Quero Amar, Amar de Outra Forma

Restructuring relationships in Lusophone women's poetry

Lorna Kirkby - 4267518
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Supervised by Dr Mark Sabine, Dr Rui Miranda, and Professor Judith Still

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Abstract

This thesis compares representations of relationships in Portuguese-language poetry written by women. Looking at poetry written by Ana Luísa Amaral from Portugal, Ana Branco from Angola, and Conceição Evaristo and Adélia Prado from Brazil, this study considers how alternatively structured relationships can be represented in poetry in order to rethink gender relations. In doing so, this thesis builds upon existing scholarship on women's writing and gender representation by bringing together writers from Portugal, Angola and Brazil, considering both how relationships have become the basis for problematic definitions of gender roles in different ways across the Lusophone world, and how they can be rewritten in order to reconceptualise the role of women in different societies. In addition to this, the poetry selected for this thesis underlines the link between human relationships and our understanding of voice and subjectivity, highlighting how paternalist representations of relationships are tied to both the alienation of women and restrictive notions of both literary authorship and poetic subjectivity. By analysing poetic representations of maternal, mystic and amorous relationships, then, this study explores how, by restructuring relationships and representing them *otherwise* (*de outra forma*), it is possible to deconstruct restrictive and binary notions not only of gender relations, but also of subjectivity and authorship.

Key words: Lusophone literature, women's writing, poetry, love

Contents

Introduction

Diz-se que os gregos
tinham cinco formas para falar
de amor.
Nós temos uma só, onde não cabe
o quase paradoxo
de que amor é tudo o que dele sabemos.
Nada mais

Era bom ter no verso
as formas todas, essas palavras todas
sempre à mão: pequeno dicionário
que soubesse de paisagens
de dentro: Que cores? Quantas
molduras?
(Amaral 2005: 10-11)

The above quotation is taken from a poem entitled 'Topografias em quase dicionário'[1] from Ana Luísa Amaral's 2005 collection *A Génese do Amor.* In these lines, Amaral considers the way we talk about love, and the link between this vocabulary and our perception of the world. She identifies an 'almost paradox' inasmuch as the way we talk about love 'é tudo o que dele sabemos' – where it is defined by the possibilities of *everything* (tudo) we know (and equally can know) about it, whilst it is also limited by *all* (tudo) we know about love (as is further underlined by the next line 'Nada mais'). It is with this paradox that I begin this thesis, which aims to compare the ways four different women construct poetic subjects through poetic representations of love and relationships. Our 'paisagens de dentro' and our identity are understood through the language, text and structures ('as formas todas, essas palavras todas') that we use to describe our relations to others, and the feelings that rule these relationships – providing a 'pequeno dicionário', if you like. Like the paradox from the first of the above-cited stanzas, this 'small dictionary' represents both the possibilities and the limits of expression, presented within a set, textual structure. This is further reflected by the question marks that end the stanza, which, again, leave an open space for further text,

[1] This is the poem's title as it appears in *A Génese do Amor's* 2005 publication, but it changes to 'Topografias em (quase) dicionário' in the 2016 selection of Amaral's poetry, with English translations by Margaret Jull Costa, entitled *The Art of Being a Tiger* (2016). In this thesis I will be drawing from the 2005 first edition published by Campo de Letras, henceforth referenced as (Génese).

whilst the unanswered questions hint at a solution which is not, nor can be, contained within the 'pequeno dicionário'.

If love, as Amaral's poem suggests, is so intrinsically tied to the limits and the possibilities of our understanding of the world, it can also be employed to challenge those limits and make space – or, to use Amaral's vocabulary, carve new landscapes – for new possibilities in the way we perceive the world and our position in it. It is this potential for movement, change, and reflection that renders love – in its many guises – a suitable focus for a study of how women writers approach the task of constructing poetic subjects that undermine the limits placed upon the subjectivity of women. As such, in order to better understand the process of subject formation in poetry written by women in Portuguese, this thesis will focus poetic representations of love, intimacy and relationships.

This thesis begins with the idea, highlighted in Amaral's poem, that we construct ourselves as subjects, in part, according to the relationships we form and the ties we construct to others – whether these ties are familial, romantic, religious, national or to a particular group. As Sara Ahmed shows in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* (2004: 1) 'emotions work to shape the "surfaces" of individual and collective bodies. Bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others.' Just as we shape our selves and the groups to which we belong through contact between the self/same and the Other, so too poets can construct poetic subjects by positioning them relative to others through textually-conceived relationships.

Within patriarchal[2] social structures, however, many of women's interpersonal or spiritual relationships have been structured to support the power of male participants.

[2] Yuval-Davis acknowledges the over-abundance of this term in feminist texts in her introduction to *Gender and Nation,* writing that '[a]lthough it was often acknowledged that the rule of the 'pater' has been traditionally applied to younger men, not only to women, this did not usually play a significant theoretical role in these generalized feminist usages of the term' (1997: 7). She also points out that defining patriarchy as a distinct social system often implies that it is 'autonomous of other types of social systems such as capitalism and racism' (ibid). Within this study, which focuses on different kinds of relations and the connection between particular gender roles and power dynamics, the term usefully denotes the specific power held by the symbolic role of the father in a number of national and literary discourses. Further to this, by

As Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso demonstrate in their study of Portuguese female authorship, *Antigone's Daughters?: Gender, Genealogy and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing,* familial ties and networks are entwined with patriarchal structures to the extent that relationships, and particularly the maternal relationships which Owen and Alonso primarily address, can become problematic when it comes to creating feminine subjects and defining a literary history (or 'herstory') of women writers. Their study, therefore, explored

> how far women's political dissidence in writing, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, came to assume the form of cultural counter-memory emphasizing antifoundationalism and working against genealogical models, by way precisely of opposing the essentialist forms of maternal womanhood handed down by both Republican and New State patriotism. (Owen and Alonso 2011: 24)

Building on Owen and Alonso's study, this thesis considers the difficulties posed by existing, often paternalist, discourses of familial ties, but looks at a later, post-revolutionary (although not necessarily post-conflict) setting to ask whether these culturally embedded, textually constructed relationships, which have traditionally defined women's participation according to biological essentialism, can be rewritten. Are some women writers choosing a different path to that described by Owen and Alonso by deconstructing the dominant understanding of women's roles in relationships, and reconfiguring them to better reflect positive experiences of womanhood and literary subjectivity?

This thesis examines and compares representations of love, intimacy and relationships in poetry written by contemporary women poets in Portuguese. In doing so, it will demonstrate how, by reconfiguring conceptions of love and intimacy, contemporary Lusophone women poets can also deconstruct paternalistically structured gender relations. This process of deconstruction will be presented as a challenge to the restriction of women's voices, both historically through perceptions of familial and

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considering three different national contexts with distinct social make-ups, I often focus on the interplay between patriarchal structures and other social systems, thus intending to avoid the pitfalls outlined by Yuval-Davis.

kinship relations, and in a literary context as the poetry considered in this thesis also subverts paternalist structures of literary influence and canonicity. To achieve these aims, this thesis proposes a comparative analysis of four contemporary poets, Ana Luísa Amaral from Portugal, Ana Branco from Angola, and Adélia Prado and Conceição Evaristo from Brazil. The principal themes for comparison – maternal subjects, mystic subjects, and amorous subjects – reflect particular sites of women's discursive subjugation to masculine and paternal elements of various relationships. The poetic corpus itself is relatively small, covering only sixteen poems in total, with the aim of presenting a closer and more complete analysis of a smaller selection of individual poems – homing in on the intricacies of poetic subjectivity whilst keeping an eye to the material, social and political resonance of the poetic texts – and exploring their positioning within the diverse intertextual, contextual and intellectual networks that these poems reach out to. As such, close textual analysis will be at the center of this study's approach to the selected corpus, informing the use of a wide range of varied theoretical and critical tools.

Whilst parenthood and romantic relationships represent much more obviously intimate relations compared to religion, the present study includes a chapter on religious life not only due to the role of the Catholic Church in first creating and later describing the relationship between the three countries addressed in this thesis, but also as religion is an example of an intimate connection that becomes immense through the development of social and cultural rhetoric and codes, many of which uphold paternalist structures and rigid notions of sexual difference.

My choice to include writers that represent such different trajectories through the Lusophone world and language, reflects firstly the effect of patriarchal structures disseminated through European colonial expansion, and, secondly, the variety of forms in the way relationships are experienced and written according to (or, in the case of the writers addressed here, against) literary, social, racial and political discourses founded upon paternal and phallocentric notions of personal relationships.

The relationships addressed in the following chapters are, of course, frequently experienced in a positive way. Focusing solely upon the oppressive aspects of motherhood, mysticism or romantic partnership, would belie the importance of these relationships to women, and discount the positive impact that these relationships can have. An acknowledgement of the damaging effects of patriarchal structures in limiting the role of mothers within a heteronormative nuclear family structure, for example, does not imply a rejection of motherhood, but a rejection of paternal dominance within a family structure and of biological essentialism. A shift in the representation of various kinds of relationships, therefore, can underline the value of love and loving relationships as positive sites for the empowerment of women.

We should bear in mind, however, that the term 'empowerment' ('empoderamento') is one that is frequently uncritically wielded, often as a catch-all term to explain positive, political action and the drive to improve conditions for a particular group (usually related to gender, race, sexuality or a combination thereof). In political terms, as Sarah Mosedale explains, 'traditional development goals, such as better health or increased income, are cited as evidence of empowerment' (2005: 244) with little consideration of the extent to which each development results in a universal increase in power for the relevant group. For example, if a company raises the wages of a group of women, would that result in the unemployment and therefore disempowerment of any other women to fund this increase in salary? The term, when used uncritically, can also suggest that empowerment is something passively received from a dominant power, although passivity is often synonymous with disempowerment. For the purpose of this study, the term will be used when discussing power dynamics as they exist in relationships or access to voice and subjectivity, and only in relation to the claiming, use or creation of power by the particular subject or group in question (as opposed to a group 'empowered' as passive beneficiaries of an outside influence). Whereas 'empowerment' makes little sense in terms of something conferred upon an individual by another, the sharing of power can be understood as an act of empowerment from within the same group. For example, a woman writer may create an empowered subject that can be read as

imbuing a group identity or community (women) with power through a shift in the dynamics of voice, subjectivity and authorship.

When it comes to literature, of course, power comes hand in hand with the dynamics of voice. As will become clear in the poetic analysis contained in this thesis, the separation of poetic voice (the voice of the poetic subject, constructed as the speaking 'I' of each poem) and authorial voice is often complicated by gender in both poetry written by women and feminist readings of poetry. As Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos and Amaral highlight in 'Sobre a Escrita Feminina' (1997) and Sousa Santos reiterates in 'Re-inventing Orpheus' (1998), the 'questão do camaleónico fingimento da máscara poética' (M. I. R. de S. Santos and Amaral 1997: 2) is frequently inflected by gender inequality, in that we might question whether women poets have the same access to poetic techniques of gender-masking as male poets. Anna Klobucka explains in her study of meta-poetic consciousness in Portuguese poetry, *O Formato Mulher:*

> [p]ara as mulheres, historicamente privadas do poder simbólico da autoria e da autoridade cultural, a construção de uma subjectividade coerentemente poética *e* feminina afigura-se como um objectivo pelo menos tão urgente como a desconstrução do sujeito monolítico e autoritário que tem preocupado os seus irmãos em literatura e teoria. (Klobucka 2009: 70)

Thus, the inequality of access to authorial voice is reflected in the dynamics of power involved in gendering poetic voices. In order to identify poetic subjects and processes of subject-formation in poetry written by women, therefore, one would have to bear in mind the effects of gender politics whilst avoiding the pitfalls of gender essentialism, or, as Sousa Santos and Amaral put it so succinctly, 'teria de falar-se, não de uma poética feminina, mas de uma poética feminista' (1997: 4). By considering the power dynamics of voice, we can read the poetic voices present in this study as projections of possible gender identities. As Amaral reminds us in 'Terra de Ninguém com Gente Dentro: a(s) Impureza(s) da Poesia', '[s]endo a poesia, como disse Emily Dickinson, o espaço da possibilidade, é-lhe sempre possível exercitar vozes várias, e mesmo distendê-las' (2013: 14). In this way, women writers can create poetic voices that are empowered

and empowering, as they portray the claiming of language, literature and voice by subjects presented as women. In doing so, they counteract the empowerment and endorsement of male voice, as reflected in literary canons that repeatedly prioritize men's literary authorship over women's. In literature about love, especially, the position of the subject who speaks or writes love is, undeniably, a position of power, as has been made clear in film studies with Laura Mulvey's gaze theory (2009) and feminist literary criticism of the role of the muse (Rich 1972). This is often a result of the strong association between power, knowledge and literary authority.

The link between exclusionary power dynamics within patriarchal societies and voice is most clearly exemplified by access to authorial subject-positions in literature. Alonso, in her text 'Becoming Visible: Women Writers from the Early Nineteenth Century to the Early Twentieth Century', ties the predominance of patriarchal social structures and conservative Catholic ideals to the limited presence of Portuguese women writers in the nineteenth century in comparison to other European countries. She writes that, aside from limited exceptions, 'women submitted almost without any questioning to patriarchal assumptions that a woman's place was in the house, and that she should not be seen or heard outside it' (Alonso and Fernandes 1996: 26) until the second half of the nineteenth century. She also comments on the limit that restricted access to education and freedom of movement in Portuguese society had on the quality of literature produced by the women, writing that 'women's conditionings however were such that it was virtually impossible for women poets to display much originality' (Ibid., 28). Similarly, in their introduction to *Mulher em África: Vozes de uma Margem Sempre Presente,* Inocência Mata and Laura Cavalcante Padilha underline the link between social structures and the exclusion of women from national literatures:

> vale lembrar que tal exclusão se repete em todos os sistemas literários nos quais há nitidamente uma predominância de vozes masculinas, pois os textos, como produtos simbólicos e como 'documentos do imaginário', na expressão de Jacques le Goff, submetem-se aos mesmos aparatos de dominação impostos pelas *ideologias hegemónicas.* (Mata and Padilha 2007: 13)

Literature Review

The predominance of male voices in defining national identity through literature has been studied in depth, as has the power held by male participants in patriarchal social, familial and kinship structures. Many have noted the way in which structures of macro identities (such as nation, empire or a shared language) follow the same, paternalist, patterns that appear in patriarchal familial and kinship relationships, but much of the analysis of literature has maintained a focus on the macro level of larger group identities and definitions of national literatures and national subjects. In the study of Mozambican literature, Maria Tavares' *No Country for Nonconforming Women* (2018), and Eleanor Jones' *Battleground Bodies* (2017), for example, consider the role of gender and sex in defining lived experiences of a particular nations – the former with a focus on subjectivity and gendered experience of nationhood, and the latter showing that the sexed body, as a battleground, can be a site for the enactment of and resistance against oppression.[3] There have also been a number of collected editions of studies on gender and sexuality in the Portuguese-speaking world more generally such as *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World* (Quinlan and Arenas 2002), *Do Inefável ao Afável: Ensaios sobre Sexualidade, Gênero e Estudos Queer* (Lugarinho 2012), *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections* (Owen and Klobucka 2014), *Beyond Binaries: Sex, Sexualities and Gender in the Lusophone World* (Pepe and Fernandes 2019) and *Legados e Heranças: Políticos (Inter)Sexuais* (Freitas et al. 2019), and some with a focus on Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa such as *Sexual/Textual Empires: Gender and Marginality in Lusophone African Literature* (Owen and Rothwell 2004), *A Mulher em África: Vozes de uma Margem sempre Presente* (Mata and Padilha 2007) and *Narrating the Postcolonial Nation: Mapping Angola and Mozambique* (Leite et al. 2014). These provide several approaches to the study of gender in Portuguese and Lusophone studies, predominantly through the analysis of prose, film, art, music and poetry, of male and female authors, directors,

[3] This kind of extended study with a focus solely on Angolan women's writing has yet to be undertaken given the disparate nature of Angolan's women's literary production, further complicated by the fact that most well-known writers (such as Ana Paula Tavares) have spent long periods of time outside of Angola.

musicians and artists. What this thesis offers in comparison to these collected editions is a sustained comparative analysis of the poetic production of women across the Portuguese-speaking world. This thesis will draw upon the centrality of familial and kinship structures in gender construction across the Lusophone world, and will trace poetic resistance to these structures in contemporary poetry, finding in the poetic form a resonance of the importance of intimacy in forming subjectivity.

What has been neglected thus far, in the aforementioned scholarship, is a focus on the development of individual literary subjects in relation to more intimate connections (rather than in connection to larger groups such as nationality or race). Whilst many have noted how the repetition of symbolic relationships constructed according to patriarchal paradigms has reinforced damaging gender stereotypes (Owen 2007; Jones 2017), there is not yet a sustained analysis of how intimacy can be portrayed and structured otherwise. By focusing on the close textual analysis of poetry written by women from Portugal, Angola, and Brazil, I will consider how relationships can be represented and structured textually to express intimacy as a positive and empowering space for women. This thesis aims, therefore, to highlight literary representations of relationships that not only exceed the traditional physical and discursive oppression of women through structures based on intimacy, but that counteract male dominance within these structures and create empowered and empowering poetic subjects.

This thesis also enters into a dialogue with the existing scholarship produced on the individual poets addressed in this thesis. Prado, Amaral and Evaristo have all been the subject of academic study in Portuguese and Lusophone studies as well as other disciplines such as the study of black women's writing, theology and religious studies, and feminist studies. Amaral's poetry has received consistent interest and acclaim in the field of Portuguese literature, with positive reviews of her work by prominent academics in the field of feminist and literary studies such as and Rosa Maria Martelo (2008), Isabel Allegro de Magalhães (2010) and Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos (2014, 2017). In critical studies, Amaral's poetry has been analysed in relation to other women writers in Portugal in the early, influential article by Sousa Santos 'Re-inventing

Orpheus' (1998) and in the book-length study of Portuguese women's poetry by Klobucka, *O Formato Mulher* (2009). In the former, Sousa Santos tracks different techniques employed by women poets to 'construct for themselves different kinds of locations vis-à-vis the dominant culture' (1998: 8), and Amaral's poetry is held up as an example of the feminist poetic technique of revising myth and literary tradition *in reverse.* In Klobucka's study, Amaral's poetry and that of Adília Lopes are compared as representative of the most recent moment of women's poetry in Portugal, in the final chapter of a study of the development of female authorship and gendered representations of poets throughout the twentieth century. Amaral's poetry has also been studied as autobiography in Catherine Dumas's comparative analysis of poetic representations of personal diaries by Portuguese poets (2008) and in Suzan Bozkurt's chapter in Williams and Blanco's edited volume *Feminine Singular: Growing up through Women's Life-Writing in the Luso-Hispanic World* (Bozkurt 2017). Much of the existing critical work on Amaral's poetry, therefore, is focused on the question of female authorship in Portugal, or on poetry as autobiography. In this thesis Amaral's poetry will be studied alongside poets from Angola and Brazil. Furthermore, although the question of authorship will inevitably be present, this thesis will focus more closely on the role and representation of maternal and romantic relationships in Amaral's work.

Prado's work, however, has received less scholarly attention from the field of literary studies than Amaral's poetry, in Brazil and internationally. Much of the critical writing on Prado's work focuses instead on the theme of religion. Ilya Kaminsky's essay *It's the Soul that's Erotic* (2017), for example, considers embodied religious devotion and the meaning of mysticism through Prado's poetry. Vania Cristina Alexa Bernardo (2004) uses Prado's poetry to comment on the meaning of biblical texts, and Josias Costa Júnior (2012) considers the link between religion and literature through Prado's poems. What these approaches have in common, though, is that they all read Prado's work in a way that prioritizes conclusions in the field of religious studies, theology and philosophy, rather than the poetry itself. Furthermore, the eroticism and feminine perspective represented in Prado's work is often read as part of the glorification of the everyday. In the entry on Prado in *A Literatura Feminina no Brasil Contemporâneo,*

Nelly Novaes Coelho acknowledges the literary value of Prado's work as representing a 'nova relação Eu-mundo' (1993: 29) from a feminine perspective, and yet, in this brief commentary on Prado's work, Coelho does not elaborate on the feminist value of Prado's work.

Writing from the perspective of feminist literary scholarship in Portugal, however, in the essay 'Do Centro e da Margem: Escritas do Corpo em Escritas de Mulheres', Amaral pinpoints the value of Prado's poetry as 'desmontagem de uma "paternidade" poética' (2017b: 65), placing Prado into a context of contemporary debates on the meaning of sex and gender within literature, but with no mention of the prevalence of religious imagery in Prado's poetry. It's clear, then, that Prado's poetry tends to be studied *either* as religious (and feminine), or as feminist. In this thesis, the analysis of Prado's poetry will consider her use of the mystic relationship with God to develop poetic subjects that challenge conventional gender roles, thus allowing a clearer analysis of the interaction of religion and gender in her poems.

Evaristo's poetry has also received significant scholarly attention from the fields of literary criticism and academic scholarship, inside Brazil and internationally. The commentary on race relations in her poetry and prose means that her work is often referred to as part of a larger dialogue on the trends and directions of the growing, and increasingly visible, body of Afro-Brazilian literature, as is the case in Eduardo de Assis Duarte's commentaries on Evaristo's literature (2006, 2015) and Weschenfelder and Fabris's 'Tornar-se mulher negra: escrita de si em um espaço interseccional' (2019). Much of the critical work on Evaristo produced within Brazil, such as that of Duarte as well as Simone Pereira Schmidt's article 'Cravo, Canela, Bala e Favela' (2009) focus on Evaristo's novel *Ponciá Vicêncio.* The growing international interest in Evaristo's work, however, is reflected in the presence of Evaristo's prose and poetry alike in a number of bilingual and translated collections of Afro-Brazilian work, including *Enfim-Nós/ Finally-Us* (Alves and Durham 1995) and *Women Righting* (Alves and Figueiredo Lima 2005). Evaristo also appears alongside thirteen other women (as one of three Afro-Brazilian writers) in the English-language collection of interviews and literature

Fourteen Female Voices from Brazil (Szoka 2002). In Emanuelle Oliveira's *Writing Identity: The Politics of Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Literature* (2008), Evaristo's work is presented as an example of *Quilombhoje*'s literary output, whereas in Vanessa Valdès's *Oshun's Daughters* (2014), Evaristo's novel *Ponciá Vicêncio* is part of a comparative study of Afro-American, Cuban and Afro-Brazilian women's writing. Building on these studies of Evaristo's work in the context of black identity-politics, I have chosen to include Evaristo's poetry in this thesis to view it in a different light, and in relation to the wider context of Portuguese-language women's writing. Unlike the existing scholarship on Evaristo's prose and poetry, this study prioritizes the close reading of poetry and the role of relationships, which means that race and Afro-Brazilian identity shall, fundamentally, be viewed from an intersectional perspective, as they are written and experienced through gender relations.

Although there is a significant body of scholarship on Amaral, Evaristo and Prado, Ana Branco is relatively unknown in Portuguese and Lusophone studies, which is tied to the difficulty Branco has faced publishing her work in Angola and as an Angolan writer living outside of Angola. Branco's work is not particularly well-known due to its limited availability but has been recognized by the *Prémio Literário António Jacinto* and by her presence as one of the four Angolan poets included in the *Antologia da Poesia Feminina dos PALOP* edited by Xosé Lois García and published in 1998 by the Galician publishing house Edicións de Laiovento. Given the difficulties encountered in publication, and the restricted access to literature for women in Angola, it is not surprising that Branco's work is yet to appear in the corpus of substantial critical studies. Branco's work forms part of this study, alongside the more widely known poets Amaral, Prado, and Evaristo, in an effort to bring attention to her complex and striking poetic production. The collection selected for this thesis, *A Despedida de Mi(m),* as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, responds to and reflects the struggle of finding an outlet for one's voice (in terms of literary production and gender politics) in Angola, and as an Angolan woman publishing in Portuguese from a marginal position in relation to the canon of Portuguese-language literature.

Bringing these four poets together allows us to view their work in an altogether different light. As the above review of existing scholarship has shown, these poets are rarely considered outside their particular contexts. Amaral's poetry is largely studied within the context of Portuguese women's writing, just as Prado's poetry is usually addressed as a commentary on Catholic devotion, and Evaristo's from the perspective of Afro-Brazilian identity politics. Comparing Lusophone representations of relationships and intimacy across national and political boundaries, this study will account for the numerous faces of gender discrimination and gender representation. Incorporating Branco, as a relatively unknown poet, as well as considering women's writing from a more global perspective, provides a wider view of the dynamics of poetic subjectivity, reflecting upon the ways in which women can understand their own subjective positions outside literature in equally diverse forms.

Although each poet reacts to her own perceptions of gender inequality, bringing them together in one study should not result in the assimilation of such diverse experiences, but should instead serve to highlight the variety of conditions experienced throughout the Lusophone world and in each nation represented here. In considering women's poetic production thus, this thesis will also add to our knowledge of women poets in other languages, the study of which in many cases, such as in the case of Anglophone women's writing, began much earlier with scholarly work on women's poetry such as Alice Ostriker's 'Thieves of Language' (1982) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's edited collection *Shakespeare's Sisters* (1979), as well as studies on women writing poetry such as 'When We Dead Awaken' by Adrienne Rich (1972). As these critics have found, poetry provides an advantageous position from which to consider perceptions of gender due to the emphasis that it places on the process of subject-formation and the definition of the poetic 'I'. For the poets selected for this study, then, poetry also represents a suitable site from which to consider the role of women as subjects (authorial, poetic and national) and to challenge the ways in which women have been restricted with regards to their access to subject-positions.

In the selection and analysis of the poetic corpus of this study, I hope to shed light on what love means when our relationships are shaped by the same structures of inequality or oppression that create the material conditions that restrict women's voices, as will be further explored in the methodology section below. Whilst existing symbolic relationships that proliferate in national, imperial, postcolonial, neo-imperial, religious and political discourses often rely upon a binary and unequal distribution of power within dominance-submission relationships, the poets addressed in this thesis present alternative, individualized experiences of relationships that do not conform to the same structures. My thesis adds to the existing body of work on Portuguese-language women's writing by considering how Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo represent relationships in ways that subvert restrictive gender representations and roles as are relevant to each context.

Methodological Framework

Despite this emphasis on the textual construction of relationships in this thesis, however, material and social factors – including developments in women's rights, race relations, feminism and black rights movements – must and will be considered in conjunction with the literary production of Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo, in order to better understand their counter-discursive representations of love in the guise of motherhood, mysticism and romantic partnership. The way in which poetic relationships are used by these poets to consolidate women's position as poetic and authorial subjects is tied to the way in which women position themselves in intimate settings and more widely as national and global subjects. In order to overcome the negative social impact of traditional stereotypes of motherhood, women in religion and romantic partnerships, writers face the challenge of creating alternative structures for how individuals relate to each other that do not rely upon binary notions of gender, subjectivity or otherness. As such, the varied and, at times, divergent, conditions for authorship will be central to determining this thesis' methodological approach to the texts. Namely, this thesis will draw upon a large and varied theoretical toolbox, as necessitated by the distinct conditions that each poet addressed in this thesis faces. This section will review the conditions for authorship faced by Amaral in Portugal,

Branco in Angola, and Prado and Evaristo in Brazil, before considering the background of postcolonial studies in Portuguese and Lusophone studies, both of which are central to determining the methodological framework of this thesis, and the range of feminist, race, and post-structural theoretical tools that will be employed in textual analysis in subsequent chapters.

Whilst assessing the challenges faced by the four poets selected for this study is essential for understanding their poetic resistance to oppressive and phallocentric structures, it is equally important to begin by acknowledging the conditions in Portugal, Angola, and Brazil that have led to the publication of poetry by these four distinctive poets. Each poet selected for this study began to publish after significant moments of political change that also represent increased juridical and, to an extent, social freedoms in their respective countries. The historical, social and political contexts laid out below are central to the critical readings of poetry that follow, accounting for the diversity of contexts represented in the corpus of this thesis, and serving as a reminder of the danger of assimilating experiences of relationships and authorship in future analysis.

In Portugal, Amaral published her first collection of poetry, *Minha Senhora de Quê,* in 1990, sixteen years after the *Revolução dos Cravos* on the 25th April 1974 which brought an end to the *Estado Novo* dictatorship. With the new 1976 Constitution, women's rights were, at least in statute, brought abruptly up to date, with women gaining constitutional equality, and the 25th April 1975 election being the first occasion when women and men were granted universal suffrage in Portugal. Whilst juridical freedom and visibility often improve conditions for women, however, they must be viewed in the context of the emergence of a socialist state from the ruins of a forty-one-year right-wing authoritarian regime and of forty-eight years of dictatorial rule. Equality of the sexes in this case was considered part and parcel of a society based on the principles of socialist equality, especially with regards to employment and workers' rights.

All varieties of popular resistance had been quashed under the *Estado Novo,* and this included feminist groups. The *Conselho Nacional das Mulheres Portuguesas* (CNMP), for example, was disbanded by state censors following the 1947 *Exposição de Livros*

Escritos por Mulheres (Bermudez and Johnson 2018: 248). The state's banning of the organization was a response to the increasingly anti-fascist purview of the CNMP, where members would frequently discuss ideals of republicanism in opposition to Salazar's dictatorship. With the relative absence of large feminist organizations[4] by the time Caetano was overthrown, there was limited feminist presence to push for widespread changes to the role of women in society. This is due, in part, to the large number of feminists, including writers, involved in left-wing political opposition to the right-wing state, which meant that feminist politics often became subsumed into the struggle for democracy and socialism. The scale of legislative change in the period immediately following the 1974 revolution – to confirm Portugal's identity as a socialist state and responding to pressure from popular movements – was such that neither the state structure nor the hearts and minds of the people could keep pace with the rapid changes. Boaventura de Sousa describes the problems that this caused juridically, writing that

> a inovação legislativa, apesar de respeitar as formas jurídicas oficiais […], foi muitas vezes ineficaz, sem qualquer aplicação prática, quer porque os movimentos populares não reconheceram os seus interesses nas novas leis e as violaram maciçamente, quer porque os grupos governantes do momento careceram de vontade política ou de condições institucionais para as aplicar (não regulamentando a lei, não atribuindo as verbas orçamentais necessárias para o funcionamento das instituições preconizadas na lei, recusando-se a – ou revelando-se incapaz de – impor, por meios repressivos, a aplicação da lei). (Santos, B. de S. 1984, 20)

Later, in *Pela Mão de Alice: O Social e o Político na Pós-modernidade,* first published in 1994, Santos uses the phrase 'a carnavalização da política' to describe the way distance was created between the state and the people during this period (1994: 62).

[4] Although there was a lack of 'feminist' organizations under the *Estado Novo,* there were a large number of state-sanctioned women's groups including the Obra das Mães pela Educação Nacional (OMEN), Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina (MPF), and the Movimento Nacional Feminino (MNF) created with the aim of promoting the regime's policies, such as stimulating the country's birth rate and, for the MNF, to encourage women's support of the colonial wars (Pimentel 2002)

As a result of both the rapid pace and the disconnection between state and people, a large amount of Portuguese legislation was not followed through, or was only selectively applied, resulting in social practices that lay several steps behind even the most innovative legislation. In terms of women's rights, despite the partial decriminalization of abortion in 1984, it was still extremely difficult for women to obtain abortions, due to reticence from medical professionals and the state's failure to provide adequate clinical infrastructure for the application of the law (Pinto 2011: 172). This remained the case until the first of two referendums on the decriminalization of abortion in 1998, which shone a light on the inadequate provisions for the fulfilment of the existing law, despite the fact that abortion would not be legalized until the second referendum in 2007. The abortion campaigns were, however, only rare occasions where Portuguese women mobilized *en masse* to demand improvements in women's rights. For the most part, the constitutional equality of women, coupled with the diminished presence of feminist groups by the end of the dictatorship, proved an obstacle. As Virgínia Ferreira reminds us, '[f]ormal equality has the effect of demobilizing women because it designates no institution to which demands can be addressed and it is therefore more difficult to make demands of society' (Pinto 2011: 182).

The transition to democracy also marked an increase in the number of women publishing in Portugal. The influx of women on the literary scene, however, was not reflected in the Portuguese national canon. As Chatarina Edfeldt shows in her 2006 text *Uma história na História*, Portuguese women's writing was consistently marginalized in literary discourse throughout the twentieth century,[5] despite the increase in publications:

> São estas as estratégias detectadas, ao longo do século XX, no discurso historiográfico-literário, em relação à literatura escrita por mulheres: tratá-la à parte, não a contextualizar em termos literários e sociopolíticos, não a conectar com as taxinomias importantes que organizam o discurso, não traçar uma história

[5] When, in 2016, the *Revista Estante* published a list of the '12 melhores livros portugueses dos últimos 100 anos', chosen by a jury of five experts, only one of the chosen texts was written by a woman (Sousa 2016).

> própria e, por fim, reduzir o conteúdo político da expressão tratando a desigualdade de género. (Edfeldt 2006: 147)

One text published during the Portuguese dictatorship that stands out as an exception to the relative invisibility of feminist texts in Portugal is *Novas Cartas Portuguesas.* First published under the *Estado Novo* in 1972, the text was banned by state censors and its co-authors Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Isabel Barreno and Maria Velho da Costa (The Three Marias) were arrested and publicly tried for creating an 'immoral' and 'pornographic' text. Whilst the cited criminal charges were likely a mask for the state's fear of the text's astute critique of Portugal's state politics, patriarchal social structure and colonial policy, the trial was a drawn-out affair, with charges only being dismissed following the 1974 revolution.

Beyond the international media storm that surrounded the trial and the support that the authors received from feminists around the world, the text also represents the most well-known example of Portuguese second-wave feminism and has been the object of many critical studies (Amaral et al. 2015; Owen 2000; Amaral and Freitas 2014; Martins 2012b). As Amaral, Ana Paula Ferreira and Marinela Freitas write in *New Portuguese Letters to the World, Novas Cartas Portuguesas* 'present a set of strategies or processes of linguistic and ideological rupture – marked by excess, violence, opacity, detours and fractures – that contribute to the construction of a 'poetics of resistance' against the discourses that legitimize repression' (Amaral et al. 2015: 3). The importance of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* to the development of Portuguese feminism is attested to by the development of two research groups headed by Amaral, the first of which resulted in the publication of the first annotated edition of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* (Barreno et al. 2010), and the second of which brought together research teams from around the world to study the global impact of the text, culminating in the publication of *New Portuguese Letters to the World: International Reception* (Amaral et al. 2015), and *Novas Cartas Portuguesas entre Portugal e o Mundo* (Amaral and Freitas 2014).

Whilst Amaral's poetic production builds on the legacy of Portuguese feminism that *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* represents, Amaral's texts interrupt the dominant order of society in a different way to that of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas.* Developed in conditions of state censorship where voice and literary subjectivity themselves are heavily politicized, *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* was informed by its position in relation to state politics. Under these conditions, the text developed by the Three Marias contains a kind of militance inherent in the spirit of resistance necessary for the creation and dissemination of such a text, for '[b]y means of that resistance, space is opened for rupture and irruption. And for freedom' (Amaral et al. 2015: 4). This militant tone so fitting to the conditions faced in the production and publication of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* is replaced by a gentler and more playful aesthetic in Amaral's poetry that, with neither pomp nor circumstance, deftly unpicks the mechanisms of masculine dominance, paternalist structures, and conservative family values. Although in number they represent only a small part of her extensive oeuvre, the poems inspired by her relationship with her daughter probably best represent the tenderness with which Amaral treats both the Portuguese language and the theme of love. I have selected three of these poems ('Testamento', 'Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha', and 'O que não há num nome') as the focus of my analysis of Amaral's work in Chapter One of this thesis on 'maternal subjects'. A selection of poems from the award-winning collection *A Génese do Amor* (2005), on the other hand, will be addressed in Chapter Three, on the theme of romantic love, where Amaral combines a keen sense of humour with a determination to redress the balance of power that defines literary canon, and move towards a new perception of the world through the way individuals, genders, and poetic voices relate to one another. The corpus on Amaral is the largest in this thesis – counting seven in total – because the three poems addressed in Chapter Three are considered together as part of the collection *A Génese do Amor,* within which the poems refer to and interact with each other as part of a larger poetic project.

Unlike Amaral, a leading figure in Portuguese literature and academia, Branco has faced a more difficult path to publication. Born in Angola, Branco moved to Portugal in 1974, the year of the fall of the *Estado Novo,* at the age of 7, where she completed both

primary and secondary school before returning to Angola to pursue a degree in social sciences. She later moved to Zimbabwe to study English, accounting and administrative management, and spent time living in Maputo, Mozambique, where she began to write poetry. Branco currently lives in Canada, having chosen to emigrate due to political instability and the difficulty of publishing in Angola. Most of her earlier works are either now out of print, or (as is the case with a number of her works listed on the website of the *União dos Escritores Angolanos*) never made it to publication whilst she was living in Angola, including the prose text *As Mãos de Deus e do diabo,* and the poetry collection *O Livro.* Branco also encountered difficulties in publishing the collection *O Bico da Cegonha* but was eventually able to under a different name (*O Cantar das Palavras,* in 2018) with the publisher *Chiado Editora,* which publishes a wide variety of authors and has offices in Lisbon and São Paulo. Despite these obstacles to publication, Branco was awarded the *Prémio Literário António Jacinto* for her first publication, the collection of poetry *Meu Rosto e Minhas Mágoas,* in 1997, which was also nominated for the *Prémio Galex* in the same year. Her next publication *A Despedida de Mi(m),* the text used for this study, did not emerge until 2004. From this collection I have only selected two poems for analysis in this thesis, although, in terms of length, these two poems make up over a quarter of the collection. The two poems 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' (which spans twenty-five pages of Branco's collection) and 'A Última Carta' (which is four pages long) share a complex prose-like style, requiring particularly close attention and much more space than the shorter poems selected for this study.

Branco's style reflects the violence and fragmentation of war and political uncertainty that have both inhibited her literary voice and determined her movements through at least five different countries. We will see in the analysis of her works in subsequent chapters that the struggle to find and express her literary voice is central to the aesthetic and form of her poetry, often pushing the poetic form and language to their limits. Violence also plays an important role, as Branco herself makes clear in the 'Nota do Autor' in *O Cantar das Palavras:*

> É com orgulho que me prestei ao longo de vários meses a escrever este livro, para que me acordasse do torpor da violência no pequeno mundo que sou e que

> represento. Usei cada letra, cada palavra, como bastão da minha dignidade, para que finalmente desertasse em mim, o verdadeiro sabor da liberdade. (Branco 2018: 10)

In this note, it is clear how the writer's sense of self is tied up with the violence she has witnessed and felt. She goes as far, in this extract, as to imply that violence ceases to be an exterior act, and infiltrates those who live through it, and that writing can be an act of catharsis. Branco guides our reading of her poetry by identifying an element of dignity and the search for freedom in the process of writing, reflecting upon the value of human life, and the link between dignity and voice. This serves as a pertinent reminder of the link between violence and the denial of subject positions.

Branco's work, therefore, represents the voice of a witness to the sustained violence and tumult of post-independence Angola. From its independence in 1975, Angola transitioned to a one-party Marxist-Leninist system headed by the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) which remained in power throughout the civil war (1975-2002), the country's transition to a multiparty democracy in 1992[6] and, with the introduction of a new constitution in 2010, a Presidential Republic in which the President enjoys virtually unrestrained executive power as the head of both state and government.

Since independence, the MPLA women's wing, the *Organização da Mulher de Angola* (OMA), has been charged with representing the political interests of women, however it would not be unreasonable to ask whether they might misrepresent the reality of life in Angola for women. For example, in their 1984 publication *Angolan Women Building the Future: From National Liberation to Women's Emancipation,* published in both English and Portuguese, containing documents produced from the first 'Congress of the Organization of Angolan Women', women's emancipation and equality of the sexes are often presented in terms of MPLA politics. They write, for example,

[6] Angola's first elections were held in 1992 during an interlude in the civil war. The MPLA candidate, José Eduardo dos Santos won the first round before armed struggle resumed, assuming the position of President without completing the second round of the election (Chabal 2002: 121).

> [t]he social transformations set in motion in Angola since the armed struggle was launched in 1961 have been intrinsic to the process of nation-formation. One such transformation was the uniting of women and the measures taken to ensure their advancement first in the struggle against colonialism, and subsequently in the struggle for national reconstruction. The interests of women are identified with the interests of the whole people, of the nation. And constraints upon women's full participation in the revolutionary process are clearly seen as detrimental to the advance of the whole people. (OMA 1984: 12-13)

This shows that women's rights have been pertinent to the ruling party in Angola only insofar as they serve the success of the MPLA or of independent Angola, especially in the case of women's participation in 'the revolutionary process'. They go on to write that the OMA

> was not created to oppose men; its formation stemmed from the fact that the MPLA, as a progressive movement, recognized the need for the emancipation of women. And it was indeed the national liberation struggle which gave the greatest impetus to their emancipation. It was in the struggle that women, fighting against a burden of illiteracy and ignorance far heavier than among men – fighting also against the traditionalist attitudes of many of their men comrades – joined the ranks of those who were prepared to accept every sacrifice and risk in order that their people should be free from colonial domination. (ibid., 14)

Many of the arguments put forth in the OMA's documents from their first congress are framed thus, with a noticeable productivist rhetoric. Beyond their justification of women's participation in the anti-colonial and subsequent national power struggle, many of their recommendations for women's rights were less successful despite being framed in socialist terms. For example, the OMA recommended the legalization of abortion (ibid., 70), which, thirty-six years later, remains a punishable offence. With regards to the role of women within the family, there appears to have been a sincere discussion held during the congress on the subject. Although a series of recommendations was made to the

government on topics such as family planning, polygamy and 'bride-price'[7] (often framed, as above, in terms of national success and socialist politics), there has been little change in either the legislation or practice when it comes to the improvement of women's lot in family life.[8] This includes the continued criminalization of abortion and the on-going failure to enforce the ban on polygamy.

The difficulty that a Marxist-Leninist perspective poses to the development of women's rights in this context is that it prioritizes a focus on the public sphere, as Owen and Rothwell explain in their introduction to *Sexual/Textual Empires: Gender and Marginality in Lusophone African Literature:*

> the productivist bias in Marxist-Leninist theories of women's emancipation emphasized the significance of their oppression, alongside men, by colonial capitalist systems of private property, locating their liberation in economic integration through waged labour and activity in the public sphere. This afforded no effective politicization of reproductive relations or the private sphere of the household. Second, and partly as a result, women and their household activities were associated with the uniformly perceived 'backwardness' of traditional African cultures, and given a particular responsibility to spearhead the modernization campaigns against this 'backwardness' even where traditional structures had previously afforded them specific forms of agency, identity and power. (Owen and Rothwell 2004: viii)

As Owen and Rothwell go on to point out, and as is demonstrated by the government's choice not to comply with the OMA's recommendations detailed above, freedom was often limited to the participation of women in public activity, presenting no challenge to patriarchal attitudes, practices or structures in a postcolonial society.

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[7] 'Bride-price' refers to part of the traditional practice of *alambamento,* an engagement tradition within which the groom formally requests the hand of the bride from her family and, if accepted, is provided with a list of requests from the bride's family (usually money, provisions for the engagement party, or manual labour) that symbolise the groom's appreciation of the bride.

[8] World Bank data shows that in 2018 Angola had the sixth highest birth rate in the world, with an average of 5.519 children per woman (World Bank 2019).

Furthermore, we must also take into account the influence of privilege in Angola when it comes to assessing women's access to politics and publishing alike. The daughter of former President Santos, Isabel dos Santos is, at the time of writing, facing accusations of fraud and embezzlement following the 'Luanda Leaks', an investigation carried out by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and laid out in a series of articles published by the consortium in January 2020 (Freedberg et al. 2020). Previously known as 'the richest woman in Africa', the billionaire obtained a fortune from her position as chairwoman of *Sonangol* (the Angolan oil company) and a series of appointments, contracts, tax breaks, telecom licenses and diamond-mining rights awarded to her by her autocratic father (ibid.).[9] The world bank calculated Angola's Gini index (a ratio that represents a country's wealth distribution where 0 represents perfect equality and 100 complete inequality) as 42.7 in 2008 (World Bank 2020).[10] The levels of inequality in Angola and the poor distribution of wealth is reflected in high illiteracy and a significant gender split in literacy rates. In 2014 the literacy rate was only 53.41% for women between the ages of 15 and 65, with the literacy rate for men of the same age range at 79.97% (UNESCO). This means that almost half of the adult female population of Angola did not have access to the most basic education; a figure which stands in stark contrast to Isabel dos Santos's education at a boarding school in Kent and degree in engineering from King's College London. We must bear this in mind when approaching the writing of women from Angola, such as Branco, as they represent a small but privileged group of women in relation to the large number of impoverished and illiterate Angolan women.

[9] The investigation spanned two decades of business deals and more than 715,000 leaked documents and interviews, providing evidence of the siphoning of public money from Angola into off-shore accounts – often through prominent Western companies. Following ICIJ questioning, the Angolan government froze Santos' assets and commenced legal processes to recover a sum of $1.1 billion from Santos, her husband and her associate Mario da Silva in December 2019 (Freedberg et al. 2020). Santos and her followers claim political motivation behind the government's prosecution under João Lourenço's new presidency (Waldersee 2020).

[10] Whilst Brazil was calculated to be much higher at 54, Portugal's value in 2008 was 36.6 and the UK's value was 34.1. The lowest value calculated in 2008 was Slovenia at 23.7 and the highest was south Africa at 63. With seven of the ten most corrupt countries in the world in Africa, according to the Gini index, Angola's value is not uncommonly high for an African nation, but is certainly significant on a global scale (World Bank 2020).

In her study of Mozambican women's writing, *Mother Africa, Father Marx,* Owen demonstrates how the postcolonial Marxist project in Mozambique relied upon a legacy of 'European liberal enlightenment ideals and paternalism' left over from Portugal's colonial presence in Africa, which operated primarily through 'domestic ideologies and their conventional divisions of public and private space' (Owen 2007: 34). This resulted in a blind spot in the state's approach to gender equality as the discourse favoured an '"asexual" construction by the Marxist-Leninist state' which 'offered no discourse of critique for [women's] "oversexualized" construction in terms of the nation' (ibid.). This is particularly clear, in both Angola and Mozambique, when it comes to the gendered rhetoric of colonial violation and anti-colonial nationalist reclamation within which territory becomes feminized, raped by the colonial oppressor and reclaimed by the sons of the nation in an anti-colonial Oedipal drama, as will be further examined in Chapter One of this study.[11] The structures through which Angola is perceived as a newly independent nation often serve to reinforce notions of national paternalism and the transfer of a symbolic female figure between men. Agostinho Neto, the poet and first President of Angola, is frequently referred to as the 'Father' of Angola (Chabal 1995: 93) whilst Amílcar Cabral is also commonly referred to as the father of Guinea Bissau (Chaliand and Vale 1977: 4), and José Craveirinha is regarded as the father of Mozambican literature and *moçambicanidade* (Owen 2007: 46). These terms associate both political power and literary ability with paternity and, coupled with the use of symbolic female figures written predominantly in masculine voices, this reinforces the association of a binary understanding of gender with a dominance-submission power dynamic in terms of both voice and political power.

Whilst the feminization of territory written by the pen of a male writer in his [con]quest to develop a literary national identity in an anti- or postcolonial setting can reinforce paternalist ideologies of national identity, some earlier women writers, such as the Mozambican Noémia de Sousa and the Angolan Alda Lara have used the figure of 'Mother Africa' as a positive symbol of national identity in their poetry to suggest the

[11] Also see Owen's analysis of Noémia de Sousa in *Mother Africa, Father Marx* (2007: 43-105).

importance of a feminine perspective on sovereignty, albeit within the same anti-colonial iteration of the Oedipal family drama. Mata, however, identifies a turn in the way more recent women's writing (from the last decade of the twentieth century, and first decade of the twenty-first) represents women's subjectivity in literature compared to that of earlier writers such as Lara and Sousa. Mata writes that

> enquanto as vozes anteriores são colectivas e verbalizam questões transversais à sociedade, a todas as mulheres e homens, dentro de uma filosofia utópica, as vozes femininas da actualidade, não descurando a dimensão comunitária, já prenunciam uma busca individual, mais íntima e sonhadora, mesmo quando a sua preocupação última é colectiva. (Mata, 2007: 425)

According to Mata, these later texts depart from 'um itinerário individual, uma percepção dos lugares subjectivos da vida, das faces esconsas do ser, uma percepção de teor sensorial, que evidencia um caminho para a complexidade do indivíduo, feito de corpo e espírito' (ibid.). We can locate Branco here, also publishing since the final decade of the twentieth century and striving to understand the chaotic trajectory of a writer moved (in more ways than one) by the violence of conflict and corruption in modern Angola, renouncing the gendered imagery of earlier generations in favour of a more complex, individual subject.

Despite selecting only one poet each from Portugal and Angola, I decided that including two poets from Brazil was necessary due to the different experiences of womanhood represented in the works of the two poets Prado and Evaristo. Despite growing up in cities only 123km apart, Belo Horizonte and Divinópolis (both in Minas Gerais), the racial and class hierarchies in Brazil are such that women of different races can be said to exist in entirely distinct versions of one country. Whilst Prado was raised in a setting within which she would have been expected to assume the role of housewife, Evaristo began her life in poverty in a *favela* of Belo Horizonte, raised by a single mother and, despite obtaining a higher level of education than most of her peers, entered the workforce in childhood, in the service of wealthier (white) families.

The different expectations and experiences of white and black Brazilian women is felt in many ways, including social attitudes, income, education, and the exclusion caused by institutionalized racism. Data collected by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) relating to average monthly income demonstrates the effects of intersectional discrimination. According to this data, in 2010 the average monthly income for a white person in Brazil was R$1,750.77 compared to R$910.73 for 'Preta ou Parda'.[12] When gender is also considered, the inequality becomes more damning, with the average monthly income of white men listed as R$2,086.41, white women R$1,396.32, black men R$1,075.5 and black women R$726.85. According to these figures black women earn, on average R$1,359.56 less per month than white men, and R$613.63 less than the national average (*IBGE*).

To understand the mechanisms behind such race and gender bias in Brazilian society, we should consider early twentieth-century Brazilian sociological discourse. After the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, the country had to integrate a large number of former slaves as free subjects, which contributed to the need to define Brazilian national identity. To do so, many sociologists looked to Brazil's newly liberated black populations in search of new ways of understanding Brazil in terms of its racial diversity. Much of the work produced in the nineteenth century, however, viewed racial mixing in the Brazilian population negatively.[13] The anthropologist Nina Rodrigues, for example, studied the black population of Bahia (a hub of Afro-Brazilian culture and religion), producing a number of texts in which he posited the miscegenation of races in Brazil as both sign and condition of degeneration.[14] Moving into the twentieth century, however, the study of eugenics became very much in vogue. This trend informed the work of writer and sociologist Gilberto Freyre whose work marks a change in the study of race

[12] The IBGE combines the racial categories 'preta' (black) and 'parda' (of mixed race) in its data.
[13] An exception to this is the immigration policies implemented under the *Império do Brasil,* in the late nineteenth century. In an effort to increase the working population of Brazil and whiten the population of Brazil, immigration from European countries was encouraged (Schwarcz 2012: 39, Schwarcz and Starling 2015: 305-306). In this context miscegenation as a means of 'branqueamento' was viewed positively.
[14] See, for example, *As Raças Humanas e a Responsabilidade Penal no Brasil*, first published in 1894, in which Rodrigues suggests two separate penal codes based on race (1957).

and national culture in Brazil. Freyre's work, which will be further explored later in this chapter, uses the (problematic) intimate relationships between the slaveholding family and a black housemaid as the basis for his thesis that miscegenation enriches Brazil and creates a unique and harmonious relationship between the races. In her anthropological study of race relations in Brazil, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz describes Freyre's valorization of *mestiçagem* in Brazilian history and culture as a

> [r]edenção verbal que não se concretiza no cotidiano: a valorização do nacional é acima de tudo uma retórica que não encontra contrapartida fácil na valorização das populações mestiças e negras, que continuam a ser […] discriminadas nas esferas da justiça, do direito, do trabalho e até do lazer. (Schwarcz 2012: 28)

Not only does Freyre's approach to racial diversity in Brazil not translate into a reduction of racist attitudes or social structures, but it also protects a racial hierarchy through a myth of racial democracy. Schwarcz goes on to explain that the changing attitude to racial mixing prompted by Freyre's works

> aparece de forma estabilizada e naturalizada, como se as posições sociais desiguais fossem quase um desígnio da natureza, e atitudes racistas, minoritárias e excepcionais: na ausência de uma política discriminatória oficial, estamos envoltos no país de uma 'boa consciência', que nega o preconceito ou o reconhece como mais brando. Afirma-se de modo genérico e sem questionamento uma certa harmonia racial e joga-se para o plano pessoal os possíveis conflitos. (Ibid., 30)

This could be seen as a question of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose,* whereby the same racist attitudes are simply dressed or expressed differently. Freyre's notions of race relations have, however, resulted in the development of a different structure to what Schwarcz refers to as the 'pessimistic' view of racial mixing, for Freyre's narrative has made possible the conditions under which racial stereotypes and inequalities may become enshrined in Brazilian national identity and social structures.[15] The positive view

[15] As recently as 2012 the Brazilian ministry of sport republished an English translation of Freyre's *New World in the Tropics: The Culture of Modern Brazil* as recommended reading about Brazilian society before the 2014 FIFA world cup and the 2016 Olympics (Freyre 2012).

of miscegenation encouraged by Freyre's work was incorporated into the Brazilian *Estado Novo's* (1937-1946) cultural policy, as cultural traditions previously perceived as African were 'de-africanized' to become symbols of Brazilian culture. The Afro-Brazilian practice of capoeira, for example, was illegal under the 1890 penal code but was promoted by Getúlio Vargas' *Estado Novo* in 1937 to become the national sport (Schwarcz and Starling 2015: 427-428).

The continued presence of racial inequality perpetuated through discourses of national identity in Brazil necessitates a consideration of the history slavery and racial oppression in Brazil in the coming chapters of textual analysis. In relation to Evaristo's poetry, which reflects a Brazilian black feminist perspective, this means a focus on the mechanisms of oppression that targeted women during and after slave society, as well as the forms of resistance that were often specific to, or rooted in a history of, female slaves. This will be explored in closest detail in the first chapter of this thesis in relation to motherhood as, in the context of slavery, maternity was the determining factor for slave status both before and after the 1871 Rio Branco law. Before the 1871 law, slavery in Brazil followed the ancient Roman principle *partus sequitur ventrem,* whereby the status of the child was determined by the status of the womb in which it was conceived. According to the Rio Branco law, however – otherwise known as the 'free womb' law – any child born to a female slavery would thenceforth be born into freedom. As Camilla Cowling explored in *Conceiving Freedom: Women of color, gender, and the abolition of slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro,* the centrality of motherhood, both before and after the Rio Branco law, meant that many female slaves, as agents of their own resistance, used motherhood in legal battles for the manumission of their children (2013). Considering history from the perspective of black Brazilian women in this way, in conjunction with Evaristo's black feminist poetic, will help to escape the white patriarchal focus of Freyre's assessment of slavery and Brazilian national identity.

Aside from a shift in the discourse around race relations in Brazil, the country also witnessed numerous political changes over the course of the twentieth century. After the end of the monarchy in 1889, Brazil entered the twentieth century as a federal

republic, until a revolt in 1930 placed Vargas as head of a revolutionary government. In 1937 Vargas led a coup which solidified his rule as dictator with military backing. During the Vargas dictatorship, which lasted until 1945, the realm of private life began to shift to the area of public interest. Susan K. Besse discusses this shift in her book *Restructuring Patriarchy: the Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil 1914-1940,* explaining that '[c]entral to Vargas's program of modernization and political centralization was the gradual expansion of the notion of public interest to encompass realms that had previously been regarded as private' (1996: 3-4). Besse argues that during the Vargas dictatorship the state sought to replace the role of the patriarch to gain a position of power over the Brazilian population, writing that

> the state increasingly usurped fathers' and husbands' traditional responsibility for disciplining women, invading what had been the most private and sacred of all relationships in Brazil: that of the family, and in particular, that of the husband and wife. State agencies, relying on the modern discourse of the rising class of liberal professionals they employed, attempted to impose new, more functional patterns of family relations. (Ibid., 6)

Whilst Besse's argument does seem to gloss over the continued and extreme problem of violence against women in Brazilian society,[16] she has picked up on the state's association of gender with power and, in particular, of the violent potential inherent in the almost unquestioned dominance of the father in the traditional Brazilian family.

The poetry addressed in this study, of course, is published much more recently, towards the end of the later 21-year military dictatorship which followed a *coup d'état* in 1964. Whilst the dictatorship did not officially transition to a full democracy until 1985, the process of *abertura política* (a gradual transition to democracy) began in 1974, culminating in the 1988 constitution in which presidential powers were reduced. Prado began to publish during this period, with her first collection of poetry *Bagagem* published

[16] In 1985 the Brazilian government created women's police stations dedicated to violent crime against women (C. M. Santos 2005: 4). There have been questions raised, however, about the low prosecution rate from crimes reported at these stations, as well as the limited powers afforded officers working for the *Delegacia de Polícia de Defesa da Mulher* (ibid.).

in 1975 and regular publications in both poetry and prose appearing since. The three poems selected for analysis in Chapter Two of this thesis are ‘Com licença poética’ from Prado’s first collection *Bagagem,* and, ‘Rute no campo’ and ‘A necessidade do corpo’ from her 2010 collection *A Duração do Dia.* Whilst the majority of the poems selected in this thesis have been published since the turn of the century, the opening poem to Prado’s first collection (and, by all accounts, her most well-known poem) is important as a statement of intent for Prado’s unique poetic, setting the scene for Prado’s later poetic production.

Evaristo’s poetry, however, represents and speaks to a very different sector of society. Her first publication appeared in the 1990 volume of *Cadernos Negros,* a literary journal published by the group *Quilombhoje* to which she has maintained strong ties throughout her career*.* These ties place Evaristo within a well-established tradition of Afro-Brazilian writing. As Eduardo de Assis Duarte explains in his text ‘Por um conceito de literatura afro-brasileira’*, Cadernos Negros* contributed in many ways to the configuration of a *literatura negra* in Brazil since its inception in 1978. He writes that *Quilombhoje’s* production is

> Marcada predominantemente pelo protesto contra o racismo, tanto na prosa quanto na poesia, na linha da tradição militante vinculada ao movimento negro […] E, ao lado dessa perspectiva, sobressai o tema do negro, enquanto individualidade e coletividade, inserção social e memória cultural. E, também, a busca de um público afrodescendente, a partir da formalização de uma linguagem que denuncia o estereótipo como agente discursivo da discriminação. (Duarte 2015: 21)

Duarte’s description of the themes and critical Afro-Brazilian perspective developed through *Quilombhoje* and contributors to the *Cadernos Negros* provide a useful frame for understanding Evaristo’s literary production. After her early publications in anthologies in the 1990s, Evaristo began to publish her own prose and poetry texts in the new millennium with her first single-authored novel, *Ponciá Vicêncio* appearing in 2003, followed by *Becos da Memória* in 2006. Her first, and as yet only, collection of poetry was published in 2008 before she moved on to collections of short stories with

Insubmissas Lágrimas de Mulheres, Olhos d'Água, and *Histórias de Leves Enganos e Parecenças* in 2011, 2014 and 2016 respectively. Evaristo's work prioritizes the development of a strong Afro-Brazilian voice, as well as a critique of the racial stereotypes that abound in Brazilian society. All of her literary production, however, also prioritizes the subjectivity of black women, with an emphasis on Afro-descendent heritage traced through black female genealogies. This is key to understanding the poetry selected for this study, and her position in relation to stereotypical representations of black women, such as those that form part of Freyre's nostalgic social theory.

Of Evaristo's extensive body of work, this thesis will analyse poems from her only collection of poetry *Poemas da Recordação e Outros Movimentos* (2008). From this collection I have selected two poems ('Vozes-mulheres' and 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre') for my analysis of maternal poetic subjects in the first chapter of this thesis, and two for the second chapter on mystic subjects in poetry ('Meu rosário' and 'Na mulher, o tempo…'). Although several of Evaristo's poems deal with both motherhood and mysticism, these poems have been selected because they are structured in a way that reveals processes of self-identification and subject-formation, played out through the development of maternal and mystic subjects.

Despite the different times and points of entry into literary publishing, the common thread between the poetry of Prado and Evaristo is a response to the sense of exclusion developed in a society in which the dominance of the white father (as exemplified by the patriarchal structures of both Freyre's ideal of national identity and Brazilian politics) and the alienation of women have become the norm. In Prado's case, poetry represents a space where her voice assumes a position of authority usually denied to women. Her poetry is unique amongst her contemporaries, despite drawing upon an established tradition of women's spiritual writing, as she combines a sensual aesthetic with a spiritual poetic subject. Although Prado's poetic is steeped in Catholicism, her poetry lies outside the discourse of the institution of the Catholic church, which has traditionally placed the male sex in a position closer to that of God than women, as she expresses

religion through an unapologetically feminine voice that not only incorporates but often revolves around the female body.

The conditions of authorship that each author faces in their distinctive and varied contexts demonstrate how the act of writing poetry itself means something different and means differently to each of the poets addressed in this study. Each poet introduced above comes to the Portuguese language and Portuguese-language literature from a different perspective and a unique trajectory. The same can be said of womanhood, whereby what it means to be a woman, in terms of both the lived experience of womanhood and of symbolic representations and expectations of womanhood in each national context, is different for each poet and to the different readers addressed by each poet. These different constructions of symbolic feminine figures and also the thread of the Portuguese language in Angola, Brazil and Portugal as well as other former colonial possessions of the Portuguese are closely tied in colonial and postcolonial narratives of national and imperial identity, as well as theoretical discussions on how to address Lusophone postcoloniality. I will now discuss in more detail the role of symbolic feminine figures and intimate relationships within these dialogues, tracing problematic paternalist structures, in order to establish the approach that this thesis takes in addressing poetry written by women from three different countries tied by a shared colonial past.

The most obvious starting point for considering symbolic feminine figures in the Lusophone world is Freyre whose theories, whilst rooted in the study of Brazilian society, have since been applied to the wider Portuguese-speaking world, connecting recent representations of colonial and postcolonial ‘nation-families’, and providing an archetype for identifying similar patterns in earlier representations of the Portuguese empire. Freyre’s influential earlier texts were instrumental in the early twentieth-century drive to define Brazilian national identity, and his later studies, created through a collaboration with the Portuguese *Estado Novo* in the 1950s and 1960s, have become central to understanding Portugal’s twentieth-century colonial policy and problematic representations of gender and race across the Lusophone world. *Casa-Grande e*

Senzala, first published in 1933, claims that Brazilian national identity is based on the combination of Portuguese and African cultures in Brazilian slave society. Whilst the term lusotropicalism was not used by Freyre until the 1950s, the roots of the concept are present in Freyre's work as early as *Casa-Grande e Senzala*, as Claudia Castelo writes in *O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo:*

> Ao longo dos anos 40, o quadro teórico [de *Casa-Grande e Senzala*] não conheceu elementos novos. Embora Freyre continuasse o seu labor intelectual e bibliográfico, regressou à interpretação do Brasil. Os fundamentos do luso-tropicalismo, porém, já estavam lançados; passado o tempo de concepção aproximava-se o tempo da formulação explícita. A visita de Freyre a Portugal e às colónias portuguesas seria determinante nesse processo. (Castelo 1998: 35)

The ideas elaborated in *Casa-Grande e Senzala*, later to become lusotropicalism, were informed by Freyre's time spent on his grandfather's plantation in North-eastern Brazil and academic debates in the field of eugenics in Brazil and the United States, where he spent time at Columbia University. Freyre's work is strongly influenced by the early twentieth-century debates around scientific racism. In 1929, for example, the *Primeiro Congresso Brasileiro de Eugenia* in Rio de Janeiro became the centre of the debate within Brazilian scientific and anthropological circles.[17] The focal point of debate amongst eugenicists at the time was whether racial miscegenation caused degeneration of the population, especially with regards to the biological effects of blackness. Freyre, influenced by the German-American anthropologist, Franz Boas (whose works are cited in *Casa-grande e Senzala*), aligned himself with opponents of scientific racism who contested the belief that racial mixing led to biological degeneration on a national level. The influence of the field of eugenics is, nonetheless, noticeably present in the way that Freyre attributes specific (often cultural) characteristics to particular races, and discusses the enrichment of a population through

[17] During this congress, Renato Kehl's suggestion that strict eugenicist policies be implemented in Brazil was met with opposition from the likes of Edgard Roquette-Pinto who argued that social factors relating to the perception of race were more pertinent. For further reading on eugenics in Brazil see Wegner and Sousa's chapter in *Luso-tropicalism and its Discontents: The Making and Unmaking of Racial Exceptionalism* (2019).

both sexual and cultural miscegenation. In *Casa-grande e Senzala,* for example, Freyre writes that *os negros* had a 'predisposição como que biológica e psíquica para a vida nos trópicos. A sua maior fertilidade nas regiões quentes. O seu gosto de sol. A sua energia sempre fresca e nova quando em contacto com a floresta tropical' (1957: 281).

Beyond statements such as these, which we can now recognize as racial essentialism, Freyre goes on to elaborate a narrative of Brazilian cultural miscegenation which serves to reinforce existing gender and racial stereotypes rooted in the social structures of slavery. The crux of this narrative is the intimacy that Freyre perceived in the black housemaid's presence within the white, slave-owning family's home (the *casa-grande*). From the physical and symbolic violence of slavery, Freyre homes in on the minority case of a black maid who exists within the site of the white family[18] to develop a narrative of love and intimacy which becomes a microcosm of the Brazilian nation. Freyre describes the presence of a black female slave in the *casa-grande* with a tone of nostalgia, claiming this relationship between the slave and the white family as the root of cultural miscegenation, and therefore of the Brazilian nation:

> trazemos quase todos a marca da influência negra. Da escrava ou sinhama que nos embalou. Que nos deu de mamar. Que nos deu de comer, ela própria amolegando na mão o bolão da comida. Da negra velha que nos contou as primeiras histórias de bicho e de mal-assombrado. Da mulata que nos tirou o primeiro bicho do pé, de uma coceira tão boa. Da que nos iniciou no amor físico e nos transmitiu, ao ranger da cama de vento, a primeira sensação completa de homem. (Freyre 1957: 279)

Within this extract, physical contact with the black female body is the nexus of the relationship between the white slave-owner and the black slave. Despite the apparent focus on culture, the majority of the interactions listed are merely different ways in which the white element of the relationship can use the black, female body – be that the breast that feeds, the hand that scratches, or the vagina that becomes the site for the white

[18] Stuart Schwartz shows in *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835* that on an average Bahian sugar plantation only 10.9% of slaves were classified as 'house slaves'. This figure includes male and female slaves, and some artisanal roles such as seamstresses. (1985: 151)

male's sexual initiation. Freyre's description of the sexual interaction between the owner and slave is indicative of a bias towards the benefit and agency of the white, male element, implying that the white man's entry into manhood is achieved through the sexual domination of the black slave woman. We need not be reminded of the problematic nature of a sexual relationship of this kind, which is, at best, considered coerced sexual congress due the imbalance of power that the white ownership of the black slave represents.

In her chapter 'Love is all you need' from *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections,* Klobucka points out Freyre's elision of the violence inherent in the relationships he describes:

> While this tradition, at least on the evidence of Freyre's own writings, does not necessarily negate colonial violence altogether, it relies on a domestication of violent acts and relations, which are represented as a private, intimate, and ultimately ancillary aspect of colonialism – a form of domestic violence, in fact. (Klobucka 2014: 40)

Freyre's work ultimately reframes a violent colonial, social system as an intimate relationship within a domestic setting, which negates both the inherent violence of slave-ownership, and violence against women. The subjugation of black female bodies within the intimate, private setting of the *casa-grande* becomes, in Freyre's work, a symbol of national, inter-racial unity.

The female figure in this narrative is silenced in two ways: firstly, through her subjugation to the white slave owner (as sexual conquest and as property), and secondly through her position in a private, domestic setting, which removes the violence enacted against her from the public realm by imbuing it with a false sense of intimacy. This early representation of lusotropical affect solidifies a number of existing stereotypes of gender and race. The black (slave) woman comes to signify a surrogate maternal figure for white children, a functional beast of burden in the context of slavery, and the sexual object of the male inhabitants of the *casa-grande.* In her text 'Feminino Plural: Negras do Brasil', in *Brasil Afro-Brasileiro* (2000), Lídia Estanislau describes the objectification

of black women in Brazil: '[a] negra é coisa, "pau pra toda obra", objeto de compra e venda em razão da sua condição de escrava, mas é objeto sexual, ama de leite e saco de pancada das sinhazinhas, porque além de escrava, é mulher' (Estanislau 2000: 213). This attitude is exemplified, for example, in the poem by Jorge de Lima 'Essa Negra Fulô', from the collection *Poemas da Negra* (1929), in which the beautiful slave, Fulô, is represented at work, caring for white children, scolded by the mistress of the *casa-grande,* and sexually exploited by the master.

The setting for *Casa-grande e Senzala* is one that constantly refers back to and reinforces the dominant position of the master-father, as is suggested by the work's subtitle *Formação da Família Brasileira sob o Regime de Economia Patriarcal.* This subtitle is useful for understanding the troubling dynamics of Freyre's work, in that, despite focusing on an intimate setting, the particular scenario that he describes is positioned as *a família brasileira:* a metonym for Brazilian identity rather than a picture of a very small percentage of life in Brazilian slave society, understood from a point of view that is invested in the maintenance of patriarchal structures. Freyre believed, as is evidenced in his preface to the first edition of *Casa-grande e Senzala,* that intimate family life was the true site of Brazilian national identity:

> Nas casas-grandes foi até hoje onde melhor se exprimiu o caráter brasileiro; a nossa continuidade social. No estudo da sua história íntima despreza-se tudo o que a história política e militar nos oferece de empolgante por uma quase rotina de vida: mas dentro dessa rotina é que melhor se sente o caráter de um povo. Estudando a vida doméstica dos antepassados sentimo-nos aos poucos nos completar: é outro meio de procurar-se o 'tempo perdido'. (Freyre 2003*:* 44)

What Freyre does not account for, however, is the role of privilege in his chosen setting. Firstly, by focusing on the *casa-grande* rather than the *senzala,* Freyre is placing Brazilian identity within the realm of the privileged, power-holding minority of Brazilian slave society and, secondly, this particular narrative represents intimacy only from the perspective of the privileged members of the household. Written from the perspective of the maid, the story would inevitably be one of oppression and enslavement rather

than familial intimacy. The elevation of this false intimacy to a symbol of national identity through Freyre's work is therefore problematic as a result of the absence of female and black voices, and the submission of a silent female figure portrayed as serving the formation of 'Brazilianness'.

As Klobucka explains, the resulting bias in Freyre's work is reflected in his specific and limited definition of love:

> the commentary on the exceptional propensity of Portuguese men for miscegenation in *Casa-grande & senzala* relies hardly at all on the proposition of their philoxenic affective engagement with women of color, being presented instead as a conjugation of mindless instinct moving individual male bodies with the pragmatic interests of the collective body politic. […] Further on, the only form of affect Freyre associates with the animalistic brutality and frenzied ubiquity of sexual relations in the self-enclosed universe of the slaveholding *casa-grande* is the allegedly sadomasochistic emotional bond between the masters and the slaves. (Klobucka 2014: 37)

The emphasis on bodily interactions, sexual desire, rites of passage and child-rearing in the above-cited extracts from *Casa-grande e Senzala* is illustrative of the kind of commentary to which Klobucka refers. Whilst Freyre's description of the white family's relationship to the black female slave seems to reflect a kind of instinct or animalism, the relationship becomes a symbol for philoxenic affect on first a national, and later an imperial scale from which women (and especially black women) are excluded. Klobucka goes on to demonstrate how, in his later work such as *O Mundo que o Português Criou,* relationships are represented in line with existing archetypes of patriarchy, particularly within the context of Christendom. She writes that

> [w]hen love and friendship begin to be emphasized in Freyre's later writings, on the other hand, they assume strongly homophilic trappings, in the Aristotelian sense of *philia* as the bond linking same with same, whether it becomes activated as biological filiation within the patriarchal family or as the communal ideal of Christian brotherhood. (Ibid., 38)

Thus, Freyre takes existing structures of affection and kinship, exemplified through a narrative of intimacy, and applies them to race relations in Brazil and, later, to colonial relations in the Lusophone world, in a way that reinforces the power of the white patriarch. What caused the perception of Freyre's work as progressive was the way in which these relationships were framed to form a positive view of miscegenation as beneficial to Brazilian society and, later, to other spaces colonized by the Portuguese.

By placing intimate relationships at the heart of his descriptions of larger social systems and historical processes, Freyre shifts attention to something that is unquantifiable, and supposedly private. In presenting something so intangible as both historical fact and a contemporary social and political system, it also becomes much more difficult to refute; an element which contributes to the tenacity of the Brazilian myth of racial democracy.[19] This placement of Freyre's theory, again, serves as a silencing mechanism, pre-empting criticism of racism in Brazil. In subsequent chapters we will see this dynamic challenged by women whose poetic representations of different relationships insist upon, and often revolve around, the presence and development of a woman's voice.

Beyond ideologies of the Brazilian national family, Freyre's work was adopted by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* to justify their continued possession of what the 1951 revision to the Portuguese constitution referred to as *territórios ultramarinos.* In 1951 Freyre accepted the *Estado Novo*'s invitation to tour Portugal and its colonies before publishing his findings in *Aventura e Rotina: Sugestões de uma Viagem à Procura das Constantes Portuguêsas de Caráter e Ação* (1953a) and *Um Brasileiro em Terras Portuguêsas: Introdução a uma Possível Luso-tropicologia* (1953b). A decade after Freyre's tour, the Portuguese government funded the publication of *O Luso e o Trópico* in Portuguese, in French and English (1961). During his trip and the subsequent publications, Freyre explores the theme of lusotropical colonization in Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique and Goa.

[19] Burke and Pallares-Burke discuss the emergence of phrases such as 'racial democracy' in *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (2008).

The terminology developed by Freyre, and adopted by the Portuguese government, fits a long-standing narrative of what Klobucka terms a 'lusotropical romance' (Klobucka 2003). Klobucka identifies the same approach to defining Portuguese colonialism in Freyre and the epic poem *Os Lusíadas* by Luís de Camões (first published in 1572), which both find their 'paradigmatic source in the unrestrained, collective practice of male sexual license' (ibid., 124). Just as the white slave-owner on the plantation assumes the role of the dominant patriarch, so does the white, male colonizer in the *estadonovista* and Camonian 'lusotropical romances', as Klobucka explains:

> the sixteenth-century literary fiction of the Isle of Love and the twentieth-century pseudo-scientific doctrine of Lusotropicalism are linked by a steady stream of discourses focused on the articulation of national identity, in which the innate tendency of Portuguese men toward sexual *hybris* emerges as a leading factor in the construction and preservation of the empire, as well as a significant *moral* justification of Portuguese imperial claims. (Ibid., 124-125)

The role of women in Freyrean and *estadonovista* lusotropicalism, as well as in earlier representations of Portuguese imperial conquest, such as Camões's, is, as Luís Madureira puts it, that of 'disembodied vaginas' who 'mean only insofar as they are penetrated and inseminated', whilst the 'historical agency is clearly the privilege of oversexed "little men" from the Iberian west' (1994: 163). These symbolic (heteronormative) relationships are presented solely from the perspective of the male participants, underlining the need for women writers to represent relationships in a way that promotes women's agency and configures their engagements with others from an alternative perspective.

Despite Portugal becoming a site of colonial and postcolonial migration, racial miscegenation did not become the centre of a narrative of national identity so much as it was employed to cement Portugal's position at the centre of a larger Lusophone diaspora. The idea of the Portuguese father as a 'sower of seeds' provides a narrative of paternal right and paternal affection towards the colonial territories and people. In presenting its colonial presence as familial ties, Portugal could also claim a larger global

presence in an attempt to increase the power of the metropolis from its marginal position within Europe. Portugal's adoption of the lusotropical narrative took place at a time of growing resistance to colonialism both within Europe and from the colonies themselves,[20] so that positioning Portugal as the father within a self-proclaimed patriarchal narrative would have the effect of asserting a 'natural' position of dominance over the increasingly rebellious colonial 'offspring' and of demanding, in return, filial obedience.

This rhizomatic and paternal relationship with the colonies is reflected in the creation of *Lusofonia* and the *Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP), in 1996, both of which position Portugal at the centre of a large linguistic network. In positioning Portugal thus, networks and structures such as the *CPLP* replicate the same patriarchal structures that are present in Freyre's description of the black maid in the white slave-owner's house. Just as the false intimacy between the black maid and the slave-owning family reinforced the power, position and 'manhood' of the white father, so the false intimacy between metropolis and (post)colony in *estadonovista* lusotropicalism*,* Camonian imperial imagery, and more modern conceptualizations of postcolonial ties such as *Lusofonia*, reinforce the power of the (former) colonial father.

In narratives and structures such as these, it is the white father who drives the narrative, as he encounters and benefits from female figures (wives, nymphs, housemaids) along the way. In Camões's epic poem and *estadonovista* rhetoric, women are predominantly portrayed in a domestic, supporting role to colonizers and troops fighting in the wars of independence. According to Margarida Calafete Ribeiro in *África no Feminino: As Mulheres Portuguesas e a Guerra Colonial,* the image of women's role in the colonial

[20] The wars of independence in Portuguese colonies began in Angola 1961, Guinea-Bissau in 1963, and Mozambique in 1964, only a decade after Freyre's tour, but opposition to Portuguese presence in the colonies had been established earlier. The *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* was formed in 1956, and the MPLA saw its roots in a number of anti-colonial groups (including the Luanda cell of the *Partido Comunista Português*) in the late 1950s in Angola. This opposition included critiques of Freyre's tour, such as the essay published by Mario Pinto de Andrade (under the pseudonym Buanga Fele) in *Présence Africaine,* 'Qu'est-ce que le « Luso Tropicalismo » ?' which refutes the application of Freyre's lusotropicalism to the Lusophone African context, and challenges the viability of Freyre's work as a reflection of Brazilian society (Fele 1955).

wars as portrayed by the *Estado Novo* and, since then, in popular memory of the colonial wars, mirrored the traditional role of wives and mothers in colonial expansion as portrayed by Camões, who[21]

> [d]efinia os papéis a desempenhar por cada sexo na construção da nação a vir: os homens empreenderiam a viagem que os levaria às futuras terras do império, as mulheres ficariam em casa, aguardando, apoiando e assegurando a vida familiar. Viajar, construir, guerrear e governar, contra ficar, assistir, acompanhar, amar – seriam estes os papéis dos dois sexos na construção da nação e do império. (Ribeiro 2007: 20)

This is linked to the image of women as moral and affective guardians of the *home front*, as Portuguese women were encouraged to sacrifice their sons to the good of the nation, with newspapers publishing the letters of mothers who 'reproduziam o discurso patriótico do regime, estimulando os seus filhos a essa luta, atitudes que, aliás, relembram a propaganda de Guerra tradicional que liga maternidade, nacionalismo e militarismo' (ibid., 24). In an effort to mobilize women across the country in support of the colonial wars, the *Movimento Nacional Feminino* (founded in 1961) established a network of *madrinhas de guerra,* who sent letters of encouragement to Portuguese troops at a time when enthusiasm and support for the colonial wars were waning.

It is clear, then, that for the *Estado Novo*, women and their affective relationships with men became a tool for governing the nation's attitudes to Portuguese nationalism and to the colonial wars, as Ferreira explains in 'Home Bound: the Construct of Femininity in the Estado Novo': 'the "institutionalization of Portuguese-ness" could not have been achieved without the rhetorical involvement of womanhood and femininity as ideological signs, and of women and those deemed "different" as socio-political subjects' (1996: 134).[22] Furthermore, as Ferreira goes on to explain, the rhetoric of femininity was

[21] Ribeiro's collection of interviews *África no Feminino* shines a light on the often forgotten presence of women in the African colonies during the colonial wars serving as a reminder that women's roles were more active and participatory than dominant discourses of politics and historical memory suggest.

[22] As Irene Pimentel describes in her article 'Women's Organisations and Imperial Ideology under the Estado Novo', these attitudes towards national identity and femininity were not only extolled by male politicians, but were also reiterated by female

expanded to include ‘difference’, aligning femininity with alterity, especially with regards to race and nationality. In doing so, the *Estado Novo* referred back to paternalist forms of power, relegating the colonies to a lesser position in relation to the white, Portuguese father, but nonetheless bringing them into the symbolic Portuguese family through a rhetoric of intimacy; a dynamic which mirrors the incorporation of the black slave into the symbolic Brazilian family in Freyrean terms. Ferreira writes that ‘the Estado Novo relied on and in turn generated a consensual fictional poetics of womanhood and femininity encompassing heterogeneous spaces and peoples characterized as ‘naturally’ different’ (ibid.). This resulted in conditions that contained women within the family unit and domestic space, ‘while at the same time colonizing all such subjects of difference under the aegis of the greater national family’ (ibid.). Thus women, like men and women from the colonies, represent an ‘other’ even as they reinforce the identity and the unity of the same. In *Gender and Nation,* Nira Yuval-Davis explains the ambivalent position that women tend to hold within the collectivity, writing that

> they often symbolize the collectivity [sic] unity, honour and the *raison d’être* of specific national and ethnic projects, like going to war. On the other hand, however, they are often excluded from the collective ‘we’ of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position […] In this sense the construction of womanhood has a property of ‘otherness’. (Yuval-Davis 1997: 47)

Thus, the place of women is continually reinforced as subordinate to and in support of men, rather than as active agents. The way these structures are tied up with perceptions of gender roles in relationships that revolve around the agency and action of male participants (the imperial fathers setting out to discover, the sons of the nation encouraged by their *madrinhas de guerra*, the white fathers of lusotropical romance, and so on) limits the representation of women to a symbolic role.

The symbolic relationships generated to serve colonialist and nationalist agendas posit intimacy and love so as to support the *Estado Novo’s* claim of Portuguese exceptionality

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figureheads such as Cecília Supico Pinto, and disseminated through the *Estado Novo’s* women’s groups (2002).

with regards to its treatment of its colonies. Although Portugal has since relinquished its colonies, an element of this narrative of exceptionalism has proven persistent in more recent theoretical discussions of Lusophone postcoloniality. Santos, for example, elaborated a theory of postcolonialism specific to the 'time-space of the Portuguese language' in his article 'Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity' published in 2002. Through a comparison with the British empire which, for Santos, represented the norm of European colonialism, Santos places Portugal in a subaltern position which would necessitate a specific approach to the study of Lusophone colonialism and postcolonialism. As Santos explains,

> [t]he subalternity of Portuguese colonialism is twofold: it occurs both at the level of colonial practices and at the level of discourses. Concerning practices, subalternity consists in the fact that Portugal, as a semiperipheral country, was itself for a long period a country dependent of [sic] England, at times an 'informal colony' of England. […] As regards colonial discourses, the subalternity of Portuguese colonialism resides in the fact that, since the seventeenth century, the history of colonialism has been written in English, not in Portuguese. (B. de S. Santos 2002: 11)

Santos goes on to state that Portugal's ambivalent status as a colonial power meant that current trends in the more dominant Anglophone postcolonial studies are not necessarily suitable for the study of Portuguese postcolonialism.[23] Since its publication, 'Between Prospero and Caliban' has proven influential and widely cited, provoking a persistent tendency for critics to consider Lusophone postcolonialism according to the marginality of the metropolis (Arenas 2015; Fonseca 2007). Although Santos's approach may be useful for understanding Portugal's self-identification in a postcolonial world, critics such as Madureira (2008) and Ferreira (2007) take issue with its application as a theory of Lusophone postcoloniality due to the difficulties it would pose

[23] Santos' article makes only a few references to the experience of the colonized people, leaving this question open for further consideration. Aside from briefly acknowledging the violence and forced labour conditions experienced in Africa (B. de S. Santos, 2002: 31), Santos claims that Portugal's weakness means that former Portuguese colonies have been less susceptible to neo-colonialism, with the exception of internal colonialism in Brazil (ibid., 19, 34).

in extricating the claim of specificity from the more problematic Freyrean and *estadonovista* claims of lusotropical exceptionalism. Furthermore, Santos's description of Portuguese colonialism does little to deconstruct imperial power dynamics or challenge an epistemologically Eurocentric lens as it continues to revolve around the perspective of a European (even if peripherally so) colonial power.

Madureira describes Santos's approach as an 'incipient Lusophone postcolonialism [which] is not only located unequivocally in the former metropolis but also reproduces in a postcolonial register and epoch the *estadonovista* rhetoric of colonial difference' (2008: 202). Whilst Santos does take a stance against Freyre's lusotropicalism, writing that 'miscegenation is not the consequence of the absence of racism, as argued by Luso-colonialist or Luso-tropicalist reasoning, but it certainly is the cause of a different kind of racism' (2002: 17), his model of a situated postcolonialism veers close to Freyrean discourse. He writes, for example, that

> [t]he informal colonialism of an incompetent Prospero saved large sectors of the colonized peoples for a long period of time from living Caliban's experience daily, and let some of them (and not just in India) conceive of themselves as the true Prospero and act as such in their domains. (Ibid., 36)

This kind of claim is reminiscent of the elision of the violence of slavery in Freyre's analysis of race relations in the Brazilian *casa-grande.*

Santos does not comment on the role of gender in colonial relations, stating only that 'Portuguese postcolonialism calls for a strong articulation with the question of sexual discrimination and feminism' (ibid., 17) in the context of the prevalence of miscegenation of Portuguese men with black women compared to the relative lack of relationships between Portuguese women and black men. In doing so, Santos also neglects to account for the problematic commentary on power dynamics in Freyre's work that are mirrored in his own elaboration of Lusophone postcoloniality. As Ferreira points out,

> one cannot ignore the connection between the postcolonial thought of the Portuguese sociologist and that of Gilberto Freyre. The latter's appropriation in the

> 1930s of the single most defamed source of Brazilian identity as a nation, sexual miscegenation, as imputed by external eyes identified with a Eurocentric, racist model of civilization and progress, finds a parallel in Santos' appropriation of the image of imperial weakness and neo-colonial dependency that Portugal increasingly had since the seventeenth century. (Ferreira 2007: 30)

Thus, despite distancing himself from Freyre's symbolic miscegenation, Santos's approach relies upon a similar dynamic in that the imbalance of power between colonizer and colonized is minimized. Such an approach, therefore, is not appropriate for a study such as this which intends to focus on the dynamics of power when considering how relationships can be re-imagined and reconfigured to empower speaking subjects identified as women. Although useful in their own ways for understanding the context within which relationships have been perceived across the Lusophone world, a critical approach to the process of deconstruction enacted in the literary works addressed in this thesis would necessitate a willingness to escape the structures of colonialism, neo-colonialism and gender that narratives such as lusotropicalism, Camonian imperial romance and Santos's Shakespearean metaphor uphold.

The poems explored in subsequent chapters have been selected because they offer poetic representations of intimacy and relationships that subvert the paternalist structures of Freyrean sociology, prioritising structures based on the empowerment of women and women's voices (poetic and otherwise). They challenge the structures upon which ideas of the national, imperial or postcolonial families described above are founded, which would make it counterproductive to situate them according to the same terms as the narratives that they deconstruct. Santos's suggestion of a situated postcolonialism conceived within the 'time-space of official Portuguese language' provides scope for neither the complex dynamics of poetry, nor for the personal, physical, intellectual, academic or spiritual trajectories (within and outside of the Lusophone world, in terms of contact as well as journey) represented by the poets and the poems included in this study.

As Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini explain, continuously re-inscribing spaces with national identities in the study of comparative literature reinforces a simplistic view of the relationship between language and nation. Similarly, to delimit a space according to an empire (as in Santos's 'time-space of official Portuguese language')

> seems to work in comparative literature almost exclusively in terms of centre-periphery relations with very clear vectors of 'diffusion' and 'impact'. Comparisons are pursued only between East and West, and any innovation in the colonized non-West, certainly 'literary modernity', becomes necessarily the product of direct colonial influence. What this focus obstructs are the many other types of traffic and 'lateral' literary contacts that empire facilitated but that do not fit within the centre-periphery model. (Laachir et al. 2018: 3)

One solution offered by Laachir, Orsini and Marzagora is that we move beyond macro categories of identity such as 'world literature' or identifiers based on former empires or current shared languages, and towards 'significant geographies'; 'the wider conceptual, imaginative and real geographies that texts, authors and language communities inhabit, produce and reach out to' (ibid., 5). Whilst Ferreira cautions against the dangers of exceptionalism in the approaches taken by writers such as Santos and Freyre, the shift to 'significant geographies' also accounts for the danger of situating literature, especially in a postcolonial context, where the critic runs the risk of reaffirming colonial power structures through the process of creating topographical lines that delimit a 'literature'. Thinking in terms of 'significant geographies', then,

> makes us consider local and distant geographies – whether imaginative or real, networks or horizons – and their interrelationship in ways that: (1) foreground the literary in its various definitions; (2) make us think about actual trajectories and specific uses of spatial concepts/ images, and so geographies that are significant rather than generic meta-categories such as 'world', 'global'; (3) highlight multiplicity, openness and disjuncture, and discourage easy technologies of recognition and complacent distant gazes. (Ibid)

This thesis will, therefore 'situate' the poems addressed in the subsequent chapters through the lens of 'significant geographies'. This means that the analysis of poetry in

this thesis will highlight the different personal, historic and linguistic trajectories and perspectives from which Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo come to Portuguese-language literature, which necessarily impact their poetic production and the kinds of womanhood and relationships represented in their poetry. To ensure that the geographies referred to in the course of the subsequent analysis chapters remain 'significant', however, I will be guided primarily by close textual analysis. The tools of analysis, in terms of historiographical discourse and theoretical perspectives, will be selected as is 'significant' to the texts. This means that the theoretical framework of this thesis is vast and is not limited to the countries of production. Rather, it draws upon a range of influences from post-structuralism, feminism, gender studies and literary studies, as well as some historiographical and sociological studies from a number of national backgrounds, in order to account for the diverse representations and experiences of womanhood and authorship present in the corpus of this thesis.

As this thesis focuses on textual analysis and the links between linguistic and social structures of oppression, however, post-structuralism will emerge as a key theoretical perspective in the textual analysis of all three chapters. Post-structuralism is particularly useful in identifying structures of oppression and textual elements that contribute to deconstruction. Although post-structuralism stems from a French theoretical school of thought, it has since been adapted and used in the foundation of post-structuralist feminism, queer studies, and postcolonial studies, and so is an apt foundation for a study that, firstly, focuses on linguistic and social structures of gender oppression in a postcolonial context and, secondly, prioritises the analysis of texts that are poised to deconstruct the paternalist symbols of femininity and intimacy detailed above.

In 'Between Prospero and Caliban', Santos defines postcolonialism as 'a set of (mainly performative) practices and discourses that deconstruct the colonial narrative as written by the colonizer, and try to replace it by narratives written from the point of view of the colonized' (B. de S. Santos 2002: 13). This description is not consistent with the amount of space that Santos dedicates to the position of the colonizer, or the use of loaded terms such as 'Prospero' and 'Caliban' which, even in creative combinations such as

Santos's 'calibanized Prospero' and 'prosperized Caliban', nonetheless repeat a language of both binary and unilateral distributions of power. Despite this contradiction, though, Santos's description does establish colonialism as a set of structures due for deconstruction. Unless we reconsider the terms with which we write and speak ourselves, particularly with regards to our relationship to others, we continue to repeat the same textual structures: Prospero and Caliban, master and slave, white man and black woman, active fathers and self-sacrificing mothers. The poetic works analysed in this thesis contribute to projects of deconstruction with regards to the terms we use to describe and place ourselves in relation to others, as well as the power dynamics, intricately tied to gender and race, that are associated with those terms. Santos's argument falters, from this perspective, in its lack of interrogation of the language and textual structures used to conceptualize the relationship between Portugal and its former colonies. A shift from the language of the colonizer to the movements of deconstruction carried out against the structures embedded in colonialism would, on the other hand, provide a point of focus that emphasizes the voice and the agency of the formerly colonized.

Deconstruction was developed by the French-Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida and is part of the French critical tradition of poststructuralism. Poststructuralism has been critiqued for its incompatibility with the realm of postcolonialism by writers such as the Marxist Aijaz Ahmad who claims that poststructuralism comes from a position of 'metropolitan privilege' (2000: 17) and 'irrationalism' (ibid., 195), removed from the material and political concerns at the heart of postcolonial studies. Nonetheless, a number of key postcolonial theorists, including Homi Bhabha (2004) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987), draw upon Derrida in their work, and justify a post-structuralist approach to postcolonialism by highlighting the link between linguistic and structural oppression, and the material oppression and suffering under colonialism.

A Derridean approach will be used to address poems in this thesis in chapters two and three, not as a method to be applied to texts, but as a way of understanding the

deconstructive movements involved in the poetic texts themselves. In ‘Psyche’, Derrida describes deconstruction as a form of creativity:

> [d]econstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodical procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail; its writing is not only performative, it produces rules – other conventions – for new performativities. (Derrida 1991c: 218)

This description is useful for placing the poetry written by Amaral, Branco, Prado, and Evaristo, especially their representations of relationships, as performative and inventive compared to the patriarchal structures discussed above. The destabilization of patriarchal structures can – as we will see in subsequent chapters – provide scope for the destabilization of larger structural hierarchies such as those involving race, gender, nationality and religion.

As we have seen already in this chapter, the ideological and material violence that characterizes the narratives of Lusophone colonialism, neo-imperialism (through structures such as *Lusofonia*) and subsequent postcolonial national identities is founded upon racial and gender hierarchies which subjugate those associated with femininity, blackness or ‘otherness’. In *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics,* Spivak reminds us of the importance of deconstruction for understanding and challenging the position of women around the world. In her defence of the application of French feminist thought to postcolonial settings she traces French feminism back to Derrida’s ‘deconstruction of the general sign of “man” as it exists within the “metaphysical” tradition’ (1987: 143). According to Spivak,

> In *Of Grammatology* [Derrida] relates the privileging of the sovereign subject not only with phonocentrism (primacy of voice-consciousness) and logocentrism (primacy of the word as law), but also with phallocentrism (primacy of the phallus as arbiter of [legal] identity). In texts such as ‘La double séance’ (the figure of the hymen as both inside and outside), *Glas* (the project of philosophy as desire for the mother), *Eperons* (woman as affirmative deconstruction), ‘The Law of Genre’ (the female element as double affirmation) and ‘Living On: Border Lines’ (double

> invagination as textual effect) a certain textuality of woman is established. (Ibid., 144)

From the establishment of the textuality of woman in Derrida, Spivak goes on to demonstrate how the works of French feminists such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray diagnose the textual oppression of women through the suppression of the clitoris (in the traditional object-status of women in literature) as the root of the violent material oppression of women (in Spivak's example of the act of clitoridectomy). French post-structuralist feminism will, then, be central to the analysis that follows in this thesis. The works of Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray will be used to highlight the use of deconstruction and innovative language poetry to challenge gender-based oppression present in the linguistic and social structures underpinning material conditions of womanhood. Cixous and Kristeva's references to motherhood, for example, will be particularly instrumental in the analysis of the link between motherhood and language in chapter one, with an emphasis on their theoretical elaborations of a privileged relationship between maternal bodies and poetic language which provides a productive counterpoint to paternalist structures of authorship. Irigaray's deconstruction of binary subject/object and dominance/submission relationships through grammatical structures will also be used to explore alternative ways of writing relationships, especially in relation to Amaral's poetry.

The link between gender, sex and language is also highlighted in queer theory, such as the works of Judith Butler which build on the deconstruction of gender roles in post-structuralist feminism to challenge socially constructed categories of sexual identity. Butler's subversion of binary gender roles in Gender Trouble will be used to illuminate Branco's subversion of gender and sex binaries associated with the act of writing in chapter one. An engagement with American feminism such as the works of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar and Adrienne Rich will also be used in this study to explore the meaning of women's authorship, especially in chapter one.

Whilst these feminist perspectives will be crucial tools in unveiling structures of oppression in existing representations of love and intimacy as well as in analysing the

ways in which the poets studied in this thesis challenge them, many French and Anglo-American feminist texts have been criticised for their universalising approach. By foregrounding gender difference, Western feminist theory has often neglected to account for the particular experiences of black or non-Western women. In order to account for the diversity of experiences and representations of womanhood present in the poetic corpus of this study, however, this study will approach feminist critique and gender from what Kimberlé Crenshaw refers to as an 'intersectional' approach, namely, taking into consideration other factors that 'intersect' with gender to shape one's experience of being a woman (Crenshaw et al., 2013). As such, this study will also reach out to black feminist thought from North America, such as works by Audre Lorde and Alice Walker, and from Brazil, such as the works of Matilde Ribeiro and Elisa Larkin Nascimento. These works, combined with other political theory and historiography based on black experiences such as the work of Brazilian sociologist Abdias do Nascimento and a wider consideration of the history of slavery, will be key to ensuring that this study avoids a universalising approach. This study will also refer to Chela Sandoval's work in Chicana studies, as Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* provides a particularly useful framework for thinking through postcolonial perspectives on intimacy and love as a form of counterdiscourse.

This overview is by no means exhaustive, as there are a number of other more subject-specific theoretical and historiographical texts called upon in the textual analysis that follows. What this overview intends to highlight, however, is that this thesis takes a dynamic approach to theory, by using and interrogating a wide range of theoretical texts to support the comparative analysis around which this thesis is based. This more flexible use of theory is intended to highlight the 'significant geographies', (to return to Laachir, Orsini and Marzagora's term) of the texts studied here. The varied tools used in the comparative reading of works by Amaral, Branco, Evaristo and Prado will highlight the ideological, cultural, historical, social, and political spaces that the poems reach out to in their poetic representations of relationships and intimacy.

Chapter breakdown

This thesis contains three chapters of comparative textual analysis of the use of relationships in the definition of gendered poetic subjects, followed by a conclusion chapter. The first chapter ‘Maternal Subjects’ deals with representations of motherhood, the second, ‘Mystic Subjects’, addresses the relationship between a mystic subject with a god or gods, and the third chapter ‘Amorous Subjects’ focuses on romantic love.

In Chapter One I will analyse the development of maternal subjects in poetry by Amaral, Evaristo and Branco, considering the connections and divergences between the experience and representations of motherhood in Portugal, Brazil and Angola in order to understand the counter-discursive constructions of motherhood created by the three poets. The first section of this chapter, entitled ‘Mother-daughter relationships’ will focus on the analysis of poems by Evaristo and Amaral and how poetic mothers and daughters are constructed in a way that challenges patriarchal family structures both socially and in relation to literary influence and authorship. This section will highlight the development of alternative and oppositional family narratives that empower women within a familial setting, providing a new paradigm for literary influence. The second section of this chapter, ‘Language and the maternal body’ will consider the use of parenthood as a metaphor for authorship, firstly through Branco’s queering of the childbirth metaphor for artistic creation, secondly, in Amaral’s interrogation of the naming process, and finally in Evaristo’s representations of a corporeal authorship.

Chapter Two will turn to mystic relationships in the poetry of Prado and Evaristo. Comparing representations of Catholic and Candomblé mysticism in poetry, this chapter will assess the use of mysticism as a poetic device used to develop empowered poetic subjects and bodies. The first section, ‘Understanding mystic poetic subjects’, will explore the use of mysticism in defining marginal poetic spaces for social and political critique. This section will highlight the different positions of Catholicism and Candomblé within Brazilian society and will compare the way in which each poet relates to mystic traditions through the poetic form. In the second section of this chapter, ‘Resignifying the Female Body through Mysticism’, I will examine representations of women’s bodies

in Prado and Evaristo's poetic evocations of mysticism. In focusing on corporeal representations in Catholicism and Candomblé, this section will further underline the diverse experiences of womanhood within Brazil determined by race and class.

The final chapter of comparative analysis, Chapter Three, will turn to romantic love to consider Branco and Amaral's complex commentaries on the literary tradition of love poetry. In this chapter, the understanding of romantic love as a textual construction tied to a heteronormative and phallocentric literary canon will be central to understanding the drive to redefine the conventions of poetry dealing with romantic love. In the first section of this chapter, 'Ana Branco: deconstructing love' I will analyse Branco's lengthy and complex poem 'A Última Carta', considering the link between love and literary subjectivity in terms of feminist and postcolonial critique. The second section, 'Ana Luísa Amaral: Rewriting Love', will explore Amaral's reconfiguration of the dynamics of literary subjectivity in relation to romantic love and human connection in the collection *A Génese do Amor*. This chapter, whilst focusing on romantic love in relation to poetic subjectivity, will also allow for a reflection on the meaning of love and human connection, and how these are mediated by power dynamics and gender relations.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will return to some of the questions and challenges raised in this introductory chapter, and to Amaral's poem 'Topografias em quase dicionário' in light of the comparative analysis carried out in Chapters One to Three. The conclusion of this thesis will draw upon the way in which Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo have used relationships and love in its various guises in their work and will consider the wider ramifications of rethinking the way in which humans relate to each other on an intimate level.

Chapter One: Maternal Subjects

The theme of motherhood provides a suitable starting point for this study, due to the centrality of the mother figure to a large number of 'feminisms' – from Anglo-American feminism such as Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* (1986 [1979]), to works by the *New French Feminists*[24] Hélène Cixous (1976 [1975]), Luce Irigaray (1981 [1979]) and Julia Kristeva (1982), and to black feminist thought such as that of Alice Walker (1972) and Audre Lorde (2000). Whilst early feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (2011 [1949]) focused on motherhood as limiting for women within patriarchal society, these later feminists have responded to the social limitations identified by Beauvoir by turning their attention to ways in which motherhood can be used as a tool to undermine the structures within which the mother can only be glorified if she accepts both a subservient and a restricted position within patriarchal society (2011: 195).

Motherhood works well as a springboard for this study because so many women become mothers or experience a relationship with (or as) a mother figure (biological or not) and also because, whether mothers or not, women are commonly affected by discourses on motherhood including, for example, the expectation that all women should aspire to motherhood. From considering these different ways in which individual women can relate to motherhood, it becomes clear that, as well as being a biological process for a large number of women, the symbol of motherhood has become absorbed into social discourse in a way that can essentialize and restrict women, glorifying a process that only women's bodies can perform. This is perhaps best exemplified by the Portuguese *Estado Novo*'s attitude to motherhood, which elevated the role of mothers rhetorically to a matter of public interest, linking the success of the family (through successful and selfless mothering) to the success of the nation-state and the Portuguese empire. Salazar's emphasis on sexual difference in defining gender roles was central to his vision of the nation, to the point that sexual difference was even

[24] While acknowledging the distinction between these theorists, I use Marks' and Courtivron's label from their edited anthology (Marks and Courtivron 1981) to denote a specific, often heavily psychoanalytic and linguistic, approach to gender and sexual difference prevalent amongst French 'feminists' publishing from the 1970s onwards.

incorporated into the constitution, to justify the limitation of women's rights as Portuguese citizens:

> A igualdade perante a lei envolve o direito de ser provido nos cargos públicos, conforme a capacidade ou serviços prestados, e a negação de qualquer privilégio de nascimento, nobreza, título nobiliárquico, sexo, ou condição social, salvas, quanto à mulher, as diferenças resultantes da sua natureza e do bem da família, e, quanto aos encargos ou vantagens dos cidadãos, as impostas pela diversidade das circunstâncias ou pela natureza das cousas. (Assembleia Nacional de Portugal 1933: section 5)

The same exceptionalism that glorifies motherhood, therefore, renders women's equality before the law conditional, affecting both the meaning of motherhood in public discourse, and the material and political experience of womanhood. In this way, women's lives and experiences of womanhood are written and shaped by male-dominated discourse, at the centre of which is the female body. In the above-cited excerpt from the constitution, the phrase 'as diferenças resultantes da sua natureza e do bem da família' introduces a biologically essentialist notion of sexual difference, at the centre of which is maternal duty.

The idea that a patriarchal, masculine voice may define women and write 'the female body' in this way is reflected in psychoanalytic readings of the symbolism of writing. Freud, for example points out that 'writing, which entails making a liquid flow out of a tube onto a piece of white paper, assumes the significance of copulation' (1959: 90) and in *The Psychoanalysis of Children,* Melanie Klein explains that

> In the boy, writing is the expression of his masculine components. His ability to write words and the stroke of the pen with which he forms his letters represent an active performance of coitus, and are proof of his possession of a penis and of sexual potency. Books and exercise-books stand for the genitals or body of his mother or sister. (Klein 1960: 3)

These psychoanalytic readings of the symbolism of writing afford the male body a privileged position in relation to the act of writing, where the pen serves as a

'metaphorical penis' (a term later employed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*) representing male authorship, and the female body takes the role of the blank page to be written upon. This association of sexual organs with the act of writing is also present when the production of major works is compared to the act of giving birth, although, as will be further explored later in this chapter, the relationship between the childbirth metaphor and the gender of the author reveals a more complex connection to societal gender norms. By writing alone, then, the writers addressed in this thesis disrupt male privilege in terms of authorship, but this chapter will focus on the link between motherhood as a particularly subversive theme and structure for women poets.

Julia Kristeva identifies the maternal body as the primary site of our contact with the semiotic. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982 [1980]), Kristeva writes that

> if we suppose that a *mother* is the subject of gestation, […] if we suppose her to be a *master* of a process that is prior to the social-symbolic-linguistic contract of the group, then we acknowledge the risk of losing identity at the same time as we ward it off. We recognize on the one hand that biology jolts us by means of unsymbolized instinctual drives and that this phenomenon eludes social intercourse, the representation of pre-existing objects, and the contract of desire. (Kristeva 1980: 238)

The mother's body is experienced by humans at a point where we do not yet have access to symbolic language as a form of communication, and where our experience of the world is mediated by bodily sensations and impulses. The positioning of the maternal body thus gives motherhood an importance which extends beyond the symbolic scheme within which the male body (the pen and its ink) dominates the female body, resulting in the alienation of women. The idea that the maternal body can be a privileged site for our encounter with the semiotic is reflected in the use of poetry to develop a series of poetic maternal subjects, as we will see throughout this chapter.

Poetry functions on numerous levels, foregrounding sound and rhythm (which govern our experience of the world from the maternal womb), in a way that allows the writer

certain linguistic and syntactical innovation that other literary forms do not. The importance of the semiotic in poetry thus suggests a link to the pre-symbolic site of the maternal body. This is reflected in the way that many have identified in poetry a kind of recuperation of the maternal figure; the mother whose voice has been repressed or limited within patriarchal social structures. Audre Lorde, for example, in her essay 'Poetry Makes Something Happen', identifies the Black Mother as a source of radical change and social development through poetry:

> The white fathers have told us: I think, therefore I am. But the black mother within each of us, the poet within each of us, whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter the implementation of that freedom. (Lorde 2009: 186)

Like Kristeva, Lorde uses the figure of the mother to reassert the importance of feeling, which has often been overlooked in favour of thinking (feeling mediated by the symbolic), when considering language and its use in literature.

The way the maternal combines the linguistic, the poetic, the material and the corporeal, even across the most diverse 'feminisms', highlights its importance in terms of women's experience across a number of different contexts. Whilst Kristeva's approach claims a more universal appeal by making a statement about an anonymous mother, seemingly not defined by race, class, sexuality, or nationality (but which, arguably, can be said to conform to a presumed, false neutral by eliding these differences), Lorde's concept of the mother is specifically positioned within the material suffering and historical oppression of black women. What these two approaches demonstrate, however, is an identification of an element of the maternal within poetic language that has the potential to be subversive.

I will begin, in this chapter, with a comparative analysis of a selection of poetry by Amaral, Evaristo, and Branco. These poets, from Portugal, Brazil, and Angola respectively, each take different points of access into the theme of motherhood in their poetry, influenced by the social and material concerns surrounding motherhood in each national context, and yet there is some consistency in how motherhood repeatedly

emerges as counter-discursive to hegemonic figurations of femininity throughout the Lusophone world, and in each individual nation. First, this chapter will examine Amaral and Evaristo's use of mother-daughter relationships, and how they use poetry to challenge the predominance of patriarchal family structures and create oppositional family narratives. I will then consider the intersection of language and motherhood in the works of Branco, Amaral and Evaristo via the use of the childbirth metaphor for literary creation in Branco's poetry, an interrogation of the process of naming in Amaral's work, and finally in Evaristo's poetic conceptualization of a female corporeal authorship.

Mother-daughter relationships

As is clear in the contrasting perspectives on motherhood from a feminist perspective above, whilst some perceive a counter-discursive potential in the maternal body, the role that motherhood has played in biologically essentialist gender stereotypes has proven a deterrent for many others. Owen and Alonso explain how this difficult relationship to the theme of motherhood, in particular matrilinear genealogy, is reflected in Portuguese women's writing:

> [a]lthough a patrilinear evolutionary model undoubtedly structures national literary history in Portugal almost to this day, in general neither Portuguese women writers nor critics have sought to replace this with a matrilinear feminist counterhistory. This is partly a rejection of maternalist sexual essentialism and its complicity with right-wing and fascist politics, but it is also a consequence of the extreme loss of cultural memory imposed on women. (2011: 206)

Thus, the presence of motherhood in Portuguese right-wing and conservative politics deterred women writers and critics from placing motherhood at the centre of their conceptions of literary heritage, language and form in the way that writers such as Lorde and Kristeva have done. Despite problematic representations of motherhood in Portugal and Brazil, however, both Amaral and Evaristo employ maternal legacy and relationships in their poetry as an effective tool for challenging hegemonic masculine voices that have dominated socio-historical discourses and literary history. Responding to the same tensions identified by Owen and Alonso, however, it becomes clear that the

maternal legacies present in Amaral and Evaristo's poetry do not conform to an expected, linear structure.

Writing from Portugal, Amaral writes against a social and political history of the glorification of motherhood under the *Estado Novo* dictatorship as well as a cultural memory peppered with biologically essentialist descriptions of women, such as in Fernando Pessoa's descriptions of Philippa of Lancaster (D. Felipa de Lencastre) and Teresa de Leão (Dona Teresa/Tareja) as 'Humano ventre do império, | Madrinha de Portugal' and 'mãe de reis e avó de impérios' respectively (Pessoa 2006: 26, 22). [25] Such an emphasis on conservative family values and sexual difference, played out through traditionally gendered binaries such as 'public/private', 'nature/culture', and 'mind/body', has severely limited representations of maternal figures and led to the continued social expectation that women fulfil outdated gendered roles. Amaral's poetry seeks to dismantle this association of motherhood with right-wing politics and traditional conservative values in a way that reflects the empowerment of relationships between women.

Rather than avoiding motherhood as a theme, Amaral uses the poetic form to tackle existing models of motherhood, using poetry as a site within which she has the freedom to re-name and re-define maternal identity, and re-configure the mother-daughter relationship in her own terms. This approach allows her to expand considerations of the definition of motherhood into an exploration of female genealogy and artistic influence. The poems 'Testamento' and 'Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha' are examples Amaral's use of mother-daughter relationships to develop counter-discursive paradigms of motherhood from which to assert positive notions of female genealogy and maternal legacy that do not rely upon notions of essential femininity.

In 'Testamento', the poetic subject muses over the influence that she hopes to have had on her daughter – an influence that deviates from *estadonovista* concepts of maternity,

[25] Amaral's poem 'Reais Ausências' from the collection *Coisas de Partir* [1993] (Inversos: 108-9) deals with the cultural memory of historical women and 'A Cerimónia' from *Vozes* (2011: 108-11) is written from the perspective of Philippa of Lancaster.

maternal sacrifice and domestic motherhood. The poem focuses on remembrance and legacy, as it dwells upon what the daughter may take from the mother (the poetic subject), conveying a strong sense of pride that this legacy does not conform to traditional images of a perfect, domestic, wife and mother.

Vou partir de avião
e o medo das alturas misturado comigo
faz-me tomar calmantes
e ter sonhos confusos

Se eu morrer
quero que a minha filha não se esqueça de mim
que alguém lhe cante mesmo com voz desafinada
e que lhe ofereçam fantasia
mais que um horário certo
ou uma cama bem feita

Dêem-lhe amor e ver
dentro das coisas
sonhar com sóis azuis e céus brilhantes
em vez de lhe ensinarem contas de somar
e a descascar batatas

Preparem a minha filha
para a vida
se eu morrer de avião
e ficar despegada do meu corpo
e for átomo livre lá no céu

Que se lembre de mim
a minha filha
e mais tarde que diga à sua filha
que eu voei lá no céu
e fui contentamento deslumbrado

ao ver na sua casa as contas de somar erradas

e as batatas no saco esquecidas

e íntegras

(Amaral 2010: 46)[26]

The title 'Testamento' directly evokes notions of inheritance and legacy and sets the poem up as a poetic testament, will or agreement which usually refers to the division of belongings upon a person's death – historically associated, above all, with men passing property to their sons. The word also suggests a more religious agreement or statement of beliefs such as the Christian Old Testament and New Testament (*Velho Testamento e Novo Testamento*). Referring to binding legal or religious testaments in this way to introduce a poem about a mother-daughter relationship subverts what Luce Irigaray has termed the 'ho(m)mo-sexual monopoly' of Western culture – whereby 'The production of women, signs, and commodities is always referred back to men […] and they always pass from one man to another' (1985: 171). The poem describes, as in a legal testament, what the poetic mother wishes to bequeath to her daughter but subverts this format by replacing objects with memories such as that of singing out of tune ('que a minha filha não se esqueça de mim | que alguém lhe cante mesmo com voz desafinada'), intangible concepts such as dreams and ambition ('que lhe ofereçam fantasia', 'amor e ver | dentro das coisas | sonhar com sóis azuis e céus brilhantes') and the choice to not pass on more domestic, stereotypically feminine attributes ('em vez de lhe ensinarem contas de somar | e a descascar batatas').

Amaral turns the tradition of male privilege in relation to legacy and inheritance (represented by the 'testament', which shares a Latin root with 'testes') on its head by replacing the father-son, male-to-male relationship with a mother-daughter, female-to-female relationship, replacing objects with abstract and negative concepts of actions not completed, and traditions not repeated. Dominions that have traditionally been classed as paternal or masculine (either by male presence or by the masculine or patriarchal power to designate space) are inverted to become sites of resistance to traditional

[26] This poem is quoted from *Inversos: Poesia, 1990-2010*, the first edition, published by Publicações Dom Quixote in 2010, henceforth referenced as 'Inversos'.

representations of motherhood, and for an alternative maternity. The irregular form of the poem suggests a poetics that evades pre-set structures or forms, with a refusal of regular stanza lengths, which ties in with the refusal of traditional models of mother-daughter relationships. The text remains intensely poetic, with sonorous harmony built into the language through assonance (particularly of 'a' sounds) and sibilance that together create a softness of sound, evoking affection consistent with the love of the poem's mother-daughter relationship.

Amaral, therefore, uses female-to-female relationships (characterized by the mother-daughter bond) to subvert social patriarchal dominance both in terms of 'ho(m)mo-sexual' structures and also in terms of the tradition of female-to-female relationships supportive of patriarchal dominance. Often this kind of relationship and female legacy is expressed through collective wisdom or *saber popular*, as it is referred to in Portugal. As in many other countries, Portuguese *saber popular* is characterized by proverbs, practical tips, superstitions and anecdotes, passed between women and often situated within a domestic setting. The knowledge transferred between mothers and daughters through *saber popular* usually reinforces traditional gender roles that place women in a subordinate position to men. These are the kinds of situations in which the role of mother is glorified, particularly in conservative family politics such as those promoted by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* and the Catholic Church, and that ultimately reinforce patriarchal dominance by limiting women's actions and the spaces within which they move. In *Gender and Nation,* Nira Yuval-Davis explains how relationships between women can serve to maintain patriarchal order in nationalist societies:

> very often it is women, especially older women, who are given the roles of the cultural reproducers of 'the nation' and are empowered to rule on what is 'appropriate' behaviour and appearance and what is not and to exert control over other women who might be constructed as 'deviants'. As very often this is the main source of social power allowed to women, they might become fully engaged in it. (Yuval-Davis 1997: 37)

A large part of this is an expectation and acceptance of maternal suffering embodied in the figure of the sacrificial mother, evident in sayings such as ‘dor ensina a parir’ and ‘o que é duro de passar é doce de lembrar’. Sayings such as these, and the expectation for women to bear children (‘Mal casada é a mulher que não pare’), ensure that suffering and disempowerment implied in the acceptance of suffering are considered the norm, thus neutralizing, to a certain extent, power perceived in the glorification of the maternal role.

In ‘Testamento’, Amaral refuses the suffering of the sacrificial mother by instead showing pride in the sacrifice of domestic duties in favour of personal development. In the second stanza, for example, Amaral writes that she wants ‘que lhe ofereçam fantasia | mais que um horário certo | ou uma cama bem feita’, specifically choosing something abstract, in the shape of dreams, which by their nature exceed material domestic concerns and the physical domestic space. This is repeated in the third stanza when the poetic subject wants to pass on to her daughter the ability to ‘sonhar com sóis azuis e céus brilhantes | em vez de lhe ensinarem contas de somar | e a descascar batatas’. In this stanza, not only do the dreams she wishes for her daughter exceed the domestic setting, but with ‘sóis azuis’ they exceed the material realm entirely, dismissing the physicality of the gestures of domesticity repeated and learned by generations of women whose positions uphold society’s patriarchal dominance.

As Maria Piteira explains, women’s identities, physical movements and gestures as mothers could be informed and regulated by the forms of *saber popular* mentioned above:

> [c]ruzam-se as suas experiências com as das outras mulheres, nomeadamente, a da sua mãe, num ‘saber fazer’, que lhes foi transmitido, gestos que se repetem numa circularidade que se fecha […] A repetição e valorização do saber maternal transmitido, pode ser entendido como uma validação dos gestos adequados à situação de dar à luz. A utilização do corpo não é um ato espontâneo ou natural, é antes uma consequência da socialização, na medida em que é imposto pela educação, o indivíduo começa por imitar o adulto responsável a quem reconhece

> a autoridade, e, posteriormente, adota a postura por ser aceite e prestigiante. (Piteira 2012: 119)

The intensity of the impulse to motherhood, suffering, and endurance extend beyond rhetoric and sayings to become repeated physical gestures, transcending language to become embodied actions repeated by each new generation. Amaral, however, removes the physicality of repeated gestures in her poetic testament, replacing them with the repetition of the negative – of not making the bed, of not peeling potatoes.

The domestic setting, therefore, which has historically been the privileged site of women's relationships, is central to the kind of maternal legacy that has reinforced patriarchal social structures. Amaral's approach to the domestic setting in this poem, however, is not to reject it, but to use a setting which is already marked as a feminine domain to build a new set of references around it that can be empowering. This enables Amaral to enter into a direct contradiction of traditional discourses on mother-daughter relationships such as those transferred via *saber popular*. Throughout the poem Amaral develops a process of transforming accepted paradigms of domestic space in relation to women's relationships from a symbolic site of oppression to a site of empowerment. Amaral achieves this in the physical description of a home in which the domestic duties come second to the mother's personal desires and accomplishments, and the example she wishes to be for her daughter in this respect. Images such as an unmade bed, and 'as batatas no saco esquecidas e íntegras' create a new meaning for the domestic setting, and a new kind of legacy or education passing from mother to daughter. Thus, the neglect of household chores is an expression of a hope that women in the future (epitomized by the poetic daughter) will be able to pursue their goals without feeling bound to domesticity. The drive for ambition is represented in terms such as 'fantasias' and 'sonhar com sóis azuis e céus brilhantes', which point towards unlimited potential expressing a feminist vision of equal opportunities. The domestic setting, however, is not the location of the speaking subject of the poem. The subject evokes the space of the home and considers her maternal role from her position in an aeroplane, reflecting the subject's mobility outside the private domain within which the maternal figure and *saber popular* are generally situated. The subject's position reflects the changing role

of women in modern Portugal and positions the relationship between a mother and her daughter outside the home in the context of the life of a successful working woman.

This drive towards ambition not only counteracts the image of the perfect housewife or a contemporary working woman who shoulders the double burden of professional and domestic duties, but also calls into question the limited types of 'feminine' knowledge expected to be transferred between women (such as strategies for enduring pain) that are more frequently associated with the body than the mind. The corporeal knowledge and gestures repeated and transmitted via the mother-daughter relationship are nowhere to be seen in Amaral's testament to the daughter. Instead the knowledge and ambition are expressed through language removed from the body, as the lyrical mother of the poem imagines herself dying on a plane and is physically separated from her material corporeality becoming an 'átomo livre lá no céu'. The knowledge bears no mention of the corporeal and is in fact in direct opposition to the practical knowledge of housekeeping ('Dêem-lhe amor e ver | dentro das coisas | sonhar com sóis azuis e céus brilhantes | em vez de lhe ensinarem contas de somar | e a descascar batatas'). The dynamic of the sacrificial mother is inverted as the mother's legacy switches from teaching the daughter to constantly look outside herself, devoting herself to the domestic space and sacrificing her needs for the wants of others, to learning to look inwards ('ver | dentro das coisas'), understanding her own desires and leaving the potatoes unpeeled.

In this poem the hypothetical notion of death appears to be liberating for the poetic subject. The prospect of dying is portrayed as an eventuality that would free the subject from the material concerns of corporeal existence, and separate the subject physically from the domestic space. Nevertheless, the empowering prospect of maternal legacy allows the subject to live on, continuing in a more abstracted consciousness through the testament hypothetically enacted by the remaining daughter. It is this notion of a rebellious, resistant legacy especially that becomes the source of hope and empowerment for the poetic subject.

The poem ‘Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha’ continues in this vein of seeking a form of legacy between mothers and daughters (and, indeed, between women) which runs counter-discursively to patriarchal forms of legacy. This time, however, Amaral finds in the mother-daughter relationship a potential to unpick the Bloomian concept of Oedipal literary heritage. This poem, with a deceptively playful tone, seems to infiltrate literary tradition and artistic canon, and subvert these traditions by altering the paradigms according to which artistic legacy is developed over time. The lyric subject of this poem is a mother, and yet what it means to be a mother seems to be in a constant state of flux throughout the poem. The lines between real mother, poetic mother, and representational mother become blurred to an extent that the linearity and binarity of legacy itself can be questioned, as well as the seemingly rigid authority of phallocentric literary tradition and in particular Harold Bloom’s Oedipal configuration in which poets are ‘fathers’ or ‘sons’, ‘as mighty opposites’ (1973: 11).

In this poem, the mother-poet finds inspiration in Jorge de Sena’s poem ‘Carta a meus filhos sobre os fuzilamentos de Goya’ to write a poetic letter to her daughter. Sena’s poem is a response to Francisco de Goya’s painting *The Third of May 1808,* which in turn inspired him to write a poetic letter to his children on the meaning of human rights and one’s responsibility as a human being. However, as the title ‘Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha’ suggests, Amaral’s poem strays from this male, artistic lineage, instead placing larger emphasis on a legacy of women, rooted in the act of writing a poetic letter to her daughter. In doing so, ‘Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha’ repeatedly refers back to the lyric subject’s dismissal of paternalist artistic heritage engendered by Sena’s poetic evocation of Goya.

The beginning of the poem, for example, toys with the associations of Sena’s poem that are brought to the foreground by the title of the poem by replacing Sena’s grandiose ruminations on human rights and responsibilities with the philosophical musings of a young girl in conversation with her mother (the lyric subject):

> Lembras-te de dizer que a vida era uma fila?
>
> Eras pequena e o cabelo mais claro,

> mas os olhos iguais. Na metáfora dada
> pela infância, perguntavas do espanto
> da morte e do nascer, e de quem se seguia
> e porque se seguia ou da total ausência
> de razão nessa cadeia em sonho de novelo.
> […]
> (Inversos: 357)

Here, the questions posed are similar to those posed by Sena's poem, pondering the meaning of life, death and legacy, only in this case the questions are projected into the voice of a young girl. This playfully undercuts the serious tone of Sena's philosophical legacy. Sena's poem begins as follows:

> Não sei, meus filhos, que mundo será o vosso.
> É possível, porque tudo é possível, que ele seja
> aquele que eu desejo para vós. Um simples mundo,
> onde tudo tenha apenas a dificuldade que advém
> de nada haver que não seja simples e natural.
> […]
> (Sena 1988: 125)

There is also a noticeable difference in the dynamics of these two evocations of future generations. Sena's evocation of his children takes place distinctly in the voice, and from the perspective of, the paternal lyric subject. He also succinctly separates his world, from the world of his progeny – the world, for Sena, is something that his children will inherit from him upon his death. This structure is linear but also granular in that the offspring may only inherit the world from their father upon the father's demise. It also recalls the Freudian Oedipal family drama to which Harold Bloom likened his reading of poetic influence in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973). Whilst the presence of false gender neutrals in Portuguese does not make it clear whether Sena's subject addresses sons or a combination of sons and daughters (although the poet had both), the position of the poetic subject (and author) as the metaphorical son of an artistic forefather (Goya), places the subject and his offspring into a line of influence that

mirrors Harold Bloom's Oedipal configuration of literary influence. This placement encourages a reading of a world, and a language of artistic expression, handed down ('que nos é cedida' (Sena 1988: 126)) from one male genius (or generation of men) to another.

The conversation that takes place in Sena's poem is one-sided; Sena's voice can only be replaced by those of his children when he relinquishes his own literary voice. The world of the mother-daughter relationship, however, is a shared one, as opposed to the single paternity and ownership of a world offered by Sena ('que mundo será vosso'), revealing two different economies – a paternal economy of scarcity, and a maternal economy of plenitude. This is made clear through the inclusion of the daughter's voice into that of the lyric subject, incorporating a conversational element by directly invoking the words of the imagined daughter: 'Lembras-te de dizer que a vida era uma fila?', 'perguntavas do espanto | da morte e do nascer'. Amaral also breaks the linearity of the kind of legacy described by Sena by referring to elements passed from the daughter to the mother, especially the metaphor of life as a line or skein of yarn around which the poem is constructed. Whereas the words of Sena's poem are unilateral, in that they are written from the father to the offspring, Amaral's words are the words of the imagined daughter, reformulated into poetry. This dynamic is repeated at the end of the poem, as the daughter passes the mother a bulb, another metaphor for life and legacy: 'Mas também esse bolbo que me deste, | e que agora floriu, passado um ano.'

The metaphor of the skein of yarn which is added to the daughter's original metaphor of life being like a line or queue, is an important motif from the perspective of literary lineage as it can be read as evoking an existing counter-discursive tradition of women's writing in Portugal. The skein of yarn, traditionally a symbol of femininity in courtly troubadour poetry such as the *cantigas de amigo,* is taken up by Horta in *Minha Senhora de Mim* (1967) in poems such as 'Segredo', where it is recast in an erotic setting, wielded by strong, feminine, poetic subjects written into positions of sexual dominance (Horta 2009: 342-343). Furthermore, embroidery or weaving has been cast as a specifically feminine form of subversive voice in Greek mythology through figures such

as Penelope who uses the pretext of weaving a burial shroud for Odysseus' father to delay potential suitors as she awaits her lover's return, and Philomela who, after having her tongue removed, uses embroidery to reveal Tereus's deceit. Amaral's poem, then, picks up and insinuates itself into firstly a tradition of feminine subversion, and secondly into a tradition of feminist revision.

The skein of yarn also presents as a visual distortion of linearity, as something that was once linear but which has been twisted and contorted into a different form. One could read the *novelo,* therefore, as an allegory for Amaral's own approach to the concept of legacy, as she twists and contorts traditional notions of inheritance, such as those evoked by Sena, into a form of legacy that exists in a different paradigm against the legacy that she places her poem into via multiple intertextual references. This dynamic is supported by the recounted conversation as the daughter's voice declares a lack of reason in the accepted linearity of life and death: 'da total ausência | de razão nessa cadeia em sonho de novelo.' This is also reminiscent of the relationship at the centre of 'Testamento', as the mother's legacy and voice transcended the limits of life and death to co-exist with the daughter as part of the daughter's surroundings – as an atom in the atmosphere and in the symbolically neglected domestic setting.

The poet's sense of humour, however, is much more pronounced in 'Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha'. Aside from replacing Sena's philosophical considerations with those of a young girl, Amaral uses a similar technique in the third stanza, incorporating the voices of a literary heritage of women:

> […]
> Num estilo que gostava, esse de um homem
> que um dia lembrou Goya numa carta a seus
> filhos, queria dizer-te que a vida é também
> isto: uma espingarda às vezes carregada
> (como dizia uma mulher sozinha, mas grande
> de jardim). Mostrar-te leite creme, deixar-te
> testamentos, falar-te de tigelas – é sempre
> olhar-te amor. Mas é também desordenar-te à

vida, entrincheirar-te, e a mim, em fila descontínua

de mentiras, em carinho de verso.

[…]

(Ibid.)

This stanza begins by introducing more directly the intertextual relationship with Sena's poem but, in a playful twist, Amaral replaces the voice of the male poet who wrote a poetic letter to his children with the voice of 'uma mulher sozinha, mas grande de jardim'. This is the voice of Emily Dickinson, a poet who was (more during her lifetime than today) well-known as a talented gardener and botanist; another form of artistic expression which frequently seeps into her poetic production. Dickinson's voice is carried through in the line 'uma espingarda às vezes carregada', a reference to the poem 'My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun'.[27] The placement of Dickinson here toys with the reader's expectations of the literary genealogy to be cited and denies the male literary voice an outlet. Furthermore, the phrase 'esse de um homem' has the effect of leaving Sena an anonymous, male author, denying the male poet authority within Amaral's poem, and reflecting the treatment of women writers as a genre or literary movement defined only by the gender of the writer.[28] Once more, then, Amaral dismantles the literary lineage represented by Goya and Sena as she places herself into contact with it, all the while developing an alternative voice of (literary and filial) legacy through the women and girls represented in her poem that is plural and multilateral.

This multilateral web of influence is further complexified as Amaral evokes her own voice as a poet-mother (or mother-poet) within this female genealogy, by citing her other 'mother-daughter poems', 'Testamento', 'Leite-creme' and 'A verdade histórica' ('Mostrar-te leite creme, deixar-te | testamentos, falar-te de tigelas'). Intertextuality does not, however, diminish the affective nature of the mother-daughter bond, as the conversational tone and use of the informal direct form of address in 'mostrar-te',

[27] Amaral is an expert in Anglo-American literature and completed a PhD on Dickinson entitled 'Emily Dickinson: Uma Poética de Excesso' (1995). She has also published two books of translations of Dickinson's poetry (2010) (2014).
[28] See Edfeldt's *Uma história na História* (2006).

‘deixar-te’, ‘falar-te’ maintains a sense of intimacy. The mothers and daughters of Amaral’s poem, therefore, occupy several different levels. There are the speaking figures of the mother and daughter in conversation; the foremothers and daughters of literary lineage; the mothers and daughters represented in the poems; and the mothers and daughters that exist outside of the poem serving as inspiration for the poetic mothers and daughters.

These many facets of both mother-daughter relationships and of subjectivity and voice create a kind of poetic-subject-in-flux, and a permeable subjectivity that allows for multiple voices to be heard, and for multiple voices and identities to belong to one subject. The poem’s evocation of multiple voices (as opposed to Sena’s single voice) creates a dynamic of continued dialogue with mothers, daughters, other writers, readers of other writers, and future generations of mothers, daughters, readers and writers, as the lines and queues (to use the daughter’s metaphor) are gathered into a skein of yarn. The reader of the poem, too, is incorporated into the poem, as their relationship to existing discourses on motherhood is central to the games of a lyric subject that consistently thwarts expectations – leading the reader to expect one thing, only to deliver something else. The linearity of the daughter’s metaphor is just one example of this, as the poem reveals a much more complex web of relations than the simplicity of a line could ever accommodate. The mother’s duty, as perceived by the poetic mother-subject, is to reveal to the daughter the complexities of life, relationships and genealogy, to ‘desordenar-te à | vida, entrincheirar-te, e a mim, em fila discontínua | de mentiras, em carinho de verso.’

The multiple subjectivity in this poem provides a platform for innovation made possible by the complexity of the lyric subject’s positioning, formed through a dynamic of inclusion rather than opposition (of a subject to an object, for example). In a similar way to Kristeva’s conception of the *sujet en procès,* this form of writing constitutes a fundamental challenge to the traditional conception of a text as an object with a stable, unitary subject. Kristeva’s *sujet en procès* [the subject in process/on trial] dramatizes the scene of the subject and the process of subject-formation, with the tension between

the semiotic and the symbolic (as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) providing part of this action. This is identifiable in ‘Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha’, as genealogy and mother-daughter relationships provide tools and dynamics through which to explore the formation of the poetic subject. Mothers and daughters become the protagonists in the *procès* [trial] and at the same time, the *procès* [process] of their formation becomes the drama of the poem and the means through which to slip inside the construction of language itself and enter into projects of linguistic innovation and renaming. Kristeva writes that ‘[t]he process dissolves the linguistic sign and its system (word, syntax), dissolves, that is, even the earliest and most solid guarantee of the unitary subject’ (1998: 134).

The bond between the mother and daughter, and the force behind the sharing of subjective space that challenges the unitary subject in Amaral’s poem is love. Whilst this love is present throughout the poem, it becomes especially clear in the penultimate stanza of the poem:

> […]
> Não sei que te dirão num futuro mais perto,
> se quem assim habita os espaços das vidas
> tem olhos de gigante ou chifres monstruosos.
> Porque te amo, queria-te um antídoto
> igual a elixir, que te fizesse grande
> de repente, voando, como fada, sobre a fila.
> Mas por te amar, não posso fazer isso,
> e nesta noite quente a rasgar junho,
> quero dizer-te da fila e do novelo
> e das formas de amar todas diversas,
> mas feitas de pequenos sons de espanto,
> se o justo e o humano aí se abraçam.
> […]
> (Inversos: 358)

The legacy with which the mother-subject wishes to provide her daughter is a new network of love, an alternative understanding of the world as constructed through the meaning of love. This reconfiguration of love through multiple networks of women, ties in with the process of subject-formation in the poem, as Amaral links the plurality of love with the metaphors of the line and the skein that provided a platform for the development of subjects earlier in the poem. This development of the poem as a privileged site for the *sujet en procès*, allows for linguistic and semantic innovation, which, in this poem, is revealed in the re-naming process:

> […]
> E o que queria dizer-te é dos nexos da vida,
> de quem a habita para além do ar.
> E que o respeito inteiro e infinito
> não precisa de vir depois do amor.
> Nem antes. Que as filas só são úteis
> como formas de olhar, maneiras de ordenar
> o nosso espanto, mas que é possível pontos
> paralelos, espelhos e não janelas.
>
> E que tudo está bem e é bom: fila ou
> novelo, duas cabeças tais num corpo só,
> ou um dragão sem fogo, ou unicórnio
> ameaçando chamas muito vivas.
> Como o cabelo claro que tinhas nessa altura
> se transformou castanho, ainda claro,
> e a metáfora feita pela infância
> se revelou tão boa no poema. Se revela
> tão útil para falar da vida, essa que,
> sem tigelas, intactas ou partidas, continua
> a ser boa, mesmo que em dissonância de novelo.
> […]
> (Inversos: 357)

Here Amaral is writing of a new way not only of expressing life, but also of experiencing it. The linguistic process of renaming – where a dragon can be without fire whilst a unicorn threatens to burn us (‘um dragão sem fogo, ou unicórnio | ameaçando chamas muito vivas’) – transcends the limits of the poem and becomes the source of revolt. The ‘dissonância de novelo’ imbues the innovations in language and subject-formation with a sense of resistance and revolution. The metaphor of a line becoming a skein becomes not only an alternative to patriarchal concepts of legacy, but also a ‘counter-legacy’ tied in with a much more complex and inclusive understanding of subjectivity than a rigid, discrete subject can ever viably offer.

The final stanza of ‘Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha’ ends the poem on a note of optimism for the continuity of this new metaphor for life and literature:

> […]
> A vida, minha filha, pode ser
> de metáfora outra: uma língua de fogo;
> uma camisa branca da cor do pesadelo.
> Mas também esse bolbo que me deste,
> e que agora floriu, passado um ano.
> Porque houve terra, alguma água leve,
> e uma varanda a libertar-lhe os passos.
> (Ibid.)

The image of the bulb flourishing, and the use of ‘pode ser’ to evoke potentiality rather than finality, gives the impression of a legacy and project to be continued, finding echoes in Dickinson’s gardening. Amaral uses the phrase ‘uma língua de fogo’ to describe the metaphor, which is still in progress, and will be continued because of the multiple and fluid nature of Amaral’s understanding of legacy and subjectivity. This line recalls the biblical tongues of fire which, filled with the Holy Spirit, gave the ability to speak multiple languages to the apostles. This reinforces the relationship between power and language so that life, given to the daughter by the mother (and through the metaphor of the bulb, also given to the mother by the daughter) can be defined by empowerment through language, and especially through the ability to adapt and wield language as it has been

in the poem. Throughout this poem a complex web of subjectivity is developed through the mother-daughter relationship and the love that provides its drive and glue. This has allowed Amaral to subvert the stability of both the unitary subject and literary text, whilst developing a heritage of women subjects that become an 'antídoto | igual a elixir' to the alienation of women in patriarchal concepts of authorship.

'Testamento' and 'Um pouco só de Goya: Carta a minha filha', therefore, use the mother-daughter relationships as an entry point into in-depth considerations of life, death and legacy. The mother-daughter relationship is developed in each case as a site for female empowerment, innovation and as the basis for a new paradigm for understanding the role of the mother and the way in which gendered protagonists can, and do, interact. Interestingly, we will now see a similar insistence on legacy and linguistic heritage in the poetry of Evaristo, only to greatly different effect.

Unlike Amaral, Evaristo focuses on the inequalities that appear at the intersection of race and gender in Brazilian society, stemming from the history of slavery. The historical structures of race and gender oppression in Brazilian slave society (as explored in the discussion of Freyre's *Casa-grande e Senzala* in the introduction) are still present in the racial distribution of women currently employed as domestic workers. According to the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografía e Estatística* (IBGE), in 2010 19.8% of 'Mulheres, Preta ou Parda' listed their employment as 'Empregado doméstico', compared to only 11.1% of white women. Evaristo herself, as well as some female family members, experienced domestic work from a young age, and we will see in her poem 'Vozes-mulheres' that Evaristo draws a link between slavery and the domestic help trade in Brazil.

Evaristo's poetry highlights the link between the structural and textual ramifications of understanding race as a social construct, and the systemic racism in Brazilian society as experienced through material suffering and exclusion. At the centre of Evaristo's representations of the intersectional experience of race and gender in Brazil is an insistence on the presence of black voices tied to the material suffering of women in particular socio-economic situations, such as slavery or domestic work. Evaristo's poetry responds to the consistent silencing of black women's voices in Brazilian society,

where women have been spoken for by the white male hegemony of politics and literature, and by 'feminisms' that often fail to take into account the double oppression of race and gender when they speak for 'Brazilian women'. Evaristo's response is to focus on revealing the voices of black women and accounting for their experiences of life in Brazil in a style of writing that she coins '*escre(vivência)':*

> Assenhoreando-se 'da pena', objeto representativo do poder falo-cêntrico branco, as escritoras negras buscam inscrever no corpus literário brasileiro imagens de uma auto-representação. Surge a fala de um corpo que não é apenas *descrito*, mas antes de tudo *vivido.* A *escre(vivência)* das mulheres negras explicita as aventuras e as desventuras de quem conhece uma dupla condição, que a sociedade teima em querer inferiorizada, mulher e negra. (Evaristo 2005: 205)

For Evaristo, matrilineal ancestry holds the key to expressing the experience of contemporary black women and uncovering the experiences of past black Brazilian women, whose creative subversions have often gone unnoticed outside their relationships with other black women:

> Assim como a centelha da criação das mais velhas se propagou anônima e oralmente até as mais novas, e nas condições de vida das mães e das avós pode se encontrar a gênese da arte literária das mulheres negras americanas da contemporaneidade, outras heranças foram conservadas no interior do grupo. Táticas de sobrevivência foram também ensinadas e aprendidas na teia familiar de todos os povos da diáspora africana. (Ibid., *207*)

It is this matrilineal legacy that Evaristo evokes in her poem 'Vozes-mulheres', which contains a sentiment of resistance and survival passed down through generations of women. In doing so, Evaristo ensures a literary representation for the maternal black women who were denied their own voices in narratives such as those created by Freyre within which, as was pointed out in the introductory chapter, the black mother is present only insofar as she serves the white family and, symbolically, Brazilian national identity. In Evaristo's poetry, black mothers are represented through their own voices, at the same time as black daughters (many of whom are also mothers) gain the force of a heritage of strong Afro-Brazilian women behind them. In 'Vozes-mulheres', the voices

of past mothers and grandmothers are accumulated into the voice of a present-day daughter figure:

A voz de minha bisavó ecoou criança
nos porões do navio.
Ecoou lamentos
de uma infância perdida.

A voz de minha avó
ecoou obediência
aos brancos-donos de tudo.

A voz de minha mãe
ecoou baixinho revolta
no fundo das cozinhas alheias
debaixo das trouxas
roupagens sujas dos brancos
pelo caminho empoeirado
rumo à favela.

A minha voz ainda
ecoa versos perplexes
com rimas de sangue
e
fome.
A voz de minha filha
recorre todas as nossas vozes
recolhe em si
as vozes mudas caladas
engasgadas nas gargantas.

A voz de minha filha
recolhe em si
a fala e o ato.
O ontem – o hoje – o agora.

> Na voz de minha filha
> se fará ouvir a resonância
> O eco da vida-liberdade.
> (Evaristo 2017: 24-25)[29]

The voice of the poem builds throughout the generations which structure the stanzas of the poem, as the voice of each 'voz-mulher' is introduced until the final daughter carries the force and creative output of all the women who came before her. This echoes the writings of the black American feminists Audre Lorde and Alice Walker, who both identify a resistant creativity passed down by the black mother figure. In the earlier cited extract from 'Poetry Makes things Happen', Audre Lorde wrote that the 'black mother within each of us, the poet within each of us, whispers in our dreams' (Lorde 2009: 186). Alice Walker wrote a pivotal essay entitled 'In Search of our Mothers' Gardens' in which she charts creative legacy through the stifled voices of black mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers:

> And yet, it is to my mother – and all our mothers who were not famous – that I went in search of the secret of what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the black woman has inherited, and that pops out in wild and unlikely places to this day. […] Yet so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realize this: that through the years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories – like her life – must be recorded. (Walker 1994: 406-407)

So, for Evaristo, like for Lorde and Walker, it is important that the voices of black mothers be given space in literature as their stories have been told only between mothers and daughters in the private realm. Whilst Evaristo's representations of black mothers are, in 'Vozes-mulheres' and a number of her other poems, plural, it is relatively common, as in the extract by Lorde above, to see a singular 'black mother' evoked by black

[29] This quotation is taken from the third edition of Evaristo's *Poemas da Recordação e outros Movimentos,* published by Editora Malê in 2017, henceforth referenced as 'Recordação'.

women writers. The evocation of a single black maternal figure may appear reductive, but in the context of the oppression of black women (especially through the pseudo-maternal positioning of the black slave woman in both Brazil and the United States) an imagined black mother figure can be used strategically as an inspirational figure. As Evaristo explains, the 'mulher-mãe' is a 'perfil desenhado para as mulheres brancas em geral' (2005: 202) which means that even a symbolic representation of mothers that is frequently read as damaging by white feminists can be viewed as a position of privilege and claimed as a representation of group-identity, Although black motherhood is experienced in many forms. By including the voices of multiple black mothers in this poem, though, Evaristo creates a literary space for the maternal black voice, resituating an empowering relationship and oral tradition between women from the private into the public sphere of literature.

The poem is arranged so that one can see on the page the bonds through which the voices are channelled. Even as the form of the poem appears linear, each woman is separate and yet visually linked by the positioning of the words 'sangue | e | fome', visually evoking a downwards movement of the language on the page from the female ancestors to the present-day poetic subject and the subject's daughter. The combination of the words 'sangue' and 'fome' to make this visual line through the poem shows that it is not just the filial relationship which ties these women together, but also the drive and the hunger which each mother gives to the next generation of women to empower them through their stories, creativity and resistance.

The generational ties and the accumulation of voices are also demonstrated by the repetition of 'A voz de…' throughout the poem, indicating a series of individual voices that echo (a term also repeated through the poem) together. The way that the voices build up as the poem progresses creates a feeling of suspense and imminence as though the voices were gathering until they could no longer be contained. This accumulation, therefore, creates a particularly militant tone compared to the more quietly subversive revolt of Amaral's poetry. The voice that will emerge, carried by the younger generations of young Brazilian women, will contain the force of each generation

of black Brazilian women since the arrival of the first on a slave-ship. As is underlined in the final lines, the voice will not be the single voice of the poetic daughter but will contain the 'ressonância | O eco da vida-liberdade'.

The use of the words 'vida' and 'liberdade' re-iterate the emphasis on *escre(vivência)*. As Evaristo explains, this form reflects the impulse for black writers to tell the stories of their mothers and grandmothers, just as her poem excavates their silenced voices:

> Essas escritoras buscam na história mal-contada pelas linhas oficiais, na literatura mutiladora da cultura e dos corpos negros, assim como em outros discursos sociais elementos para comporem as suas escritas. Debruçam-se sobre as tradições afro-brasileiras, relembram e bem relembram as histórias de dispersão que os mares contam, se postam atentas diante da miséria e da riqueza que o cotidiano oferece, assim como escrevem às suas dores e alegrias íntimas. (Evaristo 2005: 206)

The voice of the daughter in the poem carries the lived resistance of each individual maternal ancestor. The insistence on the voice and actions of generations of black women since their arrival in Brazil reflects the drive in Brazilian historiography to account for the experiences and agency of slave women, which have long been neglected in the study of slave society outside of the Freyrean lusotropical romance. Much of this more recent body of work is devoted to recovering stories and identifying the subversive acts of slave women, such as Jane-Marie Collins's examination of the murders committed by two slaves Faustina and Benta (1999) and the custody battle undertaken by freedwoman Margarida de Medeiros (2013), and collections such as 'Caetana says no: women's stories from a Brazilian slave society' (Lauderdale Graham 2002). The emphasis on identifying subversive agency and excavating the voices of black women in Brazilian slave society is reflected in Evaristo's poem which features a series of subversive acts and words that appear in spaces that lie in the domain of the 'brancos-donos de tudo'. The great-grandmother, for example '[e]coou lamentos | de uma infância perdida', which brings to mind the songs, tales and cultural practices brought by slaves from their homelands in Africa, repeated as a form of cultural resistance to

the repression of African cultures and identity under Brazilian slave society.[30] Evaristo situates this repetition of African cultural forms, and the voice of these forms, in the 'porões do navio', positioned between Africa and Latin America. The slave ship has become a symbol of the utmost violence and oppression of slavery, so Evaristo's positioning of the echoes of African culture within this space suggests an act of cultural resistance and subversion rather than passivity, painting a more complex, human picture of the displaced population of Africans brought to Brazil. The echoes of African cultural identity in the inter-space that represents the trajectory of people, trade, and culture, reveals an element of agency belonging to the oppressed slaves in the creation of an Afro-Brazilian community, thereby challenging the representation of slaves (particularly enslaved women) as passive victims. Without denying the violence of historical racial prejudice, Evaristo develops a new narrative of black Brazilian women as active and resistant within (and despite) structures of oppression and violence.

This approach is repeated in the representation of the mother of the poetic subject who 'ecoou baixinho revolta | no fundo das cozinhas alheias'. Here, the resistant voice and words of the mother are again placed within a space characterized by the ownership of white, middle- or upper-class families, as is emphasized by the distance travelled by the mother between the kitchen and her home in a poorer neighbourhood. This part of the poem depicts the life of a modern Brazilian domestic worker, drawing comparison to the life of the enslaved black woman. In 'Nossa Escrevivência: Dos sorrisos, dos Silêncios e das Falas', Evaristo uses Michel de Certeau's notion of the 'tactic' from *The Practice of Everyday Life* to describe the everyday acts of resistance against the 'brancos-donos de tudo'. Certeau claims that 'the space of a tactic is the space of the other […] it is a maneuver "within the enemy's field of vision"' (1984: 38); an idea that Evaristo compares to the resistance of Afro-Brazilians:

[30] In his book *Segredos Internos: Engenhos e Escravos na Sociedade Colonial,* Stuart B. Schwartz explains that there was some disagreement amongst slave owners and authorities in Brazilian slave society over the prohibition of African cultural practices, but that activities practiced by groups of slaves, such as *batuques* and candomblé worship were seen as 'perturbador da ordem social' (Schwartz, 1995: 389).

> Aquilombando-se no domínio do senhor, perto ou longe da casa-grande, ou mesmo no interior dela, agindo, pois, com astúcia para penetrar no campo controlado pelo inimigo, os africanos e seus descendentes, homens e mulheres construíram seus espaços de sobrevivência nas Américas. (Evaristo 2009b: 4)

By turning the noun *quilombo* into the verb-form 'aquilombando-se', Evaristo underlines the agency and active aspect of resistance involved in the occupation of space so that Evaristo's positioning of the voices and 'tactics' of the women in her poem can be read as acts of political resistance. The placement of Evaristo's women in spaces characterized by the ownership of a white elite (be it a slave ship, a casa-grande or in a modern home) is to emphasize the insurgent nature of their words of defiance. The slave, the maid, and the modern domestic worker have access to Certeau's 'tactics' because of their positioning, so that a space that used to symbolize their oppression also becomes the site of their tactical resistance. The conversations and voices represented in this poem occupy the same space as Certeau's 'tactic' as something that, whilst not present in the larger narratives of Brazil's history, have nonetheless been preserved and passed down between women in families or the work-place.

The poet herself recounts the story of her life in a way that paints her success as a result of a series of tactical activity carried out by herself and her female relatives. At the *I Colóquio de Escritoras Mineiras* in 2009, Evaristo presented a paper entitled 'Conceição Evaristo por Conceição Evaristo' in which she wrote 'ganhei uma biblioteca inteira, a pública, quando uma das minhas tias se tornou servente daquela casa-tesouro, na Praça da Liberdade. Fiz dali a minha morada, o lugar onde eu buscava respostas para tudo' (Evaristo 2009a: 3). She also explained how she traded domestic work for extra lessons or money to buy books which means Evaristo's development as a writer is the result of a series of tactical uses of domestic work.

The next female character in the matrilineage of 'Vozes-mulheres' is the poetic subject, a writer like Evaristo who infiltrates a predominantly white, male space, echoing her perplexed verses, 'com rimas de sangue | e | fome'. Considering the tactics employed by Evaristo and her family to ensure Evaristo's own education and exposure to

literature, as well as the way ‘Vozes-mulheres’ links the insurgence of the subject’s foremothers to the contemporary writer, it becomes clear that the figure of the writer represents the fruit of the tactics and acts of resistance of those who came before her.

The element that can be traced back through the matrilineage in this poem is ‘a voz’. There are two kinds of voice in this poem: the voice which can be physically silenced, described in the poem with descriptions of corporeal violence ‘as vozes mudas caladas | engasgadas nas gargantas’, and the voice which carries through the generations via an ‘echo’. The use of the word echo is especially pertinent as it represents a body-less voice, the opposite of the voice-less bodies oppressed by physical labour, long working days, and overt violence. Semantically speaking, the repetition of words such as ‘echo’ and ‘voice’ mean that sounds are never far from the focus of the poem. Also, the phrase ‘com rimas de sangue | e | fome’ links sonority and sound to the body and, in particular, bodily impulses and drives. The term ‘rima’, like the word ‘echo’, provides a link between sound and repetition. The voice carried through the poem, like a rhyme, can only be meaningful or powerful through repetition.

The rhymes in the poem are irregular in that they do not belong to any pre-set poetic structure or rhyme scheme, and yet they are noticeably present. They appear as seemingly natural parts of speech, often in half rhymes or in the middle of lines, such as ‘criança’, ‘infância’, ‘obediência’ in the first six lines – a rhyme which is picked up in the word ‘resonância’ in the penultimate line of the poem. Similarly, there are clusters of repeated sounds: ‘A voz de mi*nh*a mãe | ecoou baixi*nh*o revolta | no fundo das cozi*nhas* alhei*as*’, ‘as vozes mu*das* cal*adas* | eng*asgadas* na*s* *garga*n*tas*’ (Recordação: 24-25). This gives the language in the poem a sense of fluidity. The poem progresses smoothly, as the tension between the words is reduced by the shared sounds. This means the progression through the generations appears natural, so that the drama of the poem lies in the accumulation of voices in the final daughter rather than the differentiation of subject voices.

Whilst the multiplicity of voices in ‘Vozes-mulheres’ appears similar to Amaral’s ‘Um pouco só de Goya: Carta a minha filha’, there is a slight difference in the dynamics

involved in the drama of subject-formation for each poem. Whereas Amaral's poetic subject multiplies into a host of mother and daughter subjects, Evaristo's poetic subject suggests an opposite dynamic where multiple voices merge into one, powerful, stable poetic subject. Whilst Amaral's poem concerns a reconfiguration of the subject from the unified to the multiple, Evaristo's primary objective is to create a black female speaking subject and to provide this subject voice with a force of authority. The unification of multiple voices into a single subject mirrors the drive for political and social movements in Brazil, where the force of multiple voices crying the same demand for change is the primary focus. Evaristo's poem, then, represents the impetus to create a speaking subject who can speak for/as/from the black, Brazilian mother.

Whilst in 'Vozes-mulheres' there is a separation between the vulnerable, material body and the resistant voice of the black mother that transcends physical violence, in 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre' the maternal body becomes the locus of mother-daughter relationships and the notions of subjectivity and language put forth by Evaristo. This poem, dedicated to Evaristo's daughter, uses menstruation and bodily imagery to conceptualize a corporeal legacy that exists primarily between mother and daughter, but is extended as a symbol of an unbreakable bond between women. Evaristo writes, for example, 'velhas mulheres vermelhecem | maravilhas há séculos | e no corpo das mais jovens | as sábias anciãs desenham | avermelhados símbolos […]' and 'juntas contemplamos o cálice | de nosso sangue e bendizemos | o nosso corpo-mulher' (Recordação: 34-35). These lines establish menstrual blood as a shared corporeal legacy and link between the *herstory* of women and the bodies of contemporary women. More than this, the blood is described as a form of communication, carrying words and experiences of the female bodies it connects. Menstrual blood becomes the language ('avermelhados símbolos') that symbolizes the presence of previous generations of women as part the transformations of black women from the alienated objects of historical narrative, to empowered subjects of language and action. The subject-position that the women occupy is emphasized by the verb 'vermelhecer' which uses the colour red as an action, but which echoes the sounds of the word 'envelhecer', further cementing older, previous generations as subjects of the action.

The way the female bodies become symbols for community in this poem reflects the tendency for motherhood to become a community responsibility in a working class, Brazilian setting (and in particular in favelas) where mothers would often work long hours for low wages. According to studies such as Leila Sanches de Almeida's 'Mother, Caregiver and Worker: Working Mothers and their Multiple Identities' (2007), motherhood takes on a different guise in working class areas where creches, 'mães crecheiras' and informal agreements between neighbours and families are necessary for women to support their families. Studies such as this one portray the site of motherhood as being within a community, rather than a small nuclear family unit, where the role of mother is filled by multiple women. In 'Arranjos Familiares de Crianças das Camadas Populares', Amazonas, Damasceno, Terto and Silva claim that, due to the prevalence of single-parent families and communal mothering methods, women are the 'peças-chave' for the organization and maintenance of the family (2003: 14). More than ever, women are taking on the role of caregiver and financial provider, which makes the mother not only the nucleus of the family, but also of a wider community. This is reflected in the centrality of the black mother in Evaristo's poetry and theoretical texts alike. Both 'Vozes-mulheres' and 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre' position women as *peças-chaves* of black community, even as they also represent the historical oppression suffered by this community.

Cast, from its title, as a prayer, the poem nonetheless defies Christian depictions of the immaculate mother, removed from the corporeality of conception and childbirth. The title of the poem is taken from the traditional *Ave Maria* prayer line 'bendito é o fruto do vosso ventre, Jesus'. Through menstrual blood replacing Jesus as the 'blessed fruit', the focus is on celebrating the maternal body itself rather than its role as producer. Similarly, Evaristo evokes the Eucharist prayer 'Tomai, todos, e bebei: este é o cálice do meu sangue', adapting it in the third stanza to 'contemplamos o cálice | de nosso sangue e bendizemos | o nosso corpo-mulher' once again placing the maternal body at the centre of the act of worship. In this poem, then, the speaking subject celebrates the female-body-that-creates (rather than the fact of creation) and links procreation to linguistic and poetic creativity:

Minha menina amanheceu hoje
mulher – velha guardiã do tempo.
De mim ela herdou o rubi,
rubra semente, que a
primeva mulher nos ofertou.
De sua negra e pequena flor
um líquido rúbeo, vida-vazante escorre.
Dali pode brotar um corpo,
milagre de uma manhã qualquer.
[…]
(Recordação: 34)

This first stanza presents the body and menstruation as part of an age-old matrilineal legacy that extends between the poetic-subject-mother to the poetic daughter. The theme of legacy becomes more pertinent against the history of slavery in Brazil, which both this poem and 'Vozes-mulheres' bring into play by evoking past generations of Brazilian women. Within the context of slavery, motherhood was key to both the continuation and the end of slavery in Brazil. In *Conceiving Freedom,* Camilla Cowling highlights how the womb was at the centre of both the ancient, Roman-derived principle of *partus sequitur ventrem,* according to which the slave-status of the child followed that of the womb from which it was born, as well as the gradual process of legal emancipation through the 1871 Rio Branco law, whereby '[t]he wombs of enslaved women, previously vessels for transmitting enslavement, became spaces in which freedom was, literally, conceived' (Cowling 2013: 9). This history is evident in Evaristo's poem through the symbolic presence of blood which not only represents a legacy passed down between mothers and daughters, in this context, but which also evokes the suffering of past women in lines such as 'velhas mulheres vermelhecem | maravilhas há séculos'. The theme of blood running through the poem, therefore, is not only the focal point of the mother-daughter relationship but represents a symbolic remembrance of the physical and emotional suffering inherent to the experience of childbirth and child-rearing in the context of slavery. Menstrual blood is also significant, of course, as a sign of the absence of pregnancy which, before the implementation of the 1871 'free womb'

law, would have meant that there would be no child and thus no continuation of slavery from the womb of the enslaved woman. The changing status of the womb whereby the womb takes on a condition different to that of the rest of the female body, has been taken up by Evaristo from a contemporary perspective as a site for resistance.

Historically, the 1871 law had a relatively minor impact on the practice of slavery in Brazil, as the law meant that children born of enslaved women must be cared for by the slave owner until the age of eight at which point the owner can either give the child to the state in exchange for financial compensation for the cost of raising the child, or retain the child as an *ingenuo* (apprentice) until the age of 21 (Klein and Luna 2010: 305-6). Nonetheless, the law had the effect of providing a legal apparatus for emancipation that was centred on motherhood and maternal rights. As Cowling demonstrates through an examination of legal claims made by women in Brazil and Cuba, the free womb law changed the relationship between enslaved women and the law:

> Following hundreds of years in which the 'fruit' of women's wombs legally belonged to their owners, these children were now nominally 'free,' even as the law gave owners considerable scope to continue exercising rights over them. In the spaces opened up by the ambiguities in the law, it was mothers who were best placed to seek to apply the laws on their children's behalf. In the process they rearticulated their own bond with their children and staked a new claim to custody of them. (Cowling 2013: 60)

This link between motherhood, the womb, and historical acts of resistance carried out by mothers is picked up by Evaristo in her representation of a resistant counterdiscourse rooted in the female reproductive system. This is presente in the lines 'Dali pode brotar um corpo, | milagre de uma manhã qualquer' and 'concebemos a vital urdidura | de uma nova escrita | tecida em nossas entranhas, | lugar-texto original'. These lines suggest not only a drive towards change through resistance and struggle, but also a force and language of resistance that stems from the womb and the potential for procreation and, through language, creation.

The maternal language of Evaristo's poem is, however, characterised by the agency and voices of women, as opposed to the rhetoric of motherhood and maternal love spoken by men during nineteenth-century debates on emancipation.[31] Claiming and representing black women's ownership of their bodies is an important project for black Brazilian women as black mothers in Brazil have been represented in a limited way, partly as a result of the incorporation of the symbolic figure of the black wet nurse into the national popular imagination. This particular image of the black wet nurse is present, for example, in Freyre's nostalgic treatment of Brazilian slave society as well as cultural products such as the song 'Mãe Preta' first recorded by Caco Velho and Piratini in 1943[32] and the 'Monumento Mãe Preta' in São Paulo. The way maternal identity has been conferred onto black women in Brazil via images such as those of the wet nurse – maternal only insofar as the object of her maternal affection be white children – means that writers like Evaristo have been left the task of recovering a true image of the black 'mulher-mãe', liberating her from 'seu passado escravo, de corpo-procriação e/ou corpo-objeto de prazer do macho senhor' (Evaristo 2005: 202). In 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre', the title and the repeated use of the first person plural possessive pronoun 'nosso/nossa', ensures that only the women themselves can be considered owners of the 'corpo-mulher'. The need for this transfer of ownership with relation to the maternal body is linked to the effacement of a black maternal identity in Brazilian culture, as Evaristo herself explains:

> Observando que o imaginário sobre a mulher na cultura ocidental constrói-se na dialética do bem e do mal, do anjo e demônio, cujas figuras símbolos são Eva e de Maria e que corpo da mulher *se salva* pela maternidade, a ausência de tal

[31] In 'Slave Mothers and Freed Children: Emancipation and Female Space in Debates on the "Free Womb" Law, Rio de Janeiro 1871', Martha Abreu provides examples of how the rhetoric of maternal love was used in arguments by supporters and opponents of the abolition of slavery, even if the latter's rhetoric concealed other motives and interests (Abreu, 1996).

[32] Originally recorded as a samba by Caco Velho (Mateus Nunes) and Piratini (António Amabile), the song has re-emerged in Brazil and Portugal. Maria da Conceição recorded a fado version of Mãe Preta in 1954 before the lyrics were changed in Amália Rodrigues and David Mourão-Ferreira's 1962 fado song 'Barco Negro'. In 1975 Ney Matogrosso released a mix of the two songs 'Mãe Preta (Barco Negro)' in Brazil before Dulce Pontes released a pop version of the original 'Mãe Preta' in 1996.

> representação para a mulher negra, acaba por fixar a mulher negra no lugar de um mal não redimido. (Ibid.)

On the one hand, the symbolic black Brazilian mother has been co-opted by the likes of Freyre in a myth of Brazilian racial democracy, on the other hand, however, black women are rarely cast as maternal figures within black family settings.[33] This limited representation of black motherhood, then, has prompted black feminist writers to redefine black motherhood in their own terms, using poetry and literature to do so.

The bond between mothers and daughters is imagined through the reproductive system and the language of menstruation in 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre', in a way that reinforces women's ownership over their own bodies as an element that cannot be experienced or understood by men. In this sense, Evaristo reinforces the right of black women to define their own legacy. By representing women from past, and ancient, generations, Evaristo also ensures that black women's voices are central to the image of past women, including enslaved women, in order to develop a linguistic legacy centred on voice and agency, as opposed to that of a legal apparatus such as the 1871 law developed and overseen predominantly by white men. Furthermore, as a reference to fertility, imagery centred on the reproductive system places the mother as creator. That is not to say that this poem falls into the trap of essentialising femininity as biologically determined by the ability to procreate, but rather that female bodies find empowerment in the mother-daughter relationship in the sameness of the maternal and daughterly bodies which can call into question masculine notions of the individual subject and the absolute power of the patriarch within a nuclear family unit.

Evaristo's 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre', then, has a similar effect to Amaral's 'Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha' in that the mother-daughter relationship becomes more than genealogical lineage, but rather a symbol for a multiple and inclusive gendered voice that stands up against both the privilege of the patriarch, and Western

[33] Brazilian fathers are, statistically, more likely to be absent from the family than mothers. The 2010 census, for example, showed that 87.4% of families classed as 'responsável sem cônjuge com filho(s)' are headed by women, and 46% by 'mulheres pretas ou pardas' (*IBGE*).

culture's prioritization of a single, discrete subject. Amaral, however, forms a poetic representation of inclusivity through a disembodied voice (as highlighted in my analysis of 'Testamento') that challenges biological essentialism in defining gender roles and motherhood. Evaristo, on the other hand, roots her poetic representation of the mother-daughter relationship in the same-ness of the maternal and daughterly bodies, seeing, in this sameness, an inclusivity that extends beyond the physical ability to give birth. This is expressed through the notion of an archaic, timeless matrilineal legacy as a source of collective identity and empowerment.

> Ela jamais há de parir entre dores,
> velhas mulheres vermelhecem
> maravilhas há séculos
> e no corpo das mais jovens
> as sábias-anciãs desenham
> avermelhados símbolos,
> femininos unguentos,
> contra-sinais a uma antiga escritura.
>
> […]
>
> E desde todo o sempre
> matriciais vozes
> celebram nossas vaginas vertentes,
> veredas de onde escorre
> a nossa nova velha seiva.
> E eternos legiões femininas
> glorificam, plenificadas de gozo,
> o bendito sangue de nosso ventre,
> por todos os séculos.
> […]
> (Recordação: 34-35)

The above extracts of 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre' contain numerous references to a solidarity amongst a community of women rooted in a shared maternal body. In the

first of the two stanzas cited above, there is an inclusivity in the collectively shared maternal body, for those who are old, young, or unable to become biological mothers themselves – all women inevitably participate in the mother-daughter relationship and the ancient legacy that it carries through the act of childbirth and through the shared maternal body. The universal participation of women in the mother-daughter relationship is explained in further detail by Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born*:

> The 'childless woman' and the 'mother' are a false polarity, which has served the institutions both of motherhood and heterosexuality […] We are, none of us, 'either' mothers or daughters; to our amazement, confusion, and greater complexity, we are both. […] To accept and integrate and strengthen both the mother and the daughter in ourselves is no easy matter, because patriarchal attitudes have encouraged us to split, to polarize, these images, and to project all unwanted guilt, anger, shame, power, freedom, onto the 'other' woman. But any radical vision of sisterhood demands that we reintegrate them. (Rich 1986: 250-253)

Luce Irigaray also sees the mother-daughter relationship as universal amongst women as we are all a product of mother-daughter genealogies. In 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother' Irigaray explains how this can be harnessed to counteract the alienation of the mother:

> There is a genealogy of women within our family: on our mothers' side we have mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and daughters. Given our exile in the family of the father-husband, we tend to forget this genealogy of women, and we are often persuaded to deny it. Let us try to situate ourselves within this female genealogy so as to conquer and keep our identity. (Irigaray 1991: 44)

The ability for women to belong to and share the maternal body, however, finds further meaning against the backdrop of Brazilian racial history and of the white slaveholder's ownership of black slaves – something which has not been accounted for in Rich and Irigaray's formulations of a shared bodily encounter. Firstly, the universality of Evaristo's conceptual maternal body allows an unquestioned identification of the black woman as maternal – the same identity denied to black women via traditional notions of the *mãe-preta*. Secondly, making the maternal body collective and universal, Evaristo renders

the ownership or objectification of a body (as under slavery) impossible. The plurality of belonging to the maternal body – as the sentiment of the poem reflects a notion of belonging rather than ownership – is expressed via the combination of plural possessive pronouns and singular corporeal nouns such as the title of the poem 'Bendito o sangue de *nosso ventre*' and in the third stanza:

> […]
> E ela jamais há de parir entre dores,
> há *entre nós* femininas deusas,
> juntas contemplamos o cálice
> de *nosso sangue* e bendizemos
> *o nosso corpo-mulher*.
> […]
> (Recordação: 34-35) (my emphasis)

Whilst the material bodies that make up the collective maternal body remain plural, in a way that celebrates individual sovereignty ['celebram nossas vaginas vertentes'], the menstrual blood that is passed on to all women via the mother-daughter relationship remains singular and thus, as a form of language, is shared ['a nossa nova velha seiva']. The sharing of voice and language creates an assemblage of voices, imbued with the force of a community just as the accumulation of voices in 'Vozes-mulheres'.

It is thus clear that whilst Amaral and Evaristo have both used mother-daughter relationships to a similar end – as a subversion of masculine 'patrilineage', and a source of empowerment for women – they have both achieved this in diverse ways. Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the ways in which the two poets create maternal poetic subjects, is the use of the body. Amaral's approach responds to a historical and social context within which the legacy and construction of the self has traditionally revolved around the physicality of motherhood and the practical knowledge useful for survival in a domestic setting. She elevates the mother-daughter relationship from a purely corporeal level to a more abstract plane, focusing instead upon the construction of the self via language and alternative, deliberately complex, subject-formations. Evaristo, on the other hand, is responding to a society within which the black maternal

body has historically been oppressed by an economy of body-ownership first through slavery, and to this day through the exploitation of domestic labour. For this reason, the development of a subject position where the maternal body is irrefutably connected to the Brazilian black woman, and where the communal value of the body transcends the limits of an economy of ownership, is central to the development of a counter-discursive and empowering poetic subject. For both poets, however, the mother-daughter relationship itself provides an indispensable springboard for the development of new subject positions. The privileged relationship between mothers and daughters calls into question the credibility of a concrete and universal unitary subject, due to the blurred lines between the self and the other.

Language and the maternal body

In twentieth-century Angolan literature, the figure of Mother Africa has been subject to a process of reclamation, representing the fertile African lands taken from Angolan peoples by the Portuguese, to be recovered by the true Angolan people. The use of the mother as a representative of the land in anti-colonial struggle is not, of course, restricted to Angola. Examples that come to mind are the use of Mother Africa in other African nations and the use of Mother India in anti-British rhetoric. In her comparison of nationalist representations of the nation as 'Mother', C. L. Innes explains that

> these movements are often figured as a kind of Oedipal or Family romance, in which the sons of the nation seek to usurp the imperial father-figures who have laid claim to the mother/ wife. In this contest, the sons of the nation also seek to affirm their manhood in the process of redeeming the mothercountry, and restoring her to her youthful beauty. (Innes 1994: 10)

Whilst the use of *Mãe África* for anti-colonial purposes is distinct from the imperial and postcolonial uses of the mother figure we have seen so far in this chapter, this is not to say that there are no underlying issues concerning the agency and subjectivity allowed to the mother in this context. The narratives written by Angola's *Geração de 50*[34], for

[34] The *Geração de 50* was a group of Angolan writers, founded by António Jacinto and Viriato da Cruz, publishing in the 1950s linked to the journal created by the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* entitled *Mensagem*.

example, seem to prioritize the masculinization of the sons of Africa, foregrounding a masculine subject that speaks for the allegorical feminine rather than allowing a voice and agency to the victimized feminine figure they claim to liberate. The trope of *Mãe África* or *Mãe-Negra* in Angolan literature tends to centre on a *re-Africanization*[35] process with an emphasis on recovering a subject position for the ousted, alienated African father replaced by the European colonizer-father. According to Phyllis Peres,

> the trope of the African mother comprises only part of a 1950s poetic search to discover Angola that is oftentimes imagined through the recuperation of the feminine-as land, as origins, as tradition, as history, and, ultimately, as nation. In other words, the poetic desire for 'dis-alienation' for a native or, in some cases, adopted culture and even potentially national political entity, finds early literary expressions through the bodies of Angolan women. (Peres 2007: 37)

Whilst ideologies that dictate women's function in society, such as the sentiment behind the symbolic Mother Africa, typically focus on the corporeal duties of a mother to reproduce, nourish, and care for future generations of Angolans, Branco's references to motherhood in 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' clearly deviate from the natural biological functions of the maternal body, referring instead to the creative writing process. Branco's poetic subject is depicted in the process of creating a text on a computer – an image of literary creation that not only reflects the reality of the modern writer, but also subverts the problematic association of national culture with nature, land and the female body.

Although she uses imagery consistent with childbirth later in the poem, in the opening stanzas of 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' Branco uses only the image of a writer working at their computer, replacing the idealised notion of an organic creation process with the mechanical, everyday and mundane objects wielded by the modern writer. In doing so, Branco immediately subverts the association of biological sexual organs and the act of

[35] This term is taken from Amílcar Cabral's speech 'National liberation and Culture' given as The Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture at Syracuse University on 20th February 1970 (Cabral 1979: 145).

writing such as the psychoanalytic connection between the pen and the penis with which this chapter began. The poem begins,

> Sentei-me em frente ao meu computador como já tantas
> vezes fiz.
>
> Voltei, aqui estou perante esta máquina fria e sem vida que
> me acompanha durante tantas horas. Sem nunca reclamar
> ou chorar de cansaço.
>
> É cinza, um cinza pálido, quase sem cor, mas é claro. Nem
> é grande nem pequeno. É média esta máquina. O écran é
> quadrado, aliás, como todos os outros que conhecemos,
> pois que saiba não existem écrans redondos e muito menos
> triangulares. Hexágono nem pensar.
> […]
> (Branco, 2004: 68)[36]

The poem, like much of Branco's work, re-situates traditional literary concepts and tropes into the setting of the modern Angolan poet, focusing on the process of dismantling the romanticized image of a male writer and authorial subject. In these first stanzas, Branco emphasises the ordinary nature of the computer in phrases such as 'como já tantas vezes fiz', 'esta máquina fria e sem vida que me acompanha durante tantas horas' and descriptions of the computer such as 'quase sem cor', '[n]em | é grande nem pequeno', and '[é] média esta máquina. O écran é | quadrado, aliás, como todos os outros que conhecemos' preventing any elevation in the mind of the reader. This provides a suitably banal setting for Branco's mockery of the elevation and glorification of the poet or intellectual.

The attitude towards Lusophone literary heritage, here, is remarkably similar to the playful tone of Amaral's 'Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha', only more explicit than implicit in the case of Branco. Early in the poem, for example, she writes: 'E o

[36] References to the 2004 first edition of the collection *A Despedida de Mi(m)* by Branco, published by the *União dos Escritores Angolanos* shall henceforth be referenced as (Despedida).

pontapé levou o vento às nádegas | rijas e quadradas do homem sentado, como se sentou um | dia a imaginação do homem que criou o pensador' (Despedida, 69). Branco begins by diminishing the hallowed status of the intellectual with the humorous image of the thinker's buttocks receiving a 'pontapé' from the wind. She also highlights the artificiality of this fixed notion of the intellectual by making the image of Rodin's *The Thinker* (which Branco alludes to in these lines) ridiculous, referring to the statue's 'nádegas rijas e quadradas'. Highlighting the amount of time spent by the artist/creator on sculpting the bottom of this particular image of the thinker, can also be read as a further criticism of the self-congratulatory nature of such a project, as the white, European, male creator creates an image of a white, European male thinker. Rodin's statue, of course, despite depicting Dante Alighieri gazing down at his own creation, as an image of a creator gazing at his creation, has since become an 'allegorical portrait of the sculptor himself' (*The Thinker* | *Rodin Museum*). Despite the initial humour of Branco's representation of the narcissistic sculptor, the extent to which this image reflects the privilege of white, European men in culture and the arts is underlined as she writes '

> […]
> Infelizmente este não pensou.
>
> Simplesmente achou que é o dono do mundo.
>
> O dono da verdade.
> […]
> (Despedida: 69)

These lines, whilst illuminating an element of folly in the glorification of a particular image of the male, European creator, serve as a damning insight into the consequences of such examples of white, male hubris. The use of the phrase 'dono do mundo' recalls Evaristo's use of the terms 'brancos-donos de tudo' in that both imply a type of all-encompassing and unchallenged ownership, reflecting the long history of oppression at the hands of white, European men as well as demonstrating the extremity of their hubris in declaring themselves owners of 'o mundo' or 'tudo'. Branco takes this further by

referring to the image of Rodin's *Thinker* as also being the owner of truth ('dono da verdade'), tying physical ownership and colonization to the discursive and textual dominance that this figure affords himself in declaring his own epistemological perspective as the global standard.

This idealized image that places a particular vision of a human at the centre of the creation of art, knowledge and literature, is placed into contrast with the poetic subject working at her computer in the opening stanzas. The poem, whilst looking at the role of the poet, places as much emphasis on the practical instruments that she may wield (a computer, or a mechanical pencil, for example) as it does on the poet herself. This move is reflected in the title of the poem 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' which simultaneously addresses and dismisses the poetic subject, thus underlining the irony of a poem which attempts to focus on the process of creation, including the role of the poet, whilst at the same time detaching itself from a long, masculine, European tradition of introspective artistic creation.

This challenge to Western superiority in the arts and literature is picked up throughout 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' in numerous intertextual references to poets, texts and musicians such as Bocage, Fernando Pessoa, Vinícius de Moraes, Tom Jobim, the Bible, Caetano Veloso and Maria Bethânia. When referencing these artists, the overriding emotion is the lack of identification with the music, poetry and texts of these Western (predominantly Portuguese and Brazilian) writers and composers and, in the case of Maria Bethânia (the only woman),[37] with the artist herself. In a response to the perceived inadequacy of these artists and writers, Branco constructs a poetic and lyrical identity that is specifically *in response to* the lack of identification with existing, celebrated figures of creativity. Let us take, for example, Branco's references to Bocage, Pessoa, Caetano and Bethânia:

[37] Although Bethânia is the only female artist mentioned, the song quoted by Branco (*Negue*) was actually written by a male artist, Adelino Moreira, and has been performed by numerous artists.

[…]

É cruz e ouço nos meus ouvidos o Bum… Bum… Bum…
Bum… dos tambores, juntamente com as palavras de Bocage:

"…Meu ser evaporei na lida insana…

…Saiba morrer o que viver não soube."

E eu não sei viver e tenho medo…

Medo da gaiola cruel do amor que criei em tempos de infância na minha memória desassossegada, ou porque não me acatei e abri a porta para que o vento entrasse e olhasse para a estátua inerte dentro da garganta iluminada da realidade.

[…]

Vi o mundo correr e chorar as mágoas de Pessoa e Caetano…
Cantou a Betânia. Os lábios pintados de vermelho, o rosto sereno e sabedor do carisma que transmite, os cabelos eram da cor do ébano, vi de longe o branco da experiência a cantar.
Só a cantar para mim.

O negue o seu amor.
O ronda a cidade.
O sinto-me tão sozinha ultimamente…
Para ela não são mais do que canções,
Para mim é o sofrimento do poeta de mãos trémulas como as minhas
É o Bum… Bum… Bum… Bum… dos tambores,
É feitiço
É realidade.
[…]
(Despedida: 87 - 90)

In these examples, Branco superimposes her own subject-identity onto the works of the writer or artist in question. Bocage's poem and Bethânia's song are cut short, or spoken over so that the poem refers back to the poetic subject. This is achieved as the focus of Branco's text is not the glorification of existing artists, but the way they reflect upon the identity of the lyric subject herself, establishing the subject as outside and contrary to the discourses implicit in the chosen references. In doing so Branco mimics the processes of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence,* which is especially clear if we turn to the description of the fifth of Bloom's 'revisionary ratios', 'Askesis' which he describes as a moment where

> [t]he later poet does not […] undergo a revisionary movement of emptying, but of curtailing; he[38] yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor, and he does this in his poem by so stationing it in regard to the parent-poem as to make that poem undergo an askesis too; the precursor's endowment is also truncated. (Bloom 1973: 15)

The words of the artists are, for example, interrupted by the rhythm belonging to this poem and its poetic voice with the rhythmic 'Bum… Bum… Bum… Bum dos tambores'. This rhythmic interruption can be seen as an imposition of a different context onto the words of the other artists, a collision that underlines the incompatibility of a hegemonic Lusophone vision of culture, with the context of the emerging poet in modern Angola. The encroachment of Branco's subject voice upon those of Bocage and Bethânia, however, in the 'Bum… Bum… Bum… Bum dos tambores', also represents the encroachment of the non-Western upon the Western. Thus it challenges not only the hegemony of the father and the sons (through the inclusion of Bethânia and a gendered lyric subject), but also the hegemony of Western poets, artists and forms in the Lusophone cultural canon.

[38] Gilbert and Gubar remind us 'Bloom's model of literary history is intensely (even exclusively) male, and necessarily patriarchal. For this reason it has seemed, and no doubt will continue to seem, offensively sexist to some feminist critics' (2000: 47).

Throughout Branco's lengthy poem, one can also see a progression from the self-consciousness of a developing authorial subject to a lyric subject who is confident enough to clearly differentiate her subject position from that of another artist. In response to Bocage's sonnet, the subject seems to simultaneously fear exposure ('o vento entrasse e olhasse | para a estátua inerte dentro da garganta iluminada da | realidade') and doubt the ability of forming a complete subjective consciousness ('eu não sei viver e tenho medo'). Yet in the later reference to Maria Bethânia's song 'negue' (written by Adelino Moreira), the poetic subject firmly positions itself as distinct from Maria Bethânia ('vi de longe o branco da experiência a | cantar'), as the description of the singer and the 'branco da experiência' seems remote from the poetic subject. The poetic subject also claims a closer connection to the song than to the singer, in the line 'Só a cantar para mim', and by claiming authority through the gestures of a poet in the line 'Para mim é o sofrimento do poeta de mãos trémulas como | as minhas.' The position of the subject, then, at this later point in the poem seems much firmer, and imbued with much more authority, having gone through a process of destabilising the authority of the stereotypical European male thinker, and of interrupting and curtailing the words of Bocage.

Branco's introduction of the childbirth metaphor into the poem builds upon this developing subject as she takes a well-known, Western literary trope and adapts it to her own setting as a modern African poet. Whilst there is a long history of the use of the childbirth metaphor for literary creation in Western literature, Branco's use of the image deviates significantly from its traditional use by both male and female authors. Susan Stanford Friedman explains that the childbirth metaphor takes on different meanings depending on the known biological sex of the author:

> The basic analogy of creation and procreation remains the same for both women and men. However, female and male metaphors mean differently and mean something different, indeed something opposite. Male metaphors intensify difference and collision, while female metaphors enhance sameness and collusion. In spite of individual variation, male metaphors often covertly affirm the traditional separation of creativity and procreativity. Female metaphors, in contrast, tend to

> defy those divisions and reconstitute woman's fragmented self into a (pro)creative whole uniting word and flesh, body and mind. (Friedman 1987: 75)

On the one hand, from a male perspective, as Friedman has argued, the childbirth metaphor can widen the gap between male/mind/creation and female/body/procreation as it forces the reader to directly confront the impossibility of physical childbirth in man and the socio-cultural expectations of material motherhood are thus discounted in the consideration of the male author's literary creative process. On the other hand, for a female author or poet, the metaphor can represent a conflation of the mind and the body, which would invalidate the marginalization of women according to dichotomous understandings of being and society. The childbirth metaphor offers a female author an opportunity to escape the anxiety described by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. By asking, 'Is a pen a metaphorical penis?' (2000: 3), Gilbert and Gubar investigate the impossibility for female authors of equating their own bodies with the phallic metaphor for literary creation as a source of an 'anxiety of authorship'. The childbirth metaphor therefore allows women writers to bypass this anxiety by consolidating their bodies with the act of writing.

The problem with the childbirth metaphor for literary creation, however, is that it can never be seen as neutral, given the strong cultural and ideological significance of motherhood. Branco, however, uses the childbirth metaphor in her title poem 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' in a way that contradicts, at one and the same time, the traditional representation of women in Angola, and gendered notions of authority and the poetic genius. Whilst traditionally the male intellectual would occupy a position similar to that of Zeus, as a single parent and origin of the literary text, however, Branco engages in a process of queering the gendered childbirth metaphor for literary creation by incorporating mechanical elements such as a computer, a keyboard, and a mechanical pencil:

> […]
> E noite após noite. Lado a lado. Nós os dois, os solitários
> e silenciosos vamos casando a melhor lua de anéis. Um

teclando, outro compreendendo o destino e os pensamentos
e vamos sem que nos apercebamos, levando a vida até ao
túnel quente do útero cansado da mulher.

[…]

Espero… Espero… Um minuto, dois, três e por aí.

Já lá vão algumas horas e os poemas contorcem-se com vontade de nascer.

Quero pari-los.

Estou doída de tanta dor.

Não posso mais esperar.
[…]
(Despedida: 70-71)

The poet and the computer appear to be awarded the same level of agency in the creation of the text, and the text itself is described in a way that suggests it has its own natural drives and needs (‘os poemas contorcem-se com vontade de nascer’). This description also reflects the unpredictable and sprawling form of the poem itself. Whilst the childbirth metaphor is retained, so that the text is its own being, with similar connotations of the difficulty of the process of writing, Branco undermines the sacred status of the solitary intellectual by introducing a common piece of technology into the metaphor.

The term ‘computer’ was originally a gendered term as it was used to refer to predominantly female workers whose job it was to run calculations for male mathematicians or scientists. These days, though, the word is more likely to be associated with the non-human (and, at times, the posthuman or post-biological) and so the association of a computer with a biological process such as childbirth is jarring. In *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts,* N. Katherine Hayles comments on the phrase ‘my mother was a computer’, which was initially a reference to a woman’s job title, writing that the ‘semantic shock the sentence is likely to give us

today is rooted not only in the shift from human to machine labour, but also in the feeling that a kinship category essential to human society has been violated' (2010: 1). The shock of the combination of a female writer, whose body fits the role of life-giver, with a computer which undermines the role of the human genius in literary creation, interrupts and destabilizes both the childbirth metaphor and assumed gender roles in relation to literary creation. At the same time, the way that the language in this section of the poem evokes the female body, not only with references to the body's biological processes and specific body parts ('túnel quente do útero cansado da mulher') but also in the rhythm of the language and the spacing of the lines, creates a link between the language of the poem and a biologically female poet ('Espero… Espero… Um minuto, dois, três e por aí').

The juxtaposition of the figure of the female poet and the computer – both as creators – creates a clash between embodiment and disembodiment, not just of the poet/creator, but also of the text itself. The complexity of this image stands in stark contrast to the symbolic Mother Africa, not only because Branco's maternal figure is both creator and representation, but also because of the way the maternal figure destabilises both the male privilege of ownership (of land and mothers, colonial and postcolonial) and the gender roles upon which tropes such as Mother Africa rely.

In doing so, Branco challenges the meaning of authorship, and the boundaries between author and text, life and representation. Whilst the poem in this section is represented as a living being, earlier in the poem the text existed only within the computer:

> […]
> Letras pequeninas vão aparecendo na
> folha de trabalho, sem que olhe para elas. Não preciso,
> tenho só de descarregar as energias nas minúsculas teclas
> que toco e logo sei que os meus receios estão visíveis no
> écran e letra a letra vou teclado.
> […]
> (Despedida: 68-69)

The writer, as she is in the process of writing a poem by typing it into a computer, is poised on the border of the human and the machine, the embodied and the disembodied, the mind and the body, upsetting the stability of a single source and authorial voice.

The computer's participation in the creative process exceeds the arbitrary use of a tool and is cast as an active participant: 'E não me deixes ficar mal, vai corrigindo as palavras por mim mal escritas' (Despedida: 72). The passivity of the poet in this sentence certainly diminishes the emphasis on authority present in literary tradition, and yet the poet does not retreat to a position of complete passivity. Rather, the almost mystic perfection of the poetic product is removed.

On the eighth page of the poem, the childbirth metaphor reappears briefly with gendered imagery of a feminine figure:

> O poeta faz com que os outros
> lhes ofereçam o sofrimento, a experiência, para que ao
> desmanchar o rabo-de-cavalo que meus cabelos tão
> gentilmente conseguem imitar penso… Põe a tua cabeça a parir poesia.
> (Despedida: 75)

The idea that the male poet gives birth to a text from his ideas or head (much like the birth of Athena from Zeus' forehead) is very different to the feminine gendered imagery of the childbirth metaphor that tends to emphasise a difficult labour. Here, however, the juxtaposition of a masculine myth of genius productivity with a female body destabilizes gender binaries and the need for gendered poetic identity, much like the initial use of the childbirth metaphor where it is unclear whether the 'túnel quente do útero cansado da mulher' belongs to the poet or to the computer.

The role of the mechanical pencil ('lapiseira') in Branco's poem also contributes to this deconstruction of gender roles. If, to return to the startling first lines of Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic,* the pen is, indeed, a metaphorical penis, then what of this mechanical pencil?

[…]
Dá-me uma lapiseira. O quê? Dá-me uma lapiseira…
O papel está sempre a meu lado.

Que ironia ao ver o momento em que a surdez da estupidez
dá lugar ao ridículo da ignorância. Ora, não se pergunta
jamais em tempo algum a um poeta, para que quer uma
lapiseira. Oferece-se simplesmente, em que se pense ou
retorne no minuto em que a poesia passa ao lado do
sofrimento, ao ouvir a língua surda e muda, cega e paralítica,
do pensamento do poeta e não se deixa que a resposta ao
ficar comigo esta noite lhe mate o maior instrumento para
a poesia, a cabeça.
[…]

(Despedida: 73)

[…]
Caro amigo,
Sinto as tuas teclas cansadas.
Descansa vou pedir uma lapiseira.
O quê?
Dá-me uma lapiseira.
Ora não se pergunta jamais em tempo algum a um poeta,
para que quer uma lapiseira.
Oferece-se simplesmente…
(Despedida: 92)

The mechanical pencil appears twice in the poem: on the sixth page, and in the final stanza of the poem. If we consider the pen/is as a sign of male authority over the written language, where male sexuality has traditionally been seen as the essence of literary power, then Branco's choice of the 'lapiseira' would represent a specifically artificial and mechanical version – especially when wielded by a female author or poetic subject. The artificiality of this phallic and yet emphatically superficial symbol becomes subversive when we view it through the lens of Butlerian gender theory. According to Butler's

consideration of the ‘lesbian phallus’, for example, the artificial mimicry of gendered identities does not mean assimilation to heterosexual norms, but rather the act of replication itself emphasizes the superficiality of gender identities:

> Consider that ‘having’ the phallus can be symbolized by an arm, a tongue, a hand (or two), a knee, a thigh, a pelvic bone, an array of purposefully instrumentalized body-like things. And that this ‘having’ exists in relation to a ‘being the phallus’ which is both part of its own signifying effect (the phallic lesbian as potentially castrating) and that which it encounters in the woman who is desired (as the one who, offering or withdrawing the specular guarantee, wields the power to castrate). That this scene can reverse, that being and having can be confounded, upsets the logic of non-contradiction that serves the either-or of normative heterosexual exchange. In a sense, the simultaneous acts of deprivileging the phallus and removing it from the normative heterosexual form of exchange, and recirculating and reprivileging it between women deploys the phallus to break the signifying chain in which it conventionally operates. (Butler, 1993: 88)

Thus, in terms of authorship, replacing the image of the male author wielding his pen with the image of a female writer wielding a mechanical pencil can also interrupt the signification of traditional phallocentric definitions of authorship. This is especially clear in ‘A Despedida de Mi(m)’ as the poetic subject responds to an implied question over why she requires a mechanical pencil with ‘não se pergunta | jamais em tempo algum a um poeta, para que quer uma | lapiseira’. The subject argues, then, that nobody would question a male poet for adopting a phallic symbol of authorship.

Branco’s disruption of two gendered metaphors for literary creation – the phallic symbol of the pen and the childbirth metaphor – calls into question, therefore, the way paradigms of literary creation and genius are shaped by gender norms. If read as a statement of intent for Branco’s poetic identity, the poet defines herself in opposition to gendered assumptions of identity. The childbirth metaphor is part of this process of self-definition as it allows Branco to consider what poets and texts really are, and to expose traditional archetypes of poetic identity as well as gender norms as purely performative. This calls into question the presumed superiority of the old, white, male intellectual in

Western canon and intelligentsia, as well as the replication of gender roles in subsequent postcolonial concepts of national culture, such as the adoption of a symbolic Mother Africa.

Whilst Branco questions the need for gendered subject identities in literature, the female body and sexuality can also be seen as subversive sources of language. The maternal metaphor is something that repeatedly emerges, for example, in Hélène Cixous's descriptions of the act of writing. In 'The Laugh of the Medusa', for example, she describes the gestation drive as being 'just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language for blood' (Cixous 1976: 891), and the creativity, the language with which she writes comes from breast-milk, something passed on between mothers and daughters during the pre-symbolic stage of infant development: 'There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink' (ibid., 881).

Relating the maternal body to the act of writing in this way, as a source of language (even if tied to the pre-symbolic stages of infant development) contradicts the emphasis that Lacan places on the role of the father in the child's entry into the symbolic stage of development. According to Lacanian theory,

> [t]he duality of the relation between mother and child must be broken, just as the analytic relation must be thrown onto the axis of desire. In Lacan's account, the phallus stands for that moment of rupture. It refers mother and child to the dimension of the symbolic which is figured by the father's place. (Rose and Mitchell 1997: 38)

Lacan's formulation of childhood entry into the symbolic is problematic as it alienates the mother by placing her in opposition to the father and the child. According to Lacan, culture can only develop in isolation from the maternal body, where societal shifts occur according to generational adaptation of, and additions to, coded experience within the symbolic realm. Kristeva explains that the young girl has

> greater difficulty than the boy in detaching herself from the mother in order to accede to the order of signs as invested by the absence and separation constitutive of the paternal function. A girl will never be able to re-establish this contact with her mother – a contact which the boy may possibly rediscover through this relationship with the opposite sex […] and, what is more, why and in the name of what dubious symbolic benefit would she want to make this detachment so as to conform to a symbolic system which remains foreign to her? (Kristeva 1981: 29)

Thus, if it is ultimately damaging for women or girls to strive to join the symbolic realm, it can be liberating to embrace the space outside the symbolic in the retained connection to the mother's body. Kristeva sees poetic language as an example of reconciling oneself with the maternal body in a way that has repercussions in and beyond language as it invalidates both the linguistic 'law of the father' and the alienation of women:

> the unsettled and questionable subject of poetic language (for whom the word is never uniquely sign) maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element. If it is true that the prohibition of incest constitutes, at the same time, language as communicative code and women as exchange objects in order for a society to be established, *poetic language would be* for its questionable subject-in-process the *equivalent of incest*: it is within the economy of signification itself that the questionable subject-in-process appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it simultaneously prevents the word from becoming mere sign and the mother from becoming an object like any other – forbidden. (Kristeva 1980: 136)

Amaral's poem 'O que não há num nome' from the 2017 collection *What's in a Name?* employs this same strategic displacement of language towards the 'maternal territory' in order to draw attention to the limits of the symbolic and the 'paternal function' of naming:

> […]
> Um nome é coisa de fala e de palavra,
> tão espesso como aquelas folhas que, se pudessem olhar,
> me haviam de contemplar daquele vaso,
> perguntando-me por que se chamam assim

[…]

Mas não há nada de natural num nome:
como uma roupa, um hábito, normalmente para a vida inteira,
ele nada mais faz do que cobrir
a nudez em que nascemos

Com a minha filha,
o mais belo de tudo, a maior deflagração
de amor – foi olhar os seus olhos,
sentir-lhe o toque em estame
dos dedos muito finos

esses: sem nome ainda,
mas de uma incontrolável
perfeição inteira
(Amaral 2017d: 63-64)

Here, Amaral uses the poem, and the capacities of poetic language, to re-write her daughter's identity as something more consistent with her being, something which the confines of the symbolic naming process restrict. Phrases such as 'o toque em estame', by using a noun as an adjective, defy the rules of language, and convey meaning through other senses such as touch. This way of creating meaning is consistent with Kristeva's descriptions of a language that occupies the 'instinctual, and maternal territory', as it represents a concept that can only be understood through the physical touching of the maternal and infant bodies. The phrase 'o toque em estame' relies on the sensation of touch; more physical than symbolic. The words 'em estame' through their sound evoke a tenderness through the long vowel sounds and few plosives, physically drawing the mouth into a gentle smile as it is pronounced. The gentle caress of an infant is conveyed through language and sound, the physical movements of speech, and touch, pushing language (inherently symbolic) towards semiotic sensations felt within the womb. The final line of the poem 'perfeição inteira', highlights the limits of the symbolic function of language-as-sign through space, hinting at further meaning that is unrepresented in language, as well as affecting the sound and rhythm

of the line without further use of the symbolic. Amaral's poem, then, seems to reach out beyond the page towards the semiotic, as the shape of the poem frames the white space of that which is not written just as the white space frames that which is written.

In exploring that which lies beyond the symbolic process of naming, Amaral finds the linguistic freedom to write a truer identity for her daughter. The symbolic, on the other hand, is represented as something oppressive, a language that covers instead of liberating. Amaral uses images of the socialization of the human body – which Lacan has attributed to the law of the father and progressive re-coding of the symbolic – to convey the oppression inherent in moulding a gendered identity to fit the symbolic definitions of being ('como uma roupa, um hábito, normalmente para a vida inteira, | ele nada mais faz do que cobrir | a nudez em que nascemos').

Whilst this poem holds no direct representation of maternal bodily images, I would posit that the maternal body is nonetheless present in the language used. One could go as far as to say that this poem is a poetic representation of the prioritization of the repressed maternal body and the instinctive, corporeally driven aspects of language over the usually dominant realm of the symbolic. Amaral's poem usurps the paternal function of naming by rewriting identity through a poetic description insistent on that which exceeds the symbolic function of language, a challenge that is clear from the poem's title 'O que não há num nome'. In referring to Juliet's line in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet' (Shakespeare and Evans 2003: 107), Amaral puts her poem into a context where a name, and the paternal lineage that it represents, is positioned as an antagonist. This is further reflected in the exclusion of the father from the mother-daughter bond represented in the poem. The physical and psychic connection between the mother and daughter, exceeding language, serves to underline the need for a 'return to the mother', to a connection that precedes the naming process and the entry of the infant into the symbolic realm.

Central to the aesthetic of this poem is the notion of a reverse, not only the backwards movement of regression to a pre-symbolic stage, but also in the sense of inversion. This

is a recurrent strategy in Amaral's poetry for upsetting paternal traditions and masculine cultural domination over the feminine. Sousa Santos explains Amaral's use of the 'reverse' in order to rewrite or upset literary and historical discourses, especially through re-inventions of fairy-tales and myths, writing that Amaral

> pulls them apart and turns them inside out, radically questioning their deeper meaning. […] The reverse of the tradition or the tradition on the wrong side, whether upside down or inside out, is thus the chosen strategy of this Portuguese woman poet who knows what we might call the obverse of the tradition only too well. (M. I. R. de S. Santos 1998: 134-35)

This dynamic of inversion is part of the movement of challenging and subverting the paternal, symbolic language of literature and myth as it creates a new, opposite language through which bodies, creatures, and genders can become mythologized afresh, creating new metaphors and images that lay firmly outside of patriarchal literary tradition.

In her poem 'Bendito o sangue de nosso ventre', Evaristo refers to a language similar to that used by Amaral, only for Evaristo the link to the body is made much more explicit. In this poem, menstruation and menstrual blood play a similar role to that of Cixous's aforementioned 'mother's milk' or 'white ink', as something transferred through the relationship to the mother as a source of creativity and language. In the second stanza, for example, Evaristo writes that 'as sábias anciãs desenham | avermelhados símbolos, | femininos unguentos, | contra-sinais a uma antiga escritura.' The term 'contra-sinais' establishes a specifically counter-discursive setting for the red writing of the ancient, wise women.

The phrase 'sábias anciãs' harks back to an ancient wisdom, preceding the socialization of humans, but can also be read as a reference to perceptions of witchcraft or sorcery. These connotations highlight both the powers and the dangers of a language incomprehensible to the dominant, masculine, linguistic economy. The element of the unknown can attribute power to this wisdom, as an unknown language is essentially

incompatible with the dominant systems of knowledge in the Western world. Later, in the third stanza, the notion of an ancient, subversive writing is further developed:

> […]
> E ali, no altar do humano-sagrado rito
> concebemos a vital urdidura
> de uma nova escrita
> tecida em nossas entranhas,
> lugar-texto original.
> […]
> (Recordação: 35)

At this point in the poem, the relationship between the maternal body and subversive language is made more explicit. The description of the 'nova escrita' which is woven into the inner organs of the woman, and the term 'lugar-texto original' posits the maternal body as the original site of creation, and suggests a specific creativity that stems from the maternal organs and the possibility of motherhood. This kind of creativity, situated in the mother's womb, represents the pre-symbolic realm as well as women's experience of their bodies. The word 'urdidura' further underlines the subversive and transformational power of this ancient language in terms of its effect on the dominant, father-driven discourses of modernity. As Cixous writes, 'she must write her self, because this is the invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history' (Cixous 1976: 880).

There is a contradiction, however, in Evaristo's descriptions of the creative power of menstruation and the maternal body in this poem. The maternal bodily source of creativity and language is described equally as something new ('nova escrita', 'no corpo das mais jovens'), something ancient ('primeva mulher', 'as sábias anciãs', 'lugar-texto original'), and as something eternal ('eternas legiões femininas', 'por todos os séculos'). This ability to transcend the limits of man-made concepts of time can be linked to the cyclical nature of the flow of the menstrual blood that, in this poem, becomes language. The recurring cycles of menstruation, when menstrual blood is seen as a link between

women past, present and future, are a source of power that enables the subversion of linear, phallic-driven notions of time and language. This power is described as something that the poetic daughter gains upon beginning her first period as she inherits access to the domination over time that comes with the title of ‘mulher – velha guardiã do tempo’. This title transforms throughout the poem to become ‘Nossas vozes, guardiãs do templo’, where the maternal body (the temple) is recognized as a privileged site of collectivity via the cyclical transmission of the ancient language of the maternal body.

If we think of the language used in the poem in these terms, as cyclical rather than linear language, it becomes clear that the bodies represented in Evaristo’s poem become the source not only of new words and meanings, but also of a new way of experiencing and structuring one’s encounter with the world. This circular movement is also replicated in the structure of the poem through the repetition of phrases such as ‘Ela jamais há de parir entre dores’ in the second and third stanzas, and the reiteration of similar phrases such as ‘velha guardiã do tempo’ and ‘guardiãs do templo’. Evaristo also uses repeated sounds, particularly ‘m’ and ‘v’ sounds, strategically throughout the four stanzas of the poem. The vowel and consonant sounds of the first line of the poem (‘Minha menina amanheceu’) are repeated throughout, with the last line of the poem ‘Amem’ constructed entirely of the a, m, and e sounds that are carried through the other stanzas of the poem in phrases such as ‘milagre de uma manhã’, ‘mulheres vermelhecem’, ‘todas as manhãs amanhecemos’. The last word, therefore, whilst clearly signalling an end, of sorts, creates a sonorous circle linking back to the beginning of the poem.

When looking at the intersections of language and motherhood in the works of each of these three poets, it becomes apparent that Branco’s commentary on motherhood as a literary metaphor is distinct from Evaristo and Amaral’s use of motherhood as a focal point for linguistic innovation. Branco appears to approach the childbirth metaphor in ‘A Despedida de Mi(m)’ in such a way that upsets patriarchal notions of authorship and the glorification of a particular image of ‘the poet’ or ‘the creator’, provoking the reader to consider the role of the poet in the modern world. She creates images of authorship,

written against existing poets and musicians especially, that are at odds with the more traditional concepts of the artistic genius. Her approach to the maternal metaphor, is to create a jarring image that demonstrates the unsuitability of gender when defining a poetic identity. Amaral and Evaristo, by contrast, embrace the realm of the maternal as a space to challenge paternalist and phallocentric tendencies towards a symbolic structure of language and being. Amaral does this by pointing out a kind of meaning that exceeds codified language. She strikes at the heart of both the symbolic and the patriarchal by focusing her poetic critique on the naming process; a process which is central to the paternal function in language and the power of the patriarch in society. In order to counteract the primacy of the father in relation to language, Amaral constructs a privileged channel of understanding between the mother and daughter to which the father is denied access. Evaristo, despite similarly finding empowerment in the maternal metaphor, focuses on a more community-based maternal instinct and drive that is found in a shared maternal body, counteracting the stability of both a single paternal figure, and a unilaterally denotative linguistic function.

The above analyses have shown that Branco, Amaral and Evaristo exploit the link between motherhood and language in order to challenge the longstanding dominance of the father over language and literary legacy. The diverse uses of the maternal to contradict and reconfigure masculine, paternalist notions of language has provided a stable foundation from which to construct alternative associations with the maternal body, and from which to provide space, unhindered by existing discourses, for her multiple configurations.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen a number of ways in which maternal bodies can destabilize the way in which the symbolic woman has been used as a discursive tool throughout the Lusophone world, from the times of empire, to the modern postcolonial nation. Compared to the limited symbolic representations of mothers such as Freyre's black mother, the *estadonovista* sacrificial mother and 'Mother Africa', the maternal bodies represented in the above poems have brought to light the vast divergence in cultural experiences of motherhood, in terms of both oppression and resistance. Despite

the distinct material situations within which motherhood is experienced, however, there is some common ground to be found in the way each poet has identified in motherhood an affinity with a deviant and counter-discursive language.

Given the complex and diverse configurations of maternal bodies that appear in the emphatically divergent Lusophone spaces, and feminisms, I had not expected to encounter such a convergence in the way in which these three poets treat the intersection of maternal body and language. Whilst this theme has underlined the impossibility of conflating the material experience of motherhood into one, succinct 'maternal body', and whilst there can never be (nor should there be) a single formula for the feminist re-appropriation of motherhood, there is still a powerful thread to be found in the acknowledgement of the maternal body as a creative source. Motherhood provides, for these poets, a site both for the confrontation of existing perceptions and stereotypes of gender difference and an alternative lens through which to consider authorship and literary influence – be that in the development of a new subject identity, as is the case for Evaristo and Branco, or for the complexification and resignification of an existing women's subjectivity in Amaral's poetry.

This common thread, does not, of course, hinder nor invalidate the textual uniqueness of each poem studied in this chapter, as Branco, Evaristo and Amaral have each formed intricate webs of textuality from the myriad elements that merge to create an individual experience of motherhood, and of subjectivity. One might describe the approach to maternal bodies, therefore, as an infinitely complex intermingling of genes; genes which build and evolve over time within each maternal body through generations of contact with social pressures, racial discrimination, environmental experience and national ideologies (to name but a few influences) to form a unique textual DNA for each poetic mother.

What is certain, though, is that the Oedipal family drama which can be traced through Lusophone imperial, Portuguese, Angolan and Brazilian discourses on the mother and national identity, has been turned on its head. The alienated mothers, the Jocastas of Portugal, Brazil, and Angola, have found a voice through the poetry of Branco, Evaristo

and Amaral. Marianne Hirsch once wrote of Jocasta that '*this* story cannot be filled in because we have no framework within which to do it *from her perspective*' (1989: 4), but in the poetry analysed above we *can* find a framework for the alienated mother. Poetry has emerged as the perfect setting for this story to be heard by bringing into play alternative structures of meaning and voice that do not always prioritise the paternal symbolic function. It provides a space for poets to redefine motherhood by uncovering and laying bare the oppression that mothers suffer, by recovering the mother-daughter relationship as a space for the empowerment of women, and by developing a language that contests paternal dominance in both language and literature. Motherhood, thus, can become a 'framework' of sorts for the reconsideration of structures of poetic subjectivity, challenging the stability of the unitary subject as well as the linearity of influence, meaning and language.

Chapter Two: Mystic Subjects and Bodies in Brazil

This chapter, unlike the other chapters of this thesis, is focused on two poets from the same country. Not only are Prado and Evaristo both from Brazil, but they are also from the same state: Minas Gerais. However, each was born into different strata of society and distinct sociocultural contexts; Prado into the conventional working class white family of a labourer and a housewife in the provincial industrial city Divinópolis, and Evaristo into a large single-parent family headed by a domestic worker in a favela of Belo Horizonte. This chapter, focusing on the role of religion and the employment of mystic subjects in their work, will compare the ways in which these two distinctive poets have employed religious mysticism not only as a theme, but also as an essential element of the definition of poetic subjects and the redefinition of female bodies. Whilst Prado's poetry stems from a long tradition of Catholic mysticism that has a strong literary heritage in the writings of mystics such as Teresa of Ávila and Joana de Jesus, Evaristo's poetry refers to Afro-Brazilian Candomblé.[39]

The differences between these two cosmologies are stark: Candomblé, unlike Catholicism, is not scripture-based, is polytheistic, has no central authority, and is explored primarily through dance, body movements, and Yoruba songs that are predominantly incomprehensible to the Brazilian practitioners, rather than ceremonies centred on oration and a strongly developed institutional rhetoric. Furthermore, the institutional hierarchy of the Catholic Church adheres to a patriarchal structure, compared to the matriarchal structure of traditional Candomblé within which the leaders are referred to as *Mãe-Santos,* and the practitioners of spirit-possession as *Filhas da Santo.* What these religions do share, however, is a significant mystic component, be that in the writings of Catholic mystics, the ritual of spirit possession in Candomblé, or in the symbolic mysticism of the Body of Christ. In this chapter, the mystic element will

[39] It is important to distinguish between Candomblé in Brazil and other versions of the religion in African nations and other South American nations as, in each context, Candomblé has developed in a slightly different way, including the syncretic practice of Candomblé and Catholicism in Brazil.

provide the springboard for comparison. I will begin by using Prado and Evaristo's poetry to explore the dynamics of mystic subjectivity and how these dynamics play into the process of subject-formation and the positioning of their poetic enunciations as counter-discourse. In the second part of this chapter, I will go on to consider the way Prado and Evaristo use mysticism in order to challenge existing representations of the women's bodies by creating empowered and embodied poetic subjects. Before embarking upon a close reading of Prado and Evaristo's poetry, though, I would like to consider some initial definitions of mysticism and assess the Catholic and Candomblé mystic traditions explored by Prado and Evaristo, as well as the role of women in mysticism.

Mysticism, by nature, necessarily encompasses questions of both subjectivity and counter-discourse, as is reflected in many attempts at defining such a challenging concept. At a very basic level, mysticism refers to a direct contact between the mystic and a God or Gods, unmediated by religious leaders or texts (although mystic encounters are often subsequently recorded in text). In terms of the subject, or the self, Certeau writes that mysticism is 'characterized by the consciousness, received or acquired, of a fulfilling passivity in which the self loses itself in God' (1992: 13). Nelson Pike uses the metaphor of a sponge to explain the union that occurs between a mystic and God: 'in Full Union the soul is less like a fish than like a *sponge* in water. The soul is not just submerged, it is also sopped with God' (1992: 10). Thus, according to Pike and Certeau, mysticism involves the absorption of an 'other' into the 'self' which, in literature, could challenge conceptions of the discrete and impermeable literary subject – an element that will become further significant when we consider the representations and limits of the female body later in this chapter.

Beyond the dynamics of the mystic union, though, many definitions of mysticism focus on the deviation that mysticism constitutes from the institutional centre of a religion and the power that the direct contact with God can provide an otherwise institutionally marginalized voice. Certeau usefully explains this phenomenon in terms of space, writing that mysticism 'had for its place an *elsewhere* and for its sign an *anti-society* […]'

(1992: 12). Grace Jantzen, author of *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* also writes that

> [t]he fascination of the subject of mysticism is not, I suggest, simply a fascination with intense psychological experiences for their own sake, but rather because the answers to each of these questions are also ways of defining or delimiting authority. The connection of questions of power to questions of mysticism is obvious as soon as one stops to think of it: a person who was acknowledged to have direct access to God would be in a position to challenge any form of authority, whether doctrinal or political, which she saw as incompatible with the divine will. (Jantzen 1995: 1)

For Jantzen and Certeau, mysticism is spatially and critically separate from the hegemonic voices of a religion and (or) a society where certain (often institutional) religions take precedence over other more marginalized religious practices. The marginalization of mystic practice is regularly perceptible in the influence that a dominant religion may have over politics, the form a society takes (particularly with reference to patriarchal structures or so-called 'family values') and identity-formation (in definitions of national identity, for example). Mysticism, therefore, has the potential of altering the power dynamics by imbuing an otherwise marginal space with divine power and authority, which is usually reserved to hegemonic religious practice and institutionalised religious authorities.

The choice to evoke mystic traditions in their poetic work, then, reveals a distancing from an authoritative or socially hegemonic centre. Prado, often described explicitly as a Catholic mystic poet, appears to have picked up on a centuries-old tradition of Catholic mystic writings by women, harking back to the likes of Teresa of Avila and Joana de Jesus,[40] whilst transplanting the tradition firmly into the realm of modern, Brazilian literature. Descriptions of Prado often refer to her as a kind of prophet or *'vate'.* Carlos Drummond de Andrade wrote in the *Jornal do Brasil* in 1975 'Acho que [S. Francisco

[40] Whilst lesser known than Teresa of Ávila, Joana de Jesus is an important example of a Portuguese mystic writer following in the literary tradition of Teresa of Ávila. For more information on Joana de Jesus, as well as transcriptions of her texts, see Joana Serrado's doctoral thesis 'Ancias/Anxiousness in Joana de Jesus' (1617-1681) (Serrado 2014).

de Assis] está no momento ditando em Divinópolis os mais belos poemas e prosas a Adélia Prado' (quoted in Moreira 2011: 13), and in *A Literatura Feminina no Brasil Contemporâneo*, Nelly Novaes Coelho wrote that 'Adélia Prado resgata uma presença há muito banida do mundo da poesia: a do *vate*, o "poeta iluminado" que desde a origem dos tempos deu voz aos deuses ou ao mistério que preside à criação da vida' (Coelho 1993: 29).

Having worked as a religious studies teacher, Prado's poetry is filled with scriptural and ecclesiastic references; her (personal and poetic) dedication to the Catholic faith has, however, not resulted in an uncritical or conventional relationship to the Catholic Church. Although subtle, Prado's use of the mystic subject to express a form of Catholic devotion that bypasses the patriarchal structures of Catholicism, allows us to view her extensive oeuvre as a counter-discourse working against both traditional Catholic rhetoric on the body and gender, and also its status as organising principle in modern Brazilian society. This ability to evoke spirituality outside the paradigms of organized religion is often perceived as a fundamental quality of the mystic evocation. The liberation theologist Leonardo Boff, for example, views mysticism (Catholic, syncretic, and non-Christian) as essentially a form of critique or deviation from the institutional norm of the Catholic Church as it takes its authority directly from a divine source rather than via ecclesiastical hierarchy, writing that

> [d]e modo geral, a instituição não gosta dos místicos. Ela gosta das pessoas que falam em nome do papa, do bispo, da doutrina… O místico não se refere a nada disso. Ele fala em nome de Deus. O Deus que ele experimenta. Por isso o místico é fundador. Ele não parte do fundado, daquilo que existe. (Boff and Betto 1994: 36)

Whilst Prado's poetry is characterized by a certain religious conservatism, there is a kind of radical movement in her poetry away from the hierarchies and practices of the church which can be perceived as counter-discursive in its own way. Through her mystic poetry, Prado creates a direct relationship between a gendered, feminine poetic subject and God; something that has traditionally been denied to women through the male

domination of institutional power within the Catholic church.[41] In order to explore this relationship, the poems chosen for analysis in this chapter serve to highlight the definition of the poetic subject in terms of its space within Brazilian literary heritage (in 'Com licença poética' (Prado 2016: 11); the way in which Prado critiques and subverts existing Catholic rhetoric on women (in 'Rute no campo' Ibid., 149); and the centrality of the body to Prado's development of a mystic poetic subject.

Evaristo, on the other hand, has a significant background of political engagement with Afro-Brazilian activism, particularly through cultural groups such as *Quilombhoje,*[42] and Brazilian black feminism. For some time Candomblé in Brazil has provided a space for the expression of Afro-Brazilian heritage and community in practice, but numerous theorists have also lauded the *terreiro* (place of worship) as a site for Afro-Brazilian given its spatial and ideological links to historic *quilombos* resistance (Sodré 2002; A. do Nascimento 1980a). Although Candomblé is often featured in Brazilian literature (particularly in the works of writers from Salvador da Bahia such as Jorge Amado and Helena Parente Cunha), the religion itself is oral in nature and does not have a central text.[43] Contrary to the centrality of the scriptures in Catholicism and of written confessions in Catholic mysticism, Candomblé mysticism is expressed primarily through song (although in a long-forgotten Yoruba language) and bodily performance. The focus on orality and corporeality, combined with a history of forced, violent, social or political silence of a specific community means that, when transferred into written literature, the politics of *voice* become especially apparent.

That being said, Evaristo and many Brazilians do not encounter Candomblé or any religion in a complete vacuum but through a long history of religious syncretism.

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[41] Pierre Bourdieu, in *Masculine Domination* (2001) [*La domination masculine* (1998)] details the mechanisms that create and maintain male domination in modern society, with a particular focus on the family, the Church, education, and how these combine to ensure privilege the masculine over the feminine.

[42] *Quilombhoje,* is an amalgamation of the terms *quilombo* and *hoje* (today). *Quilombo* is the Brazilian term for the historic societies of escaped slaves and comes from a Kimbundu term for a military initiation camp (Schwarcz and Starling 2018: 94).

[43] The oral repetition of the songs and tenets of Candomblé draws on and contributes to the tradition of oral story-telling in pre-colonial African and modern Afro-Brazilian communities.

Candomblé itself developed as an amalgamation of African religions and certain aspects of Catholicism (as we will see later in the chapter), and it is with this in mind that I have decided to include the poem ‘Meu rosário’ in this chapter, as I believe that to look at Candomblé mysticism in isolation from the influence of Catholicism would be to omit not only an important part of religious expression, but also an element of the development of an Afro-Brazilian voice in Brazilian society as a whole. The second poem that I have chosen to include in this chapter will be ‘Na mulher, o tempo…’, in which I will consider the links between the role of the black female body in Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian feminism.

Within feminist theory, critics are divided on the subject of mysticism. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, for example, took a cautious approach to the subject, acknowledging, on the one hand, the potential of mysticism for the creation of an empowered subject position for women, whilst, on the other hand, emphasising the existentialist and broadly materialist perspective that a person could only realize their full potential through human choice and action. Beauvoir writes:

> Mystical fervour, like love and even narcissism, can be integrated into active and independent lives. But in themselves these attempts at individual salvation can only result in failures; either the woman establishes a relationship with an unreal: her double or God; or she creates an unreal relation with a real being; in any case, she has no grasp on the world; she does not escape her subjectivity; her freedom remains mystified; there is only one way of accomplishing it authentically: it is to project it by a positive action into human society. (Beauvoir 2015: 734)

The exception to Beauvoir’s negative opinion of mysticism is the case of Saint Teresa of Ávila whom Beauvoir credits with being ‘one of the only women to have lived the human condition for herself, in total abandonment’ (ibid., 766). For Beauvoir, Teresa was exceptional because of the way she surpassed the objectification of women according to sexual difference. This perspective is in line with Beauvoir’s existentialist emphasis on the actions of free and responsible individuals, regardless of the values of the society within which the individual lives:

> [w]hen finally it is possible for every human being to place his pride above sexual differences in the difficult glory of his free existence, only then will woman be able to make her history, her problems, her doubts and her hopes those of humanity; only then will she be able to attempt to discover in her life and her works all of reality and not only her own person. As long as she still has to fight to become a human being, she cannot be a creator. (Ibid., 767)[44]

Thus, what distinguishes Teresa from other women mystics, in Beauvoir's opinion, is not her practice of mysticism, but her choice to transform the authority she gains from the mystic union into productive action; accounting for Teresa's more material achievements such as her reformation of the Carmelite order.

As Amy Hollywood explains in *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History,* Beauvoir's assessment of mystics, including her praise of Teresa of Ávila, 'effaces the intersubjective and divine relationships that make Teresa's projects possible' (2000: 123). She writes:

> Beauvoir refuses to acknowledge the way in which Teresa's activities were both engendered and enabled by the world in which she lived – in particular by her deployment of claims to divine authorization with and against human, male-dominant institutions. Teresa's situation not only limited or denied her freedom, but also provided the means by which she was able to transcend at least some of its constraints. (In a similar way, the body – in its limitations and mortality – not only serves as a constraint to human transcendence and autonomy but also is the means through which we attain consciousness and subjectivity.) (Ibid., 137)

Hollywood's assertion, whilst intended as a comment on a predominantly Christian tradition of mysticism, is also useful for defining my approach to Evaristo's poetry, in that for both poets, my reading places a strong emphasis on maintaining an eye to the material even when contemplating loftier planes.

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[44] The French possessive pronouns in the original text do not present the same false gender neutrals as this translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, although Beauvoir does use the masculine noun 'être humain'.

Understanding mystic poetic subjects

In order to understand the trajectory and propulsion of Prado's poetry, it is best to start from the beginning, with the well-known opening poem of her first collection *Bagagem* (1975), 'Com licença poética'. Functioning as a mission statement for her poetic approach, this poem introduces both the role of the mystic poet and Prado's perspective on the condition of being a woman and, indeed, a woman writer.

> Quando nasci um anjo esbelto,
> desses que tocam trombeta, anunciou:
> vai carregar bandeira.
> Cargo muito pesado pra mulher,
> esta espécie ainda envergonhada.
> Aceito os subterfúgios que me cabem,
> sem precisar mentir.
> Não sou tão feia que não possa casar,
> acho o Rio de Janeiro uma beleza e
> ora sim, ora não, creio em parto sem dor.
> Mas o que sinto escrevo. Cumpro a sina.
> Inauguro linhagens, fundo reinos
> ─ dor não é amargura.
> Minha tristeza não tem pedigree,
> já a minha vontade de alegria,
> sua raiz vai ao meu mil avô.
> Vai ser coxo na vida é maldição pra homem.
> Mulher é desdobrável. Eu sou.
> (*Louvará*: 11)[45]

This poem offers a 'claim to divine authorization with and against male-dominated institutions' such as that described by Hollywood in a number of ways. Firstly, Prado creates a gendered, modern poetic subject that appears in direct counterpoint to

[45] Unless otherwise stated, all citations of Prado's poetry will be taken from the 2016 anthology published by Assírio & Alvim in 2016 *Tudo que Existe Louvará: Antologia;* henceforth referenced as 'Louvará'.

masculine-dominated Brazilian modernism through intertextuality with one of its leading figures, Carlos Drummond de Andrade[46]. Secondly, she sets her poetic subject up as a spokesperson for the condition of the average Brazilian woman using the figure of the *vate.* Finally, she uses the modern poetic subject to expand and complexify the simplistic and limiting definitions of women repeated by Brazilian society and institutions such as the Catholic church.

The opening poem to Prado's first collection propels Prado into the literary scene by establishing a bold and original poetic voice, positioning her gendered poetic subject in opposition to an androcentric literary tradition. 'Com licença poética' enters an intertextual dialogue with Drummond in order to establish the role of a feminised poetic subject within the forum of Brazilian literature. This dialogue calls into question the role of the modernist poetic subject, as constructed by Drummond, by placing the modernist subject into contact with the social condition of being a woman in Brazil. This poem functions, on one level, as a pastiche of Drummond's 'Poema de Sete Faces' – the first poem of his collection *Alguma Poesia* (1930). The intertextuality is most obvious at the beginning and the end of the poem ('Quando nasci um anjo esbelto, | desses que tocam trombeta, anunciou:'; 'Vai ser coxo na vida é maldição pra homem.') where she, in both cases, refers to the opening stanza of Drummond's famous poem:

> Quando nasci, um anjo torto
> Desses que vivem na sombra
> Disse: Vai, Carlos! Ser gauche na vida
> [...]
> (Drummond de Andrade, 1948: 9)

Whilst Drummond's original is a parody of the glorification of the classical concept of the poet placed on earth by the gods to give voice to divinity via the influence of a muse, Prado's re-contextualization of the stanza reverts to a more stereotypical image of angels who encourage the poet towards a different path. Prado's divine influencer, with

[46] Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902-1987) was a popular writer who published during the second wave of Brazilian modernism, generally considered to stretch from 1930 (the year that Drummond published *Alguma Poesia*) to 1945.

the pomp of trumpets, drives the poetic subject to *carregar a bandeira*. This phrase places Prado's poetic subject in the position of a leading voice, of representing and speaking for a silenced group (such as women poets, or women in general), but at the same time the word '*carregar'* suggests that this may be a heavy load to bear. It is as though there is a path set out along which the poetic subject must carry the flag in order to fulfil her 'divine mission', which stands in stark contrast to Drummond's angel who encourages the poetic subject to be *gauche* (taken from the French, this word can be understood as divergent). Whilst Drummond's masculine subject is driven to defy identification, Prado's feminine subject is presented with the burden of providing a voice for an entire, under-represented (and yet over-*re*-presented) social group. The rest of the poem, however, expresses the subject's ambivalence towards the 'cargo' bestowed upon her by the 'anjo esbelto'. This ambivalence is suggested through the complex unfolding of the poetic subject's identity that refuses the reduction of the subject to a simplistic symbol of femininity, such as the feminine figures in the works of Camões and Freyre that become symbols of colonial conquest and national harmony in the service of male privilege and a dominant patriarchal figure.

At the end of the poem, Prado uses humour to dismantle the privilege of the isolated male intellectual, through a homophonic parody of the third line of Drummond's poem. Replacing *gauche* with *coxo* [lame or incomplete], and declaring this *gauche/coxo* quality as a curse upon *man*kind, Prado cleverly dismisses the fragmented masculine poetic subject, at once stabilising the apparently-alienated and misunderstood intellectual's identity, reducing it to a single identity of its own creation – and (playing with the homophonic pair *gauche/coxo* and the semantic similarities of *coxo*, *torto* and *gauche*) using the voice of the male poet. The poem ends, however, not on a humorous note consistent with the word-play of the poem, but with a complex statement of identity, 'Mulher é desdobrável. Eu sou.' Fabio Scorsolini-Comin and Manoel Antônio dos Santos explain that

> [e]ssa aproximação ao universo drummondiano – outro mineiro nascido no Interior de Minas – tem caráter programático na obra inaugural de Adélia, ao contrastar o gênero feminino com o masculino e problematizar suas distinções. Ao destacar

> que ser mulher é ser 'desdobrável', a poetisa assume que não haveria uma única identidade, unívoca, datada e sedimentada, que abarcaria o que é a *mulher,* enquanto categoria social. (Scorsolini-Comin and M. A. dos Santos 2013: 5)

The final line of the poem, therefore, stands for the critical approach to gender stereotypes that is carried into Prado's later poems as she continues to develop her poetic mystic subject. In this initial poem, Prado distinguishes her poetic subject against the societal and religious discourses that categorize women, and also against the predominance of a masculine poetic subject in Brazilian literature. This critical standpoint is visible in the poem through the intertextual references and critique of Drummond's 'Poema de Sete Faces', with a particular focus on the role of the poetic subject in conjunction with the drive for poetic production. Drummond's complex poem does not go quite so far as to suggest that the subject is comprised *only* of the seven 'faces' that make up the seven stanzas of his poem, but they do suggest a drive to capture a whole, the struggle towards which is the main theme of the poem. Prado, however, establishes a dialogue with Drummond's poem that questions the teleological belief in the drive towards a 'whole' through the introduction of the *desdobrável* – the un-fold-able.

The terms 'faces' from Drummond's poem and 'desdobrável' in Prado's highlight the different approaches to poetic subject identity in the two texts; a difference that recalls the Derridean concept of a 'fold' [*pli*]. For Derrida, '[t]he fold renders (itself) manifold but (is) not (one)' (2000: 229), whereby the process of folding a text creates a number of 'other' faces, folds or sides, and yet these cannot be reduced to parts of a single whole. The folds of a text emphasize both its materiality and its complexity. Besides being a material, textual object, the text is multiple but made of multiple folds that do not necessarily neatly converge to create a whole. Neither are the faces created by the fold easily separated or categorized, for the fold is 'out of itself, in itself, at once its own outside and its own inside; between the outside and the inside, making the outside enter the inside and turning back the antre or the other upon its surface' (ibid.). Drummond, then, in separating the poetic subject into 'sete faces', is looking at the poetic text and the poetic subject through a different lens to Prado whose poem creates meaning

instead through the folds of the text, and whose 'desdobrável' poetic subject relies upon the tension and possibilities present in the folds rather than the *faces* of a text.

This difference in approach becomes apparent, for example, in the structures of the poems. Whilst both poems are essentially structured around the process of constructing a complex and modern poetic subject, Drummond separates the various facets of his subject into distinct stanzas, as opposed to Prado's single-stanza poem. The effect of this is that Prado's poetic subject identity develops in a different space: in the folds. Identity and meaning are constructed in the *entre*, where the various facets of the subject's identity meet and are folded against each other, away from each other, inside each other, and so on. Prado's poem uses notions of gender identity or authorial identity that are often used in simplistic categorizations of women, poets or women-poets: 'Não sou tão feia que não possa casar, | acho o Rio de Janeiro uma beleza e | ora sim, ora não, creio em parto sem dor.' These three lines present a common prejudice against women writers or women who choose to work (that they cannot find husbands to provide for them), an opinion on Rio de Janeiro which defies a simplistic identification of a 'regional poet', and a statement on childbirth that brings to mind both a feminist agenda (bearing in mind that Prado is rarely described as politically feminist) but which also goes against Christian rhetoric on the punishment of the female body as a result of Eve's original sin. In finding the possibilities of meaning (rather than a straightforward or literal meaning) in the folds of these ideas, stances and opinions, Prado defies the tendency in Western society to categorize women according to generally simplistic identities such as 'feminist', 'women writers', 'religious', 'conservative', or 'regional'. The subject of this poem is defined more from the tensions and the play between these multiple facets than from the facets themselves. This reading would certainly mirror the ambivalent relationship that the subject has with the heraldic angel who encourages her to 'carregar a bandeira' as a spokeswoman.

The term *desdobrável*, of course, refers to a process of '*un*folding' or (literally) '*de*-folding'. Both the poem and the aforementioned theoretical explorations of 'the fold', however, do not seem to suggest a reading of this term as simply a reversal of the

process of folding (a return to a single whole), as this would deny the fluidity and infinite nature of the original fold, and would also negate the structural changes left by a fold (such as a line on a sheet of paper). As with many Derridean terms, the fold relies on its 'undecidability', which refers to terms or concepts that defy dichotomous definition. A pertinent example of this is Derrida's exploration of the 'double-edged' word 'hymen', which can stand for both virginity and marriage. Derrida explains that

> It produces its effect first and foremost through the syntax, which disposes the '*entre'* in such a way that the suspense is due only to the placement and not to the content of words. Through the 'hymen' one can remark only what the place of the word *entre* already marks and would mark even if the word 'hymen' were not there. [...] It is the 'between,' whether it names fusion or separation, that thus carries all the force of the operation. The hymen must be determined through the *entre* and not the other way around. (Derrida 2000: 220)

If the meaning of the term 'hymen' lies in the *entre* then the seemingly binary opposite values virginity and marriage can no longer be defined by a dichotomous relationship. The process of folding and unfolding, then, also becomes more complicated when we consider its undecidability. In stating that '[m]ulher é desdobrável', Prado is not claiming that 'woman' was previously folded and can now be unfolded and returned to a single whole but is hinting at the infinite possibilities of 'mulher'.

This movement is present not only in the way Prado structures the development of the poetic subject in her poem, but also in the way in which she expresses herself through language. In a manner that recalls Derrida's refusal of language as a carrier of a single, literal meaning, Prado also highlights the polysemic function of poetic language through the folds and hymens of the text. She does this through intertextuality and parody, wordplay (such as the homophonic pair *gauche/coxo*), and ambiguous language and syntax. The result of this is to highlight the multiple possibilities of expression; creating a text that is as *desdobrável* as the poetic subject's identity. In Prado's poem, the folds of the text succeed in multiplying the possibilities of language, as is highlighted in the final line 'Mulher é desdobrával. Eu sou.' This line functions as a chiasmus, in that the second statement, by partially rejecting (and simultaneously relying on) the syntactical

expectation that the verb ‘ser’ requires either a noun or an adjective, holds the possibility of folding backwards to the first statement ‘Mulher é desdobrável’ to complete itself. The fact that this is dissymmetrical, resulting in multiple possible meanings, of course, means that a lateral meaning is never really ‘complete’ after all. The line leaves multiple readings open to interpretation as the ‘Eu sou’ folds back on itself searching for a noun or an adjective to find multiple possibilities (‘eu sou e mulher é desdobrável’, ‘eu sou desdobrável porque sou mulher’, ‘eu sou uma mulher que é desdobrável’, ‘eu sou uma mulher e/mas mulher é desdobrável’). In an analysis of Philippe Sollers’s novel *Numbers,* Derrida writes: ‘X: not an unknown but a chiasmus. A text that is unreadable because it is *only* readable. Untranslatable for the same reason. [...] [The] two propositions return upon each other, double for each other, and contradict each other’ (2000: 362-363).

The tension (which produces the possibilities of meanings) of Derridean chiasmus is created by the dissymmetrical nature of the chiasmus:

> The form of the chiasm, of the *X*, interests me a great deal, not as the symbol of the unknown, but because there is in it, as I underline in ‘*La dissemination,’* a kind of fork […] that is, moreover, unequal, one of the points extending its range further than the other: this is the figure of the double gesture, the intersection. (Derrida 1982: 70)

This is exactly the kind of dynamic that we see in Prado’s poem, which has the effect of highlighting the intangibility and the textuality of both the *Mulher* and the *Eu* (which are at once united and separated by the chiasmatic movement present in the final line). Just as Derrida’s use of the chiasmus in his readings of literary texts aims to challenge binary or simplistic understandings of the function of language and text, Prado uses this syntactical play to call into question the stability of poetic subject identity, and the tendency for gender to be characterized through relative and dichotomous figurations: two concerns which, of course, converge in the figure of the woman-poet. In terms of our reading of this poem as a response to Drummond’s ‘Poema de Sete Faces’, this final line relies so entirely upon the folds and the infinite possibilities of the fold, that the

neater faceted model of poetic subjectivity offered by Drummond is put under erasure. If we turn our focus to the poem as a socio-political commentary, however, Prado is also breaking down the kind of linguistic and ontological structures that have led to reductive understandings of gender and gender roles which she clearly aims to challenge and, indeed, transgress.

In her text 'Do Centro e da Margem: Escrita do Corpo em Escritos de Mulheres', Amaral sumarizes the counter-discursive power of Prado's inaugural poem:

> Assistiríamos, assim, no poema de Adélia Prado, à desmontagem de uma 'paternidade' poética e à fundação de uma nova identidade, conseguida através de um duplo movimento: um, subversivo, porque utilizando os instrumentos socialmente construídos para o papel social e psico-sexual do dito 'feminino' – daí o (delicado) pedido, contido no título, de autorização poética –, o outro, transgressor, nos sentidos de 'Liberdade' e mesmo 'dissolução' que a palavra 'licença' igualmente contempla. Esse duplo movimento irá depois expandir-se na multiplicidade que implica o 'desdobrável', atributo físico e psicológico da mulher, que serve para a representar, e com quem o sujeito lírico parece identificar-se. (Amaral 2017b: 65)

The Catholic Church's attitudes to the role of women in society seem to be a particular focus of Prado's transgressive and subversive poetic. This is demonstrated in the opening of the poem through the subject's ambivalence towards the directions of the 'anjo esbelto' as well as the lines 'Não sou tão feia que não possa casar, | acho o Rio de Janeiro uma beleza e | ora sim, ora não, creio em parto sem dor.' Here, as I have already mentioned, the poetic subject responds to a number of essentializations of gender identity in Brazil, and especially to the expectations of women according to the more conservative gender roles encouraged by the Church. In referring to the issue of pain in childbirth, Prado brings to mind the Christian understanding that the pains of childbirth and the burdens of reproduction are part of the punishment for Eve's original sin. Prado's poetic subject, therefore, appears to engage critically with religious discourse. This is further underlined by Prado's earlier mimicry of religious discourse in the fifth line of the poem which describes women as 'esta espécie ainda envergonhada.'

The mimicry of this long-standing association of women with shame, along with the choice to include the word ‘ainda’, imply an impatience on the part of the poetic subject as well as an element of sarcasm highlighted by the ironic distance created by referring to women as ‘esta espécie’.

Through the theme of Catholic guilt, Prado also highlights the role of the body both in faith and in the material conditions of womanhood. Incorporating references to the physical suffering of women in childbirth highlights the link between the suffering of women in religious discourse and the real, material suffering of women. The term ‘desdobrável’ itself has distinctly physical connotations, provoking images of something that is palpable and yet not rigid. The use of this term therefore points to the corporeality of the Adélian poetic subject as well as the counter-discourse that Prado’s poetry proposes against gendered narratives of shame and more rigid and oppressive definitions of femininity. The title of the poem, ‘Com licença poética’, similarly suggests an element of discord and yet a deference (‘com licença’) to the poetic form which has provided the poet with the freedom and authority necessary to create a poetic subject that casts a critical eye on Brazilian society and religious practice.

Whilst the dynamics of mystic subjectivity are not fully explored in this first poem, the poetic subject is presented to the reader first and foremost through her relationship to, and interaction with, a heavenly being (the *anjo esbelto*). Furthermore, Prado’s poetic impetus is introduced as something driven simultaneously by, and in spite of, the subject’s relationship to a heavenly plane. This relationship supports the understanding of Prado’s essentially counter-discursive poetic subject. The approximation of the poetic subject to a divine being imbues the voice with a certain authority, as explained in the previously cited text by Hollywood, but at the same time, the poetic subject does not uncritically accept everything dictated to her by the ‘anjo esbelto’. So in this inaugural appearance of the Adélian poetic subject, the reader is aware of both a divine authority that renders the subject capable of ‘establishing lineages and founding kingdoms’ (‘Inauguro linhagens, fundo reinos’), and of a critical distance that allows the subject her own voice, and a certain level of autonomy from the divine (‘Mas o que sinto escrevo’).

The mystic subject, whilst incorporating the ultimate 'other' as part of the 'I', complicates and holds before us the ultimate question of the speaking subject. As Certeau explains, our understanding of God's role in the world has changed due to the fact that 'the world is no longer perceived as *spoken* by God, that it has become opacified, objectified, and detached from its supposed speaker' (1995: 188). Religious institutions approach this problem by creating testaments of the word of God and using the status of the word (as both written scripture and the orally repetition of text in the performance of religious ceremony) to justify their significance as unshakeable and essential truths and contracts. The mystic, on the other hand, turns to the original speech act rather than the existing scriptural text. It is the ability to hear the ultimate, divine 'I' that denotes faith. Certeau writes:

> Since the Speaking Word *must* exist even though it may become inaudible, he [the mystic] temporarily substitutes his speaking *I* for the inaccessible divine *I.* He makes this *I* into the representation of what is missing – a representation that marks the place of what it does not replace. Contradictory in nature, therefore, the speaking *I* (or writer) takes up the illocutionary function, but in the name of the Other. Like the position (also contradictory) of 'author,' the mystic sustains the question that cannot be forgotten but cannot be resolved either: that of the speaking subject. He 'holds' this void in suspense. (Ibid.)

Within the mystic subject, there are two '*I´s,* the subject and the divine Other. Through the mystic subject, the Other also attains the status of subject, but the mystic subject does not coincide exactly with the divine voice, as the mystic's subjectivity continues outside of the Other's enunciation. Through the illocutionary function – through speaking, written narrative or, in the case of Prado, through poetry – the mystic subject expresses both subjectivities 'in the name of the Other', but does not wholly replace or become the Other subject in the process. She remains distinct from what Certeau calls the 'inaccessible divine "*I*"' because of her accessibility and historicity. This position allows for the creation of a narrative or a fiction around the act of speaking that exceeds the authority that comes from access to the divine *'I',* whereby the mystic subject is able

to construct a discourse through her own inimitable voice (as opposed to institutional doctrine, for example).

Certeau uses the case of Teresa of Ávila as a case in point, stating that "'[t]he command" authorizes the author whereas the "fiction" allows discourse; the former comes from clerics while the latter is addressed to "sisters "' (Ibid 190) This description of Teresa of Ávila's case goes some way to understanding, or developing, Beauvoir's admiration of her 'active and independent life'. Ultimately it was the fictional aspect of Saint Teresa's work – the development of a new discourse on religious practice in the Carmelite order – that allowed her to exceed the restrictions of her gender and reform the order. As Certeau hints above, Teresa had two audiences to appeal to in her writing: the confessor and advisors who must approve and edit her writing, and the women (predominantly subordinates) whom she hoped to inspire through her mystic writing.[47] Whilst Prado was not faced by this same calibre of censorship, nor did she identify as a mystic writer *per se*, her inaugural poem shows some trace of the different levels from which the poem can be approached. As a response to the privilege of male voices in literary and religious discourse (and the resulting under-representation of women's voices in national discourses such as those discussed in the introductory chapter), Prado's insistence on the sovereignty of the mystic subject in the face of divine power (made possible through the dynamics of the mystic condition) prevents the reduction of the gendered protagonist to a mere follower of, outlet for, or object to the divine being.

The voice of the Other is present, though, as a claim for authority in the evocation of the angel proclaiming Prado's poetic subject as a 'flag-bearer' for women poets. At the same time, however, the poetic subject's enunciation is defined by the material conditions and gender norms of 1970s Brazil – a materiality that the divine *I* cannot access. In Prado's poem, the gendered body, therefore, becomes the space where the question of the speaking subject is held (to use Certeau's phrasing). The duality of the

[47] See *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* by Alison Weber (1996: 78) on Teresa's writing process.

mystic subject in Prado's poetry is succinctly demonstrated in the short poem 'Rute no campo', from *A Duração do Dia* (first published in 2010).

> No quarto pequeno
> onde o amor não pode nem gemer
> admiro minhas lágrimas no espelho, sou humana,
> quero o carinho que à ovelha mais fraca se dispensa.
> Não parecem ser meus meus pensamentos.
> Alguns versos restam improveitáveis,
> belos como relíquias de ouro velho quebrado,
> esquecidas no campo à sorte de quem as respigue.
> A nudez apazigua porque o corpo é inocente,
> só quer comer, casar, só pensa em núpcias,
> comida quente na mesa comprida
> pois sente fome, fome, muita fome.
> (*Louvará*: 149)

In this poem the poetic subject and her relation to God is played out through the story of Ruth from the Bible. Prado likens her role as poet to that of Ruth gleaning wheat in the fields ('Alguns versos restam improveitáveis, | belos como relíquias de ouro velho quebrado, | esquecidas no campo à sorte de quem as respigue'). The poetic subject forms a poem, therefore, from the act of 'gleaning' [respigar]. Prado's choice of metaphor is an apt visual representation of the complexities of the subject explained by Certeau, as it requires two subjects (the subject who leaves the wheat and the subject who gleans the wheat). The owner of the wheat field (in the story of Ruth, Boaz, but for the purposes of the poem, God) is absent at the time of gleaning, but symbolically present in the wheat (the word). The wheat, or poetic word, are then gleaned by the mystic subject and they become hers, to be incorporated into a separate form by the protagonist.

This same sentiment explains the unusual repetition of 'meus' in the previous line: 'Não parecem ser meus meus pensamentos.' The repetition of 'meus' means that although the subject claims that the thoughts do not appear to be hers, they continue to be

defined as ‘her thoughts’ in that they are incorporated into her subjective space. The agency awarded to the poetic subject in the acts of gleaning and thinking, ensures a respect for the originality of the mystic subject herself, even during the mystic illocution. The Other is present in the lines of poetry, but the Other’s voice has now been incorporated into the enunciation of the poem and the *act of writing*.

The tension between the integrity of the speaking subject and the invocation of the Other is present in the conceptualization of space in the poem. The first line, for example, ‘No quarto pequeno’, recalls the cell of a nun; a common trope in the mystic tradition. In this cell, the mystic (usually a nun) is paradoxically enclosed in a small space, and yet in the presence of the immensity of God; an immensity that cannot possibly be contained within the space of a small room, but which the mystic has access to. The best example of the paradox of space in mysticism is the analogy offered by Teresa of Ávila: the ‘interior castle’. Teresa’s description of the interior castle notes the interiority of the soul, and simultaneous freedom that the soul has in this ‘castle’ to ‘fly’. In her article ‘A Woman’s Soul is her Castle: Place and Space in St Teresa’s Interior Castle’, Sheila Hughes writes that the most significant tension in Teresa’s writings ‘exists between place and space. Despite the map-like implications of her description, Teresa effectively resists the limitations of even metaphorical place’ (1997: 377). Thus, the soul, and the act of prayer and introspection that takes place within the soul, represents both containment and release, where her sisters would encounter a greater degree of movement within the soul than in the physical spaces that they inhabit.

Although there is nothing in Prado’s poem that identifies the subject as a nun, the opening of Prado’s poetic subject to the subjectivity of the Other, and the loaded image of the ‘quarto pequeno’, suggest the same desire for freedom of space, movement and expression as epitomised in Teresa’s ‘interior castle’. When we take into consideration the musings on the social condition of women and the questions posed by the poetic subject regarding social romantic conventions and the religious institution of marriage, Prado’s poem appears to reflect the concerns of early twentieth-century feminist writings on the importance of space, and ownership of space, for women’s freedom, as in

Virigina Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* [1929] (1945). In the face of Brazilian patriarchy, and the absence of women's voices (black and white) from discourses of national identity such as Freyrean lusotropicalism, the occupation and ownership of space – be it physical, psychological, or ideological – gains further meaning as a form of resistance in itself.

In 'Rute no campo', the poetic subject is physically enclosed within the 'quarto pequeno', which is described according to its limitations as physically small and, symbolically, as a representation of social restrictions on women's expressions of love or sexuality. The room is described as a place 'onde o amor não pode nem gemer'. In this line the term 'gemer' [moan] has connotations of extreme emotion (pleasurable or painful) and of sexual desire. The fact that love is the subject of the line rather than the poetic subject herself suggests a universality so that the reader becomes aware of a wider commentary on love that extends beyond the small bedroom and the small poem. The small room can be read, then, as a symbol of the social limitations (such as the expectation that the room of an unmarried woman be a place 'onde o amor não pode nem gemer') and also as a space within which the poetic subject is free to express her desires (as in Woolf's *Room of One's Own*) and where the 'fome, fome, muita fome' is free to be felt. The use of the word 'fome' has distinctly sexual connotations especially through the repetition of the word which leads to an intensification of the sentiment as well as suggesting that there are multiple objects of the hunger and desire expressed in this line. Within this room the poetic subject, who symbolically becomes naked in the ninth line of the poem, can truly feel and explore her desires through introspection even if she is unable to physically attain the object of her hunger.

Prado uses the freedom and space created by the mystic union to enter a critical relationship with normative social and religious attitudes to 'the female body' and women's expressions of love and sexuality. In the last four lines, Prado directly contradicts religious discourse on the body by creating a paradise for the poetic subject, where the burden of the guilt associated with the body is relieved. The line 'A nudez apazigua porque o corpo é inocente' returns the female body to its state in the Garden

of Eden, before Eve's transgression, and before the guilt and shame that follow the 'original sin' became the burden of women (such as the burden highlighted in 'Com licença poética'). If we see her clothing as a symbol of the socialization of the human body, nudity becomes a state where one is free from the restrictions placed on sexuality and the body by society. Prado denies Christianity's punishment of the female body and uses her poetry to build new religious associations with the female body. Whilst the institutions of Catholicism are dominated by men in terms of authority, the relationship that Prado's poetic subject has with God allows the creation of a religious femininity characterized by its voice and privileged position in relation to God, bypassing the structures of an androcentric institution.

Evaristo also uses religion and mysticism in her work, not only as themes but, like Prado, as a crucial tool for the formation of gendered poetic subjects that run counter to dominant Brazilian discourses on religion and representations of women's bodies. Evaristo, however, engages poetically with the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé in which mysticism plays a more central and communal role compared to the marginal practices of Catholic mysticism. In Candomblé the mystic practice of spirit possession is the focal point of worship, performed, observed, and shared by members of the *terreiro*. For many afro-Brazilian practitioners of Candomblé, the mystic performance and process also represents a connection to past generations of slaves in Brazil and also to the African homelands from which their ancestors were taken as slaves. The shared nature of the performance of mysticism as well as the emphasis on community is distinct from the more isolated, individual practice of Catholic mysticism which is only shared following the transformation of the mystic experience into written text by the mystic and, for the most part, their confessor or advisor. As Rachel Harding explains in *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness,*

> Candomblé took its shape and meaning from the experience of African people and their descendants in slave-based societies as they tried to make sense of themselves, their condition, their relation to structures of temporal power, and their relation to the structures of Being. (…) Candomblé was an important means for the engagement of trauma. It represented an integrative process – pulling together and

> (re)organizing that which had been rendered asunder: family, identity, and psyche.
>
> (Harding, 2003: xiii-xvi)

As such, Candomblé evokes not only a modern religious and spiritual identity, but also the history, creation, suffering and process of group identity formation of Afro-Brazilian communities. Furthermore, Candomblé mystics communicate spirit possession only through the movement of the body and the occasional guttural scream, thus situating the connection between the modern practitioners of Candomblé and their ancestors within the Afro-Brazilian body and the physical exertion of this body rather than a text. The balance between the individual subject that experiences spirit possession within the mystic ceremony, and the communal nature of this event determined by the oral, visual and performative aspects will be considered carefully in the forthcoming analysis of mystic poetic subjects.

The gender dynamics of Candomblé are also distinct from those of Catholicism, not only as positions of leadership and performance are traditionally reserved exclusively for women, but also in the meaning of gender within the Candomblé *terreiro.* In Candomblé, everything exists on a continuum, including notions of masculinity and femininity, and balance must be maintained within this continuum to successfully complete the ritual of spirit possession. Part of this balance is that certain roles and elements of the Candomblé ceremony are considered masculine and feminine. The *mediuns* play a feminine role, occupying the feminine space of the *terreiro*, maintained in equilibrium by the masculinity of the music, musicians, instruments and *orixás.* This gender continuum, however, does not directly correspond with the biological sex of performers. Whereas traditionally only women were able to be initiated as *mediuns*, these days men are admitted but still occupy a feminine role in the ceremony as *mediuns.*[48] During possession gender and biological sex are separate qualities, as all *orixás* are considered 'masculine' in terms of the role they play within the *terreiro*, and yet between them, each *orixá* has its own persona that can be either masculine or feminine. Equally, the gender of the possessing *orixá* need not correspond with the biological sex or

[48] This has led to a homosexual community applying camp aesthetics (through drag) to Candomblé, particularly in Cabocló Candomblé practiced in Rio de Janeiro.

gender-identity of the possessed *medium*, as a balance has already been obtained via the attributed masculinity or femininity of the roles they occupy in the ritual.

Although the most explicit use of Candomblé in Evaristo's work is her 2003 novel *Ponciá Vicêncio*, I will be looking at Evaristo's poetry which provides a clearer indication of the dynamics of mystic subjectivity through the drama of poetic subject-formation.[49] Evaristo's poetry shows how Candomblé and its mystic subjects become a beacon for Afro-Brazilian community and memory and what Evaristo calls 'a mística do *quilombo*': 'latente ou patente, como forma defensiva e afirmativa do negro, na sociedade brasileira' (2010: 138). In her article 'Literatura negra: a voz quilombola na literatura brasileira', Evaristo distinguishes the *quilombo* from the *senzala* (slave-quarters on a plantation) or the *gueto* (ghetto) by the fact that the *quilombo* is a chosen and self-defined society, representative of a community spirit and resistant 'blackness':

> [p]odemos pensar o quilombo como um espaço de vivência marcado pelo enfrentamento, pela audácia de contradizer, pelo risco de contraviver o sistema. O quilombo não garantia ao escravo a liberdade. Era escravo e escravo fugido, redobrando assim a sua exclusão social. O quilombola era o marginal, o fora-da-lei. (Ibid., 139)

The mystic element of the *quilombo*, the *terreiro*, and of black, Brazilian literature, is its simultaneous inclusion in and exclusion from Brazilian society – created within Brazil because of the displacement of African people in slavery, and yet separate from hegemonic Brazilian culture and society. Its marginal position is acknowledged as a way to create space for the development of an Afro-*Brazilian* identity from the 'other-ed' identity of an African transported to Brazil through slavery. Describing the *quilombo* as 'o fora-do-lei', Evaristo marks the *quilombo* as discursively 'outside' (*fora*), and therefore not restricted or shaped by the same paradigms as the society from which it distinguishes itself. Thus, the 'voz quilombola' in Evaristo's article is characterized first and foremost by its discursive 'outside-ness' which provides a distance from which to

[49] For an analysis of Evaristo's use of Candomblé in *Ponciá Vicêncio,* see Vanessa K. Valdés' *Oshun's daughters: the search for womanhood in the Americas* (2014).

develop group consciousness and, simultaneously, by its unavoidable inclusion in Brazilian society, gives the discourse of the *quilombo* its *counter*-discursive quality. The *terreiro*, historically situated in the sites of earlier *quilombos* (now encompassed by rapidly growing cities), possesses a similar symbolic status in modern Brazilian society. Upon entering the community-led place of worship, one symbolically leaves Brazil to enter a space defined by its mystic relationship to an idealized, mystic Africa (symbolized by details such as the traditional Candomblé dress and leaves scattered on the ground to represent the African jungle), and yet, even more so than the *quilombo*, the enclosed site of the *terreiro* is always situated within Brazil and the condition of Afro-Brazilians. The staging of the *terreiro* and the use of specific clothing, dances and rituals relating to the array of African cultures brought together in Brazilian slavery have persisted since the inception of Brazilian Candomblé and are part of what Harding describes as 'attempts to create and re-create community among human beings, to experience communion with the natural-divine world, to find spaces of refuge from trauma, and to resist one's own dehumanization [that] have been at the heart of the meaning of Afro-Brazilian religion throughout history' (Harding, 2003: 44). This space of 'refuge', in the *quilombo* and *terreiro* as well as in the mystic spaces opened in Candomblé, also becomes a space of opposition in that they allow for processes of identity formation that subvert the social structures (of both slave society and contemporary Brazil alike) that oppress Afro-Brazilians. This paradox is representative of the identity of the Candomblé community that worships a distant image of Africa as a point of origin for black Brazilians,[50] whilst practising a religion shaped by the conditions of its development in Brazil.

The complex position of the literary 'voz quilombola' is epitomized in Evaristo's poem 'Meu rosário' through her inclusion of the syncretic religious practice of Catholicism and Candomblé. Brazilian religious syncretism itself is an example of how a group-

[50] The diversity of the Brazilian slave population is underlined by the vague references to 'África' in Candomblé and the variety of more specific references to *Nagô* (Yoruba) ancestry (referring to a region that encompasses parts of modern-day Nigeria and Benin) and *Bantu* traditions (referring predominantly to populations whose native languages were *Umbundu, Kimbundu and Kikongo,* in areas that roughly correlate to the modern states of Angola and The Democratic Republic of Congo).

consciousness can alter the paradigms of a societal concept (such as the social practice of religion) through the creation of a counter-discourse stemming from an initial attempt at community-identity-formation. Thus, the inclusion of syncretism in 'Meu rosário' resonates as an individual experience of religion in Brazil, and as a representation of the gradual process of inclusion of non-hegemonic discourse.

On a personal level, Evaristo's own experience of growing up in a Catholic family whilst hearing formational, traditional African tales from the women of her family, appeals to the syncretic practice of Brazilian religions[51]. In a 2012 interview, Evaristo describes her first encounter with Candomblé as an epiphany that accounted for her experiences of '[an] imaginary that had been constructed from traces, remains of elements of an African culture [her] mother naturally transmitted to [her]' growing up in Belo Horizonte:

> It was necessary that I found out *Candomblé,* in Rio de Janeiro, to learn the sense of a mythic narrative that was kept even in a broken, mutilated, form under the folds of another religious tradition, the Catholic. I was overwhelmed by a huge emotion. We lost the origins of the myth, but something strong from the Black African tradition abided in us. (Correa and Cesario 2012: 167)

In this interview, Evaristo underlines the significance of Candomblé in modern Brazil, where the 'African-ness' of the tradition has developed a certain mystique. In his book *Ecstatic Encounters* (2011), the anthropologist Mattjis van de Port documents the suspension of disbelief that leads to a subjective encounter with 'Africa' during the spirit possession ceremonies. From an anthropological perspective, Port wrote that

> all that it takes for this Africa to be real is 'the willing suspension of disbelief'. At several points in my field notes I keep instructing myself that a mere deconstruction of the splendid performances I had been witnessing will not do […] when each and everyone is totally engaged, totally involved, totally immersed, it becomes kind of useless to question the authenticity of the Africaness that is being staged here.

[51] Note that beyond the syncretism of Candomblé and Catholicism, Candomblé has also incorporated indigenous Amerindian beliefs in the practice of Candomblé de Cabocló.

> Tonight, I was in Africa. An Africa, perhaps. But Africa, nonetheless. (Port 2011: 220)

The fact that this experience of what I will call 'mystic Africa' is entirely subjective, however, means that it is shaped by the ideologies of the community that imagines it. The physical spaces inhabited by Candomblé, the *terreiro* and former *quilombo*, and the historical and socio-political significance that they retain, are combined with mystic Africa during the Candomblé ceremony, through the communal encounter with the *filhas de santo* who receive the visiting 'African' spirits. The bodily space of the *filha de santo* as the site of the community's encounter with mystic Africa is picked up by Evaristo in both of the poems that will be addressed in this chapter as a space for the creation of black women's solidarity and political identity within the symbolic order.

Candomblé did not develop in isolation, however, but through syncretic practice with Catholicism – an element that is still central to contemporary Candomblé. What will become clear in the analysis of 'Meu rosário' is that, for Evaristo, the counter-discursive power of Candomblé does not rely on the rejection of Catholicism (as Candomblé purism would have us believe), but on the symbiotic and mutually influential relationship between the two. Using the ritual Catholic act of reciting rosary prayers as a motif, Evaristo explores modern Afro-Brazilian devotion through a poetic representation of the descent into a mystic state. The poem closely examines the intricacies of the Catholic and Candomblé subject whilst using the expansion of the individual subject inherent in mystic practice to account for the racial consciousness of a community and a diaspora, making a pertinent statement on contemporary Afro-Brazilian identity-politics.

> Meu rosário é feito de contas negras e mágicas.
> Nas contas de meu rosário eu canto Mamãe Oxum e falo
> padres-nossos e ave-marias.
> Do meu rosário eu ouço os longínquos batuques
> do meu povo
> e encontro na memória mal adormecida
> as rezas dos meses de maio de minha infância.
> As coroações da Senhora, em que as meninas negras,

apesar do desejo de coroar a Rainha,
tinham de se contentar em ficar ao pé do altar
lançando flores.
As contas do meu rosário fizeram calos
em minhas mãos,
pois são contas do trabalho na terra, nas fábricas,
nas casas, nas escolas, nas ruas, no mundo.
As contas do meu rosário são contas vivas.
(Alguém disse um dia que a vida é uma oração,
eu diria, porém, que há vidas-blasfemas).
Nas contas de meu rosário eu teço intumescidos
sonhos de esperanças.
Nas contas de meu rosário eu vejo rostos escondidos
por visíveis e invisíveis grades
e embalo a dor da luta perdida nas contas
de meu rosário.
Nas contas de meu rosário eu canto, eu grito, eu calo.
Do meu rosário eu sinto o borbulhar da fome
no estômago, no coração e nas cabeças vazias.
Quando debulho as contas do meu rosário,
eu falo de mim mesma um outro nome…
E sonho nas contas de meu rosário lugares, pessoas,
vidas que pouco a pouco descubro reais.
Vou e volto por entre as contas de meu rosário,
que são pedras marcando-me o corpo caminho.
E neste andar de contas-pedras,
o meu rosário se transmuta em tinta,
me guia o dedo,
me insinua a poesia.
E depois de macerar conta por conto do meu rosário,
me acho aqui eu mesma
e descubro que ainda me chamo Maria
(Recordação: 43-44)

There are two main ways of looking at religious syncretism between Catholicism and Candomblé in Brazil: the historic (resistant, African) and the modern (inherent, Brazilian).[52] Candomblé first developed in Brazilian slave societies precisely through the kind of historic and resistant, syncretic mimicry[53] that first emerges in 'Meu rosário' as the Candomblé deity *Mãe Oxum* is mentally incorporated into the physical gestures of the Catholic ritual, replacing the Virgin Mary. This resembles the historic form of syncretism, whereby slaves would perform the gestures of Catholic rituals whilst inwardly worshiping their own Gods. Through this syncretic practice, the iconography of Catholicism would come to represent multiple deities or saints. For example, a figure of Jesus would provide a point of focus for the worship of *Oxalá* – the most important and oldest of Candomblé *orixás*, and representations of the Virgin Mary would represent the *orixás Oxum* and *Iemanjá*. In the context of a slave society, therefore, syncretic expression and mimicry of Catholic rituals would have been a key form of cultural resistance, of a refusal to submit their minds and personal devotion to the slave-economy when their bodies had already become forcibly subjugated to (and subsumed into) an economy based on body-ownership.

Evaristo's poem, on the other hand, must be recognized as coming from a very different context. Whilst racial prejudice remains in contemporary Brazilian society, the modern experience of Candomblé is of a religion with roots in the historic syncretism of the *senzala*, but which has grown and developed from these roots to hold a position more consistent with Evaristo's descriptions of the *quilombo* (something defined by the community itself, all the while remaining part of Brazil). This configuration of Candomblé is specific to Brazil (compared, for example to Cuban Santeria and Haitian Vodou), and has become what it is today, as a result of Brazil's history of slavery, passing through years of persecution, criminalization and marginalization to become an openly practised

[52] Whilst Leonardo Boff has created a more complex schematization of Brazilian religious syncretism in his book *Church, Charism & Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (Boff 1995), the distinction between historic and modern practices of syncretism will be sufficient to discuss representations of syncretism in 'Meu rosário'.
[53] Here I am referring to the act of mimicry as a form of survival rather than Homi Bhabha's definition of colonial mimicry in 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' (1984).

religion.[54] Rooted in the historic amalgamation of various cosmologies (African and European), Candomblé's development into a widely practised religion means that syncretism has become a fundamental aspect of the expression of Candomblé, minus the deterrent of punishment in a slave society or the subsequent government prohibitions. Put briefly, the syncretism of Candomblé has changed from being a resistant device to a fundamental aspect of the religion. Evaristo writes that

> A literatura negra nos traz a revivência dos velhos *griots* africanos, guardiões da memória, que de aldeia em aldeia cantavam e contavam a história, a luta, os heróis, a resistência negra contra o colonizador. Devolve-nos uma poética do solo, do homem africano, transplantada, reelaborada nas terras da diáspora. (Evaristo 2010: 136)

The two final qualities that Evaristo attributes to *a literatura negra* – 'transplantada' and 'reelaborada nas terras da diáspora' – are key to understanding not only the dynamics of Afro-Brazilian literature, but also the present-day configurations of other aspects of Afro-Brazilian culture that have become part of the cultural definition of the social group, including Candomblé. Within the Afro-Brazilian religion, elements of the 'African' – brought to the Brazilian space by the African peoples uprooted by slavery – have been transplanted and re-elaborated to become Afro-Brazilian. The transplantation of African religion to the *senzala* in times of slavery as an act of syncretism, therefore, has been further 're-elaborated' to become the 'modern' religious syncretism of Brazil today. For example, the two female *orixás,* Oxum and Iemanjá, and the Virgin Mary through association, have become symbols of the memory of the trauma of slavery, and Afro-Brazilian community through the connection that these two *orixás* have to water in the Candomblé pantheon (*Oxum* to fresh water and fertility, and *Iemanjá* to salt water[55]). It

[54] Whilst openly practised, certain elements of Candomblé remain a mystery to the non-initiated. Much of the preparation and activities after the ceremony take place in private rooms. This includes initiation rites and training that the *mediuns* must complete, and the rituals for removing the spirit from the head of the *medium* following each ceremony.
[55] Although *Oxum* and *Iemanjá* are separate *orixás*, they are often celebrated together, as Mikelle Smith Omari-Tunkara demonstrates in her description of the annual celebration that takes place on 2 February in Rio Vermelho, Salvador. This festival, originally dedicated to *Oxum*, has become one of the biggest festivals celebrating *Iemanjá* and, due to the strong symbolic association with the Virgin Mary, offerings and prayers are directed to all three simultaneously. These gifts and prayers are made with

is this same process that has made it possible, through the mixing of culture, for literature such as Evaristo's poetry and prose, to intertwine the spirit of the African *griot* with the language and literary tradition of her social and national context. As Helena Theodoro explains in her book *Mito e Espiritualidade: Mulheres Negras:*

> Os diversos cultos afro-brasileiros propiciam uma síntese do vasto panteão dos orixás africanos, além de uma relação entre mito e religião cristã, que mostra a troca entre brancos, negros e outras etnias. Representam a reposição cultural negra, que é capaz de responder por uma identidade cultural brasileira. (Theodoro 1996: 71)

Like the devotion described in 'Meu rosário', the development of both Candomblé and Catholicism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Brazil was shaped by a constant flux between the two cosmologies. James H. Sweet, in his study of the development of Afro-Brazilian beliefs and cultures in Brazilian slave society, *Recreating Africa,* explains that

> [o]nce Africans and their descendants did begin to accept certain elements of Catholicism, it was not at the expense of their own cosmologies. […] Brazilian slaves naturalized Catholicism, integrating many of its elements that coincided with their own worldviews. […] These distinctly African forms of Catholicism continued to be practiced in parallel with the more familiar African religions, never vanquishing the more clearly discernible African practices during the colonial period. (Sweet, 2003: 202-203)

Syncretism developed in slave societies, therefore, both as a form of resistance and as part of the effort of slaves to conform to Catholic practices enforced upon them. There are records of slaves and freed slaves using Catholic brotherhoods, spaces such as churches, and sacred objects to facilitate the practice of *Calundu*[56] – providing opportunities to form communities, space to carry out religious rituals, and sacred objects such as the *pedra d'ara* that could be appropriated as talismans.

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a strong emphasis on femininity, as worshippers offer gifts such as soap, perfume, ribbons, combs, mirrors, or flowers, and request spiritual aid with matters of health, children and love. (Omari-Tunkara, 2005: 83-84)

[56] *Calundu* is one of the principle African religions (originating from modern-day Angola) incorporated into Brazilian Candomblé.

There is a resonance of this appropriation of (often material or organizational) aspects of Catholicism to enable the practice of African religion in Evaristo's poem. In this poem, although much of the devotion is consistent with Candomblé and, in particular, the diasporic communities evoked in Candomblé, the structure and form of the poem is held together by the Catholic element of the rosary beads and a female-centric and cyclical structure of spirituality. Through the image of the rosary beads, and the evocation of the Virgin Mary and the female *orixás,* including *Oxum* mentioned by name, the poem harnesses the powerful symbolic ties between female-focussed and matricentric forms of worship in both Candomblé and Catholicism.

Whilst maintaining an element of socio-political resistance, the syncretism of this poem forms the crux of the poetic subject's ability to express herself and becomes the organizing principle of the poem through the link between female religious figures. The repetition of the phrase 'meu rosário' and 'as contas do meu rosário' holds the poem together and gives a material and tangible focus to the subject's devotion. The rosary beads become mystic themselves in the excess of life that they represent, both as a devotional object, which necessarily exceeds its existence as an object by becoming a symbol of access to a greater being. The act of claiming ownership of an object and making it one's own also counteracts the continued presence of slavery in lusotropicalist discourse on national identity, as the black *subject* (no longer an object) claims possession of an element of religious culture that stemmed from the European colonisers and slaveholders, incorporating it into an act of modern devotion relative to Afro-Brazilian identity.

Indeed, the rosary beads not only give form to the poem and the religious expression of the subject as a Catholic devotional object, but they also recall several elements of Candomblé in the images, forms and movements that the words provoke in the mind of the reader. The circular form and motion of the rosary beads as wielded in Catholic ritual, as well as the individual beads that make up the rosary, are all common to the form of the initial stage of the Candomblé ceremony, where initiates dance and chant in a circular motion to encourage a quasi-meditative state which allows the initiate to open

up her subjectivity to accept that of the descending *orixá*. Each bead could be seen as an initiate forming part of the circle of *mediuns* as they repeatedly circle the central pillar of the *terreiro.* The repetition of the phrase itself also mimics the repetition of gestures within the circle of initiates who take part in a lengthy process of calling each *orixá* to the *terreiro* by repeating the chants and gestures that reflect the character of each *orixá* along to a repetitive drum rhythm which, again, is tailored to the member of the Candomblé pantheon being called. Each bead, and each *conta, canto,* and *conto* of the poem can be seen to represent each woman readying her head[57] for spirit possession, or even the pantheon of deities worshipped in Candomblé.

Each repetition of 'meu rosário' also appears to express a further step in the descent of the *medium* into spirit possession. The poem begins with 'Nas contas de meu rosário eu canto Mamãe Oxum', which recalls the Yoruba chants calling the orixás one-by-one down to the *terreiro*. 'Do meu rosário eu ouço os longínquos batuques | do meu povo' appears to recall the drumbeats of the ceremony that follow traditional African drum beats. 'As contas do meu rosário fizeram calos | nas minhas mãos' evokes the physical exertion of the ritual where the women remain in constant movement for several hours throughout the entire ceremony. 'As contas do meu rosário são contas vivas' elicits the lively, human forms of the women circling the *terreiro* and the excess of life inherent in the process of bringing past lives into the present space and body of the *terreiro* and *medium*. The following two references to the rosary beads 'Nas contas do meu rosário eu teço intumescidos | sonhos de esperanças. | Nas contas de meu rosário eu vejo rostos escondidos | por visíveis e invisíveis grades' foreground the fact that the ritual brings together the past and the present, linking the needs and desires of the present-day Afro-Brazilian community with the historic loss of the homeland, and the imagined, mystic space of 'Africa'. In this sense, the rosary and the Candomblé *Mães* and *filhas* represented in the poem represent a link between present-day devotees of Candomblé

[57] In the language of Candomblé, the *orixá*s become the *donos-de-cabeça* of the initiates. For further details on the terminology of Candomblé see Paul C. Johnson's *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods* (2002: 45).

and past generations of women – their suffering, strength and spirituality. According to Harding,

> [i]n Candomblé, women are a primary link to that memory of slavery and to the engagement of its continuing meaning for the present: the *mães-de-santo* who founded and led many of the oldest extant *terreiros,* their successors, and the initiates and devotees who form the rising generation of caretakers of the religion. These women absorb, carry, wrestle with, and yield to the history and its ghosts, the experience of slavery and survival that created and sustains an ancestral connection to Africa at the heart of Candomblé. (Harding, 2006: 12)

Evaristo highlights the centrality of women as beacons of family and community by using them in this poem as an organizational principle that leads the poetic subject to a reflection on Afro-Brazilian ancestry and a shared suffering. The physical suffering evoked by both the memory of enslavement and the calluses on the subject's hands from the repeated handling of the rosary beads also recalls the central role of physical hardship in the Candomblé ceremony, whereby traditional and often strenuous methods of cleaning and maintaining *terreiros* are employed by women practitioners in order to pay homage to the suffering of their ancestors in the *senzala.* As Harding explains, '[t]he memory of the hardships experienced by earlier generations is somehow a guide, a support, and even a responsibility for those who are the current caretakers of that legacy' (Harding, 2006: 15).

The next reference to the rosary beads signifies a closer link between the body of the poetic subject and the subjectivity of the descending spirit. Evaristo writes 'Nas contas do meu rosário eu canto, eu grito, eu calo. | Do meu rosário eu sinto o borbulhar da fome | no estômago, no coração e nas cabeças vazias.' At this point, the body is successfully opened and primed to receive the ancestral spirits of a diaspora. Evaristo describes the physicality of the response to the religious devotion through bodily language – reflecting more the physical form of a Candomblé ceremony which takes place in an entirely corporeal space, where the only language present is predominantly indecipherable to the worshippers. The singing, the screaming and the silence ('eu canto, eu grito, eu calo') recall the process of the Candomblé ritual of spirit possession

where the *mediuns* initially chant to the *orixá* and later, when possessed, become silent apart from the occasional expression of the *orixá* through a visceral scream, shout, or groan. The physical apparition of the 'fome | no estômago' seems to speak of a yearning, or desire consistent with the format of both Candomblé and Catholic mysticism (demonstrated by Prado's use of 'fome' in 'Rute no campo'), as the longing that enables the mystic subject to transcend the material and access the spiritual. Certeau calls this desire the *volo* ('an initial "I will"'). [58] By linking this *volo* to the physicality of a bodily urge such as hunger, Evaristo heightens the materiality of the mystic relationship to the descended spirit, anchoring the experience in the body of the poetic subject, and avoiding an 'elevation' or 'ascension' as such. In doing so, Evaristo acknowledges the physical suffering of Afro-Brazilian people in a society where many black people live in poverty and recasts this suffering as a force for change in the context of Afro-Brazilian identity politics.

The remainder of the poem completes the mingling of subjects as the limits of the poetic subject disappear to incorporate the 'Others' of the mystic experience. At this point, the poem turns to resemble the mystic writings of Catholic tradition, where the enunciation itself – the text, the illocution, the textual subject and the experiential subject – is called into question and enters the drama of the poem. The mystic dramas of illocution and subject definition mingle with the drama of subject-formation inherent in poetic texts by marginalized or emerging social groups, as well as the kind of drama that characterizes the formation of literary subjects in women's writing.

To begin with the drama of illocution, the performance and the experience of writing (and speech) becomes the focus of the poem as the movement of the subject(s) allow for a more fluid definition of the lyric self. This process begins with the 'threshing' (*debulhar*) of the rosary beads, which leads to the line 'eu falo de mim mesma um outro nome…' (Recordação: 44). In this line, the poetic 'I' becomes the subject and the object

[58] Certeau names *volo* one of the mechanisms necessary to transform language into an 'exercise of language' and into discourse – a movement necessary for a successful mystic speech act. *Volo*, according to Certeau, provides 'the *break* that precedes discourse and that sets up a contract with the receivers' (1995: 163-164).

of the speech act, which is also an act of transformation, implying a change in, or exchange of, the speaking subject, and yet the *eu* is still present as the enunciator of the poetic line. In speaking herself (as enunciator, object, and the 'other' subject who enters the poetic subject through mysticism), the speaking subject dramatizes the act of enunciation itself in a way that is consistent with Certeau's emphasis on the speech act as experience in mysticism in his consideration of Saint Teresa:

> The 'experience' that specifies mystic writings, moreover, has as its principal characteristics on one hand the *ego*, which is precisely the 'center of the speech act,' and on the other hand the *present*, the 'source of time,' the 'presence in the world that the act of utterance alone makes possible.' (Certeau 1995: 162-3)

In 'Meu rosário' we find that through Candomblé, the poetic subject does not gain access to a single 'ultimate Other' but – as is consistent with the African tradition of ancestor worship – to a whole diasporic community of past, present, near and far. As in Prado's poem 'Rute no campo*',* and St Teresa of Ávila's 'interior castle', space is an important aspect of Candomblé mysticism, and the mystic relation represented in Evaristo's poetry. In Candomblé, the ritual spirit possession not only allows a mystic relationship with the *orixá* in question but, crucially, to mystic Africa which can be accessed via *axé* in the *terreiro* by the *medium* and by the congregation taking part in the performance of spirit possession as its audience. *Axé*, grounded in the physical space of the *terreiro*, refers to a power or energy that comes from 'African' ancestry and lineage – not of the individual worshipper, but of the space and the community of worshippers that occupies that space. *Axé* is at once an energy that can be *generated* and offers the possibility for transformation or improvement for the individual worshipper, a power that is *contained* within a *terreiro* as part of its essence and authenticity, and it also represents a heritage that can be *accessed* by worshippers (Johnson 2002: 48). It is this aspect of a heritage or lineage shared by a community and linked to the specific religious space of the *terreiro* that is key to understanding Evaristo's employment of Candomblé as a source of social identity and socio-political counter-discourse both in the most explicit use of Candomblé in *'*Meu rosário' and in

other poems where the mystic Africa is evoked without direct reference to the deities themselves.

This sentiment ties in with Evaristo's description of 'a mística do quilombo' as well as the socio-political harnessing of the power of community and heritage epitomized by the Brazilian black civil rights leader Abdias do Nascimento's concept *quilombismo*. *Quilombismo* refers to a movement in Afro-Brazilian resistance that takes the egalitarian and collective structure of the *quilombo* as a model for a utopian society. One such group that Nascimento claims reproduces the essence of the *quilombo* by retaining the history and culture of Afro-Brazilians is the Candomblé *terreiro.*

> Quilombismo was structured in associative forms that could be found in whole independent communities in the depths of forests or in jungles of difficult access, facilitating their defense and protecting their economic, social and political organization. […] Objectively, this web of associations, brotherhoods, clubs, *terreiros* (houses of worship of Afro-Brazilian religion), *tendas, afochés,* samba schools, *gafieiras, gremios, confrarias,* were and are Quilombos legalized by ruling society […]. Nevertheless, the 'legalized' and the 'illegal' form a unity, a unique human, ethnic and cultural affirmation, at once integrating a practice of liberation and assuming command of their own history. This entire complex of African social phenomena, of Afro-Brazilian *praxis*, I denominate Quilombismo. (Nascimento 1980b: 151-152)

For Nascimento, the emphasis on maintaining African history and culture and the tenacity of *quilombo* structures make the *quilombo* an 'authentic, broad, and permanent socio-political movement' (ibid., 151). This is exactly how Evaristo harnesses the collectivity of the *terreiro* with its emphasis on roots and culture to create poetry that acts as a socio-political counter-discourse. The way in which the mystic space of 'África' and its community is so firmly rooted within a specific social identity and socio-historic narrative distinguishes Candomblé from Catholic mystic practice. In his exploration of the mystic subject, Certeau identifies a fictional space obtained via mysticism:

> A fiction of the world becomes the place in which a fiction of the speaking subject is produced – if by 'fiction' we understand that which is substituted (provisionally)

> and represents (contradictorily) the cosmos that served as a language for the speaking creator. This figuration of space is also, then, located at the threshold of the mystic discourse. It opens, in an imaginary mode, a field for the development of this discourse. It makes a theatre of operations possible. Thus it is the necessarily fictitious space of the discourse. (Certeau 1995: 188)

In Candomblé, on the other hand, there is a specifically material and communal space directly linked to the mystic, 'fictional' space of 'África'. The *terreiro,* previously the *quilombo,* and its ties to mystic Africa constitute the imaginary mode that makes the further mystic activity in the rituals of spirit possession possible. The speaking subject in Candomblé and its corresponding literary manifestation is, therefore, necessarily anchored to a historico-cultural context and the material pressures and dynamics of the community that it describes. In 'Meu rosário' the material concerns and feeling of marginality and isolation are expressed firstly at an individual level through an apparent memory of the poetic subject, described primarily through a sense of not belonging in a specific cultural and religious space: 'as rezas dos meses de maio de minha infância. | As coroações da Senhora, em que as meninas negras, | apesar do desejo de coroar a Rainha, | tinham de se contentar em ficar ao pé do altar | lançando flores' (Recordação: 43). This appears early in the poem before the poetic descent into a mystic state, and yet this identification with the inequality in a Catholic celebration becomes inextricable from the long history of oppression of black people in Brazil.

The image of the young girl forced to the margins of a Catholic ceremony is brought about by 'os longínquos batuques | do meu povo'. The sound of the African drums, physically brought into the present space of the *terreiro,* brings together the old and the new through the act of remembrance and acknowledgement of the wrongs committed against the community. Bringing the history of oppression and slavery into contact with a particular example of exclusion in the life of a young Afro-Brazilian girl, recalls the implantation of the ancestors into the body of the initiate modern *terreiro*. It also mimics the merging of the individual with the communal and the expansion of the subject inherent in Candomblé mysticism. The theme of a history of oppression is underlined as the poem lists some of the sites in which Afro-Brazilians encounter inequality or

suffering (‘contas do trabalho na terra, nas fábricas, | nas casas, nas escolas, nas ruas, no mundo’) as well evoking physical suffering in the image of the calluses that the rosary makes in her hands. The imagery employed in the poem, of worn bodies and ‘visíveis and invisíveis grades’, transcends any limited application to any one time or place to express the condition of a community and a diaspora.

What makes this poem work as a socio-political counter-discourse, however, is the transformation of a shared history of oppression into *axé* as an expression of belonging, solidarity, and empowerment. To this end, Evaristo uses markers of social struggle and political action in language such as ‘luta’, ‘o borbulhar da fome’, ‘sonhos de esperanças’ or ‘corpo-caminho’. Evaristo also explicitly marks her poem as *counter*-discourse (replicating the structures described by Nascimento) in the lines ‘Alguém disse um dia que a vida é uma oração, | eu diria, porém, que há vidas-blasfemas’. These lines evoke the historical employment of the charge of blasphemy in slave societies and subsequent repressive governments as a form of social control to prevent groups of Africans or Afro-Brazilians from meeting. In this case, however, the term blasphemy is taken up by the oppressed to describe a kind of life rather than a crime; a life in which one lives against the dominant power or the hegemonic order of society (as a *quilombeiro*), and especially one in which the language used is ‘blasphemous’, as a specifically linguistic subversion of the rhetoric that these powers and orders have come to rely upon.

In the final lines of the poem, there emerges a specific focus on the act of writing and of the origins of the language used in the poem. Evaristo uses the theme of spirit possession and the Candomblé sense of community to suggest that the hand writing the poem is guided by a collective experience and identity (‘o meu rosário se transmuta em tinta, | me guia o dedo, | me insinua a poesia.’). There is a power, or *axé,* that drives the poet’s hand, and employs the body of the poet as a present-day outlet for a sentiment and discourse that pre-exists the poet’s time. Mysticism in Evaristo’s poetry becomes a vehicle for a group-consciousness or ideology, giving the poem a strong Afro-Brazilian identity, and putting the suffering of an individual into the context of a history of oppression. If we compare this attribute of ‘Meu rosário’ to Evaristo’s own

description of *literatura negra,* we can see that the poem was created with this effect in mind:

> A anterioridade de ser um escritor (que por acaso era negro) lhe dá uma especificidade que tem a ver com o papel social dos demais escritores. A anterioridade da condição de ser negro (por acaso escritor) lhe daria uma especificidade que teria a ver com o papel social dos demais negros. […] A literatura negra apresenta um forte teor ideológico, pelo fato de lidar, de tomar como pano de fundo e de eleger com sua temática a história do negro, a sua inserção e as relações étnicas da sociedade brasileiro. (Evaristo 2010: 135-136)

'Meu rosário', like Evaristo's description of *literatura negra,* speaks from the position of the Afro-Brazilian community. Through Candomblé and the syncretic experience of religion in Brazil, this poem encapsulates the social development of the community and mysticism becomes a gateway through which one can access both the strength of a community, and the myriad voices that have historically been silenced.

Resignifying female bodies through mysticism

Despite referring to two very different religious traditions, Prado and Evaristo both portray a kind of devotion within which female bodies hold a central position. Responding to very different discourses, as we have seen above, the female bodies described by Prado and Evaristo take very different forms and play different roles in re-defining stereotypical gender roles. Evaristo engages with a religion within which women already play a central role. The closest thing that Candomblé has to central authority is the M*ãe de Santo* of each individual *terreiro.*[59] and women are also the focal point of the ceremony and the ritual of spirit possession as, through movement, dance, and costume, female bodies become physical embodiments of the *orixás.* Whilst there are some similarities between Catholicism and Candomblé, as discussed in the analysis of syncretism in 'Meu rosário', one cannot deny the stark differences in attitudes towards representations of female bodies, particularly in terms of their visibility in religious ritual.

[59] Whilst women officially preside over candomblé ceremonies, men also have a say in the running of the *terreiro* via their patronage and financial support as *ogans*. Whilst an *ogan* need not necessarily be a man, more men tend to take on this role.

The majority of Catholic worship, for example, is traditionally played out through the focal point of the male body, including the performance of the Eucharist ritual. It is this ritual, in fact, that Prado employs in her poem 'A necessidade do corpo', from the 2010 collection *A Duração do Dia,* as a template within which to alter and challenge the gendered performance of Catholic ritual as practised in a church:

> Nenhum pecado desertou de mim.
> Ainda assim eu devo estar nimbada,
> porque um amor me expande.
> Como quando na infância
> eu contava até cinco para enxotar fantasmas,
> beijo por cinco vezes minha mão.
> Este é meu corpo,
> corpo que me foi dado
> para Deus saciar sua natureza onívora.
> Tomai e comei sem medo,
> na fímbria do amor mais tosco
> meu pobre corpo
> é feito corpo de Deus.
> (Louvará: 156)

In Catholicism one can identify a chain of representation based around the male body that begins with God, is passed on to Adam, hu*man*ity, Jesus Christ, and eventually to the priest who enacts the Eucharist in the church. At each stage the male body is employed as the form of God, which is replicated as a sign of holiness and honour with women created only as a kind of sub-category from the rib of Adam,[60] remaining separate from this corporeal lineage. This connection that exists in liturgical discourse between the physical qualities of the male body and the perfection of God immediately establishes a rift of sexual difference between the 'man-created-in-the-image-of-God' and the physically deviant female body as well as an implied dichotomy between the

[60] 'And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man' (Genesis 2:18-24).

godly and the not-godly; the same and the different.[61] The result is a long-lasting emphasis on a masculine (and patriarchal) performativity in deference to an overarching 'father', where the priest becomes a physical representation of Jesus Christ offering his body to the congregation through the act of performing the Eucharist.[62]

This often appears via the incorporation of false gender neutrals (for example in Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*: 'all men of every race are united to Christ in the bond of brotherhood') and by a discourse within which feminine symbols are often restricted to the maternal, which only exists in a complementary relation to the paternal lineage of male bodies. An example of such a symbol is the Mystic Body of Christ (referring to the church community) which fails to diminish the primacy of the male form on two parts: firstly, in that the Mystic Body of Christ is rarely understood in material terms but as a spirituality that can be shared by a multitude of worshippers, often attributed with maternal qualities of belonging similar to the way in which the nation takes on maternal metaphors (as discussed in the introduction and Chapter One); and secondly, in that the way in which the Church is imagined through corporeal metaphor, as both the Mystic body of Christ and as the Bride of Christ. The positioning of the Church as the Bride of Christ is undoubtedly subordinate, as is made clear in Ephesians in which Paul writes

> [w]ives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:21-24)

In *Mystici Corporis Christi,* Pope Pius XII describes, for example, the 'unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers who assert that the Church was born from the side of our Savior on the cross like a new Eve, mother of all the living' (*Mystici Corporis Christi* 1943: paragraph 19). In statements such as this, femininity appears as an attribute associated with both subordination to a higher, male authority, and a caring, maternal

[61] See *Introducing Body Theology* by Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart (1998).
[62] This emphasis on the replication of physical form has been used as an argument against the introduction of female priests to the Catholic Church.

attitude, or a familial atmosphere within a body of people rather than an active, performing body such as the performance undertaken by the male priest administering the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In ‘A necessidade do corpo’, Prado uses a mystic encounter between the poetic subject and God to subvert the primacy of the male body that has been carried forth from the rhetoric of the scriptures and papal encyclicals, into the material and situated reality of the performance of ecclesiastic ritual. She begins by invoking, once more, the mystic tradition. Whereas in ‘Rute no campo’ Prado focused on the meaning of space in a mystic relationship, and the freedom that this can afford the mystic subject, in this case the poet focuses on using the mystic subject to elevate the feminine subject to a position rarely accessible to women in the Catholic Church. In the first three lines of the poem, Prado establishes the mystic quality of the subject using hallmarks of the Catholic mystic tradition:

> Nenhum pecado desertou de mim.
> Ainda assim eu devo estar nimbada,
> porque um amor me expande.
> […]

Whilst at this point in the poem, there is no indication of an object for the love experienced by the poetic subject, the language used by Prado here recalls texts such as the most famous passage from St Teresa’s autobiography (immortalized in statue form by Bernini) describing the ecstasy experienced during a mystic encounter with an angel who appeared ‘en forma corporal’:

> Veíale en las manos un dardo de oro largo, y al fin del hierro me parecía tener un poco de fuego. Éste me parecía meter por el corazón algunas veces, y que me llegaba a las entrañas : al sacarle me parecía las llevaba consigo, y me dejaba toda abrasada en amor grande de Dios. Era tan grande el dolor, que me hacía dar aquellos quejidos, y tan excesiva la suavidad que me pone este grandísimo dolor, que no hay desear que se quite, ni se contenta el alma con menos que Dios. No es dolor corporal, sino espiritual, aunque no deja de participar el cuerpo algo, y aun harto. Es un requiebro tan suave que pasa entre el alma y Dios, que suplico

> yo a su bondade lo dé a gustar a quien pensare que miento. (Teresa of Avila 1912: 202-203)

The way in which the love between the mystic subject and God is described in this passage is similar to the third line in 'A necessidade do corpo' ('um amor me expande'), as we can see a semantic field of immensity and size ('amor grande de Dios', 'Era tan grande el dolor', 'tan excesiva' 'este grandisimo dolor'). The idea of an expansive love that breaks, transgresses or reshapes the limits of being and the body is a common trope in mystic writing. Joana de Jesus, the Portuguese mystic, for example, writes of 'hum amor tão exsecivo, e huma ancia tão apertada que me sentia morer […]' and 'hum impito de grande amor o qual me fasia com muita força ir arrebatando o espirito com tanta veemência que não era possível poder lhe resistir, e paricia-me que até os cabelos de cabeça me levavão' (Serrado 2014: 139, 85).[63] Prado's use of the term 'um amor me expande', therefore, situates her poetic subject within a specific literary tradition that allows for fluid definitions of the body achieved through mystic union. The term 'nimbada' also suggests a spatial expansion of the body, traditionally depicted as a circle of light that surrounds a subject, representing a holy union with God.

Where Prado's subject differs from the mystic tradition, however, is in the first line 'Nenhum pecado desertou de mim'. This line suggests that the body in question has not been cleansed of its sins, and so the subject who enters the mystic encounter retains its sins. This is fundamentally opposed to the kinds of feminine figures and bodies (in particular virgin or celibate figures such as the Virgin Mary or nuns) who would ordinarily achieve the elevated position of mystic. The effect of this is to bring the mystic encounter back into contact with a situated, material, and embodied subject who has not shed the burden of the lived experience of women in order to attain the expansion of mystic love.

Prado has, therefore, set the scene for a radical process of rethinking the limits and the meaning of female bodies in a religious setting. In recalling the mystic tradition and creating a subject and body that metamorphoses and expands, the 'mulher' is

[63] These quotations are from transcriptions of the original texts by Joana Serrado in her 2014 doctoral thesis *Ancias/Anxiousness in Joana de Jesus (1617-1681): Historical and Philosophical Approaches.*

becoming, once more, ‘desdobrável’, to use Prado’s own term from ‘Com licença poética’. The physical form, the social connotations, and the speaking subject itself become ‘desdobrável’ in that they are no longer defined by rigid parameters but are becoming more complex through a poetic subject that takes on the dynamics of mystic illocution, and employs a rhetoric of transformative love in order to resituate and empower female bodies.

Furthermore, Prado incorporates some of the violent, corporeal imagery often associated with this mystic relationship. Within this tradition, writers such as Saint Teresa and Joana de Jesus express the tension between the body and the soul, as well as the intensity of the mystic union, through physical pain or suffering, such as Teresa’s heart being pierced by a burning arrow, or Joana de Jesus’s hair being pulled away from her head. Prado evokes this same tension in her description of the mystic union between her poetic subject and God, both in the description of a self that is expanded by the experience of mystic love, and in the lines ‘Este é meu corpo, | corpo que me foi dado | para Deus saciar sua natureza onívora’.

These lines draw attention to the same tension between body and soul that exists in the mystic writings discussed above. The body evoked in Prado’s poem exists in the temporal space occupied by the mystic subject, and at the same time has been created for the purpose of transcending the material in order to feed an ‘omnivorous’ God-figure. Within the context of a poem about a body which retains its situated identity upon entering into a mystic union, the line ‘Este é meu corpo’ takes on a double meaning. The reference to the Eucharist (which I will discuss in more detail later) can also be read as a statement of body-ownership on behalf of a poetic subject who claims her body as it is (‘Nenhum pecado desertou de mim’), creating a state of mysticism that allows for a materially situated and ‘real’ kind of femininity. This means that the body, whilst at the end of the poem ‘é feito corpo de Deus’, never belongs entirely to God and has not been purified or sublimated. As discussed earlier, the complexity of the mystic subject is that the subject exists as itself outside the mystic union that it experiences with God. Prado uses this complexity to ground her poem in the material world, utilising the mystic union

for a sense of authority whilst avoiding the traditional trend of transforming a female body through purification in the process.

It is at this point in the poem that the body becomes ‘unfolded’. Through a complex engagement with the metaphor of the Eucharist, Prado uses the paradox of the mystic condition (the fact that the mystic exists outside of the mystic union, and yet embodies an elevation beyond the material) to free the female body of its social, political, cultural, and liturgical representations. Prado directly evokes the ritual of the Eucharist with the phrase ‘Tomai e comei sem medo’, which is spoken and performed by a male priest in the Catholic Church during the transubstantiation of the bread and wine. In the Eucharist ritual as performed in a Church, the male priest physically embodies the male body of Christ, who was created in the image of ‘man’ (God’s finest creation), who in turn was made in God’s image.

Recently the developing discipline of queer theology has necessitated a changing attitude towards body politics in Christian theology, prompted by the developments of queer and gender studies and the interrogation of the performativity of gender that has ensued. Thus, whereas Christ’s body may be situated in a specific space and time, the process of transubstantiation – carried out through ingestion of bread and wine during communion – can be seen through the lens of queer theology as an act of radical inclusion that makes possible a transcendence of the boundaries of gender, sex, and the body. In ‘Eucharist Imagination: A Queer Body-Politics’, Ángel F. Méndez-Montoya explains that

> Eucharist imagination envisions and performs the bread and wine becoming the body of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit invoked by the gathered community. Through such Eucharist action, this same body is furthermore broken into pieces and shared, with the main purpose of being consumed so that partakers of the Eucharistic banquet may be transformed into the single boundary-crossing mystical body of Christ. (Méndez-Montoya 2014: 328)

If we consider the transformative nature of the Eucharist, along with the position of the mystic subject and how these are used in ‘A necessidade do corpo’, it becomes clear

that the unusual portrayal of a Eucharistic ritual in Prado's poem can be seen as a radical refusal of social representations of 'the female body'.

Transubstantiation generally refers to the transition of a symbolic body of Christ (the bread) into a material body of people (the congregation) that represents entry into the community of the Mystical Body of Christ (the Church). The process of ingestion permits this transition. In Prado's poem, however, there is no congregation and the bread and wine (the body and blood of Christ) are replaced by the body of the gendered mystic subject which is instead consumed by God:

> […]
> Este é meu corpo,
> corpo que me foi dado
> para Deus saciar sua natureza onívora.
> Tomai e comei sem medo,
> na fímbria do amor mais tosco
> meu pobre corpo
> é feito corpo de Deus.
> (Louvará: 156)

If transubstantiation represents the shift of the Body of Christ from the symbolic to the material congregation, then this poem represents its reverse. As God consumes the situated, material body, so the body becomes elevated to a symbolic position, momentarily shedding its situated representational burden and attaining a higher symbolic meaning and status within the religious imaginary. At the end of the poem, the material body returns as a 'pobre corpo'; the qualifier 'pobre' is not consistent with an elevated, symbolic body any longer. However, this 'poor body', is also 'feito corpo de Deus'. The processes that the body of the poetic subject has undergone through the course of this poem have resulted in a resignification of the female body within the subjective religious imaginary, since it is now the material ('pobre') female body that represents the body of God. There are, of course, two ways in which this last line can be understood. It can be understood either as an affirmation that the female body was created by God (and not simply as a subsidiary of the male body), or as a claim that the

female body, through ingestion, has become the body of God. These two readings are linked by the idea that 'man' was created in the image of God. What Prado has done, however, is opened up a possible discourse of God creating 'woman' in his/her/their image, thus challenging much of what has been assumed about gender in traditional Catholic discourse.

Although Prado's poem was written long before the advent of queer theology, it appears as though the poet has used the mystic tradition and the complexity of a mystic subject to 'unfold' (*desdobrar)* the boundaries of sexual difference that have been established in religious rhetoric. The mystic union has provided a site within which ecclesiastic structures and practices can be bypassed to allow for a more personal and transformative expression of religious love, and previously gendered performative rituals like the sacrament of the Eucharist become more aligned with a personal experience of devotion.

Despite the fact that Prado does not initially appear to embrace a radical political engagement, with a poetic that so often revolves around the domestic and the everyday, the dynamics at play in poems such as 'A necessidade do corpo', 'Rute no campo' and 'Com licença poética' do engage in an intense process of resignification of gendered representations and an interrogation of notions of sexual difference in religion and in Brazilian society as a whole. If we remember, too, that in Brazil religion, family, and politics are rarely clearly separated circles, then Prado's use of the mystic subject in the creation of a modern poetic subject can be read as a socio-political critique with important examples of an alternative paradigm for the understanding of gender and subjectivity.

The central position that Prado's female subject occupies in 'A necessidade do corpo' also reflects the popular practice of Catholicism in Brazil through devotion to Saints. Nossa Senhora Aparecida, for instance – a 36cm clay representation of Nossa Senhora da Conceição – became the focal point of popular religious devotion in Brazil to such an extent that she was made patron Saint of Brazil in 1930 and designated Queen of Brazil in 1931 (Oleszkiewicz-Peralba 2007: 119). Through Mariology and the veneration

of female Saints, women in Brazil find spiritual empowerment in gendered representations that they can identify with, as Kelly Hayes explains,

> [Brazilian] women find in saintly figures like the Virgin Mary or Slave Anastácia an accessible source of spiritual power on whom they can rely for help with everyday dilemmas as well as in times of great need. Petitioned for healing, protection, material blessings, and practical assistance with a range of domestic issues, these powerful intercessory figures, whose own lives on Earth were marked by particularly gendered forms of suffering, are understood to be especially attuned to the needs of women. (Hayes 2016: 423)

From a social perspective, this element of identification between material suffering and spiritual empowerment often manifests through what Evelyn Stevens termed '*Marianismo*: the other face of Machismo in Latin America', which she defines as 'the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men' (Pescatello and Stevens 1979: 91)[64]. There is, therefore, a source of empowerment in the veneration of female icons in Brazilian popular Catholicism, although the spiritual power that women gain from this worship is primarily experienced within the private realm as wives and mothers. Stevens' essay on *marianismo* highlights that this empowerment can also be read as a perpetuation of traditional gender roles in Latin American societies[65], however the empowerment that these iconic representations of women create is fruitfully tapped into by both Prado and Evaristo in their poetic representations of women in religious contexts. Prado's use of the Eucharist combined with the privileged position that the poetic subject enjoys in relation to God, repositions the devotion of a female religious subject into a setting (and discourse) associated with the public practice of Catholicism

[64] Marianismo is not, however, to be confused with Mariology. Although the name stems from the Virgin Mary, Marianismo is a social phenomenon related to gender roles in society. As Stevens writes, 'Marianism, or *Mariology,* as most theologians prefer to call the religious movement, has provided a central figure and a convenient set of assumptions around which the practitioners of *marianismo* have erected a secular edifice of beliefs and practices related to the position of women in society.' (Ibid: 92)

[65] Elsa M. Chaney considers this perspective in *Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America* which explores the low level of women's participation in Latin American politics against the social context of marianismo (Chaney 1979)

in Brazil empowering the poetic subject to challenge the institutional hierarchies of power.

Evaristo's poetry, too, through her references to the Virgin Mary and the female *orixás* of the Candomblé pantheon in 'Meu rosário' evokes the iconography and empowerment of female figures. Unlike Prado's poetry, Evaristo's poetry is centred on the veneration of black Brazilian women, through the evocation of black Brazilian ancestry that the black female icons and the real black women who perform Candomblé rituals in Brazil represent. Evaristo thus taps into the empowerment not only of women more generally through Mariology, but also of the particular focus on black women in Brazilian popular Catholicism. It is important to note, for example, that the patron Saint of Brazil, *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, is black and is believed by many to be a symbol and source of liberating power. The status of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* as national patron saint and Queen of Brazil also draws an important link between Mariology and the iconography of black women at the centre of Brazilian national identity. Evaristo's poetry not only homes in on the symbolic power of black women, but also of the real socio-political empowerment of black women through the recognition of generations of suffering and the harnessing of this recognition as a force for change. This drive is seen, for instance in devotion to *Escrava Anastácia,* a martyred slave woman said to have possessed the mystic powers to heal and liberate her devotees despite having suffered a life of abuse and torture herself. Often represented in an iron collar or face mask to represent her enslavement and suffering, *Escrava Anastácia* has become a popular devotional figure in Brazil in both private homes and public places of worship and, within the *movimento negro,* has also become 'a symbol of black pride and heroic resistance: a reminder of the horrors of slavery and its continuing legacy of racism' (Hayes and Handler 2009: 26). The women represented in Evaristo's poetry tap into this simultaneous backwards movement of remembrance and forwards drive towards social change through the empowerment of black women figures that represent the struggles of a community.

The poem, 'Na mulher, o tempo…', is centred on a black woman's experience of her own body, but also on her recognition of this body through its relationship to Afro-

Brazilian ancestry and its role as an individual in a present-day black consciousness movement. Like Prado's 'A necessidade do corpo', this poem can be read as using the mystic union and its ability to exceed and transcend the limit of the materially situated body to construct a more empowered poetic subject. This poem is essentially about the beauty of aging female bodies. Evaristo's use of Candomblé as a reference point in much of her poetry and prose, however, alongside a number of textual references to elements of Candomblé in the poem itself, has prompted me to continue with an analysis of the poem from the perspective of mysticism. This approach does not contradict the central message of the beauty of an aging woman, but enriches the significance of this body and its experience, especially through the references to a community which underpin the importance of Candomblé throughout the history of its practice in Brazil.

Evaristo's protagonist is built around a female body defined by its access to a mystic plane, but which is also, like Prado's subject, grounded in a particular experience of womanhood. The multiple levels of meaning symbolised by this body are represented in Evaristo's poem through access to mystic Africa and the heritage that this mystic plane represents. In this poem, however, the situatedness of the subject's body is emphasized through physical attributes which are already important to the performance of mysticism in Candomblé. In this poem the elevation of the protagonist's body through access to a mystic plane subverts the reduction of the black female body to an object in lusotropicalist discourse. In the first two stanzas, for example, Evaristo employs the trope of the mirror to explore the dual and paradoxical existence of a mystic subject:

> A mulher mirou-se no espelho do tempo,
> mil rugas, (só as visíveis) sorriram,
> perpendiculares às linhas
> das dores.
> Amadurecidos sulcos
> atravessavam o opaco
> e o fulgor de seus olhos
> em que a íris, entre

o temor e a coragem,
se expunha
ao incerto vaivém
da vida.

A mulher mirou-se no espelho
de suas águas:
— dos pingos lágrimas
à plenitude da vazante.
E no fluxo e refluxo de seu eu
viu o tempo se render.
Viu os dias gastos
em momentos renovados
d'esperança nascitura.
Viu seu ventre eterno grávido,
salpicado de mil estrias,
(só as contáveis estrelas)
em revitalizado brilho.
[…]
(Recordação: 38-39)

Firstly, the use of a mirror implies duality. The mirror reflects a real object or person, and an image which is different to (the reverse of, the image of and in addition to) the 'original'. Through the mirror, therefore, we have two versions of the protagonist, yet one version is but an image, which underlines the 'hidden' aspects of the protagonist that extend beyond the visual and the mirror's limits. The first mirror, the 'espelho do tempo', implies an access to, or ability to gaze into, another plane (as in spirit possession) as well as transcendence of the present moment. The quality of the mirror shows that part of this 'tempo' that the woman can gaze upon is reflected in the image of her body. This reflects the significance of female bodies in the performance of *orixá* possession in Candomblé, and also represents the impact of the past and of the act of remembrance on the present subject and community.

The second mirror, in the second stanza, is an 'espelho de suas águas'. This image underlines the impact of memory, as water is a common symbol in Evaristo's poetry and prose referring to memory and the journey of remembrance, evoking the journey of slaves across the Atlantic.[66] By attributing the memory-waters to the protagonist, Evaristo again evokes the centrality of female bodies in the Candomblé ceremony as a point of access for devotees to *axé* and mystic Africa. There is a similar sense of mystic belonging to a community to that created in the Eucharist ritual as discussed in the analysis of Prado's poem. Whilst the feminization of the Church (the Mystic Body of Christ and Christ's Bride) is alienated in the discourse against which Prado is writing, in Candomblé women's bodies are revered for their importance both in physical performance and in mystic life. Helena Theodoro explains:

> Elementos simbólicos significativos e fundamentais permitem aos movimentos corporais a exteriorização de um sentimento ancestral ou de uma determinada força cósmica, que, através do corpo das mulheres, transmutado em altar vivo, propicia a criação de um tempo mítico, numa reunião de pessoas, natureza, orixás e ancestrais que a todos fortalece e impulsiona pelas trocas de axé. (Theodoro 1996: 77)

This sense of inclusion and community-building through a performing body is reminiscent of the role of the Mystic Body of Christ in the performance of the Eucharist sacrament, which of course, became altered slightly when the mystic relationship was taken away from the church and into a privileged relationship between Prado's mystic subject and God. In Evaristo's poem, although the role of the female bodies in Candomblé spirit possession is crucial to her notion of an empowered bodily subject, the 'audience' (if you will), is replaced by the mirror image of the subject. This separation of the flesh-and-bones body and the image of a female body, emphasizes the tension between the performative feminine body and the living (in this case aging) female

[66] The most obvious example of this is the poem 'Recordar é preciso', (a pastiche of Pessoa's 'Navegar é Preciso') which critiques the way the Portuguese empire is often remembered and represented without taking into account the violence of slavery.

body.[67] Viewed in terms of performativity, however, there is a difference between the empowerment of the *terreiro* with *axé* in Candomblé, and the empowerment of the protagonist of the poem. Whilst in Candomblé, female bodies perform various gendered identities whilst possessed by an *orixá,* in 'Na mulher, o tempo…', the protagonist finds empowerment by turning her gaze upon her own body in the mirror and, through this process of gazing, undergoes a gradual process of self-acceptance and empowerment.

The connotations of memory, diasporic community and historical suffering evoked by the qualifiers of 'water' and 'time' remain, but the scene portrayed in this poem is an individual experience of a female body rather than a performance viewed by an audience. Evaristo has ensured that the body represented in this poem is undeniably female and feminine. This is identifiable in the repetition of the word *mulher*, five times in total, and in the attributes that the woman of the poem shares with the *orixá Oxum. Oxum* is the feminine *orixá* of fresh water, who is linked to maternity, fertility, the female body and feminine beauty – regularly portrayed in image and in Candomblé spirit possession holding a mirror. The water and the use of the mirror, therefore, extend beyond the symbolism of belonging to a diasporic community to represent a gendered existence. The use of pregnancy as a symbol of community, as was further explored in Chapter One, is similarly inseparable from the gendered experience of womanhood. Evaristo writes 'Viu seu ventre eterno grávido, | salpicado de mil estrias, | (só as contáveis estrelas)'. The use of an image of pregnancy highlights at one and the same time both the value of the female body as a symbol of community, and the corporeal experience of womanhood on a material level. This is exemplified by Evaristo's wordplay of *estrias* [stretch marks] and *estrelas* [stars], where the stars can be seen to represent the dispersed elements of a diaspora, whilst the stretch marks underline the physicality of pregnancy and its effect on women's bodies.

The focus on the physicality of the body, and the act of self-gazing around which this poem is structured, creates a kind of narrative of self-realization and empowerment as

[67] In Candomblé, the post-menopausal woman is considered 'cool' (quite literally out of 'heat') and so *Mães de Santos* are generally elderly women to maintain the 'coolness' of the *terreiro.*

the protagonist learns to equate her physical appearance with the power that Candomblé mysticism equates with community through the concept of *axé.* The act of self-gazing also replaces the objectifying eye of the male gaze that reduces the female body to its use in the service of male privilege. The body of Evaristo's protagonist, for example, is not fragmented in the same way as Freyre's description of the black housemaid in *Casa-grande e Senzala,* where he describes the breast that feeds, the hand that feeds and scratches, and the vagina that provides 'a primeira sensação complete do homem' (Freyre 1957: 279). Instead, Evaristo's description of wrinkles and skin provides a more holistic description of the body in the subject's own eye, whilst going beyond the physical to explore the spiritual meaning of black women's bodies.

This poem is, essentially, an expression of the process of identification, of understanding the complex *mélange* of symbolism and experience that leads to one's sense of belonging to a certain identity. Rewriting Beauvoir's well-known statement that 'on ne naît pas femme, on le devient', the Brazilian feminist Matilde Ribeiro has written about the process of '*tornar-se negra*' (1995), highlighting that race can be approached as a social construct, although systemic racism, material exclusion and physical violence are key components of this construction as well as the more abstract social structures within which these material factors exist. In her article 'Mulheres Negras: uma Trajetória de Criatividade, Teterminação e Organização', Ribeiro explains that black women '[e]ntenderam que desigualdades são construídas historicamente, a partir de diferentes padrões de hierarquização constituídos pelas relações de gênero e raça, que, mediadas pela classe social, produzem profundas exclusões' (2008: 988). Bearing this in mind, however, in her theoretical writing, Evaristo underlines the importance both of a collective subject-voice that allows for the empowerment of a community or state of mind related to an Afro-Brazilian self-defined identification, and of the importance of speaking a voice of experience (hence the emphasis on voice in poems such as 'Vozes-mulheres'):

> Quando falamos de sujeito na literatura negra, não estamos falando de um sujeito particular, de um sujeito construído segundo uma visão romântico-burguesa, mas de um sujeito que está abraçado ao coletivo. O sujeito da literatura negra tem a

> sua existência marcada por sua relação, e por sua cumplicidade com outros sujeitos. Temos um sujeito que, ao falar de si, fala dos outros e, ao falar dos outros, fala de si. (Evaristo 2010: 136)

> Surge a fala de um corpo que não é apenas *descrito*, mas antes de tudo *vivido.* A *escre(vivência)* das mulheres negras explicita as aventuras e as desventuras de quem conhece uma dupla condição, que a sociedade teima em querer inferiorizada, mulher e negra. (Evaristo 2005: 205)

Whilst these two quotations emphasize the need for a literary subject that expresses on the one hand a group identity, and on the other hand the specificity of the challenges and empowerment that black Brazilian women experience on a daily basis, Evaristo's use of the mystic subject and the contradictions inherent in the mystic condition enable the synthesis of these two processes of identification in the site of the female body. As the title 'Na mulher, o tempo…' suggests, there are two facets of identity explored here. The 'mulher' described in the poem, undergoing a process of identification, comes face to face with her 'real' body and the experience that is etched into her physical appearance through the 'rugas' and 'estrias' that run through the poem, whilst the 'tempo' refers to the significance of the body as a source of inclusion and shared experience that, in this case, is empowering. The symbolic expansion of the female body through Candomblé as a point of access to a mystic community or diaspora is, for example, a far cry from the symbolism of the fetishized *Mãe Preta* or *Mãe-África*. The emphasis on a mystic space and community as opposed to the national communities that are the focus of Freyre and Angolan nationalist literature removes, to a certain extent, the problematic focus on physical reproduction. Furthermore, Evaristo's insistence on recognising both the lived experience and the voices of the black women who appear in her work specifically and deliberately goes against the history of the fetishization of the black female body as she explicitly states in her text 'Gênero e Etnia: uma Escre(vivência) de Dupla Face' (2005).

One bodily image that is carried through the poem and best exemplifies the duality of the mystic female body is that of the 'rugas'. Evaristo's choice to focus so heavily on wrinkles is particularly interesting as it also raises a question of beauty standards in

relation to age and race without the strong connotations of race that elements such as skin-colour or hair (which are often used in Afro-Brazilian literature for a similar purpose) have. [68] Thus, Evaristo's use of physical descriptions of female bodies grounds the poem in the material condition of living as a black woman in Brazil, whilst at the same time refusing to adopt the stereotypical images of the black body that have been so often repeated both negatively in racist slurs and positively as an image of shared experience. In evoking an element of beauty and self-image, Evaristo brings to mind the invasive and often exclusive realm of beauty standards and challenges this socially ingrained hierarchy of femininity by replacing the eye of society with the eye of a solitary woman who undergoes a gradual process of defining her-self and her body through her own gaze. This is consistent with a strong and ongoing movement in Brazil for black women to create definitions of beauty and femininity that account for their bodily realities. In *Negras in Brazil,* Lily Caldwell writes:

> While Afro-Brazilian women's experiences with regard to beauty underscore the political importance of the body as a marker of racial and gender identity, their resistance in the realm of beauty also demonstrates how they struggle against dominant ideologies and work to give meaning to one of the most intimate aspects of their lives, their bodies. (Caldwell 2007: 99)

Evaristo's poem, by focusing on wrinkles, creates a space for the redefinition of black women's bodies that diverges from the emphasis on colour, giving the skin a new and empowering significance that constitutes the same dynamic of resistance against a dominant ideology. The skin of an Afro-Brazilian woman is, of course, an image loaded with social rhetoric and ideology which has developed in Brazil according to different skin tones. In her book *The Sorcery of Color,* Elisa Larkin Nascimento claims that in fact it is the word 'colour' that has replaced 'race' in social rhetoric to justify the denial of racial hierarchy:

[68] Derogatory descriptions of black hair are common in racist media and insults such as in the 1996 song 'Veja os cabelos dela' by the former circus-clown Tiririca as discussed by Lily Caldwell in *Negras in Brazil* (2007).

> Rather than erasing racism, the suppression of the word tends to favour the prevalence and normalization of its effects. This was the victory of the sorcery of color in Brazil, where substituting race with color allowed the nation to cultivate a pretentiously antiracist ideology that obscured the existence of an extremely efficient system of racial domination. (E. L. Nascimento 2007: 18-19)

The use of wrinkles, therefore, maintains the materiality of the body and skin, evokes the lived experience of a woman in Brazil, and yet sidesteps the Brazilian rhetoric of colour that has resulted in a thinly veiled justification for racial hierarchy.

From the beginning of the poem, the tension between the material and the social is apparent as Evaristo introduces the concept of visible and invisible wrinkles 'mil rugas, (só as visíveis) sorriram, | perpendiculars às linhas | das dores.' In this opening image, Evaristo underlines, through the two bodies present, two different kinds of wrinkles. The visible wrinkles are created by the act of smiling, and by the accumulated experience of pain over a lifetime: this represents the material female body, or the body of the mystic subject outside of the mystic union with the *orixás,* mystic Africa and its community. In this sense, the wrinkles and stretch marks can be read as a gendered positive representation of marks of suffering – a form of representation that is usually reserved for the scars of men, viewed as proof of masculinity within a patriarchal society. The bracketed phrase '(só as visíveis)', on the other hand, hints at potentially invisible wrinkles that exceed the limits of the material world: that of the ancestral lineages, of the experience of more than just the single woman looking at herself in the mirror. Interestingly, the use of brackets here and later in the second stanza ('só as contáveis estrelas') place the mystic experience separate from and secondary to (in terms of sentence structure) the description of the subject. The gendered subject as a symbol of radical inclusion is an aside at this point to the woman's pre-existing subjectivity. In the second half of the poem, however, the material and the mystic (the body and the mystic body/community) begin to converge in the protagonist's view of herself:

> […]

E viu que nos infindos filetes de sua pele
desenhos-louvores nasciam
do tempo de todas as eras
em que a voz-mulher
na rouquidão de seu silêncio
de tanto gritar acordou o tempo
no tempo.

E só
só ela, a mulher,
alisou as rugas dos dias
e sapiente adivinhou:
não, o tempo não lhe fugiu entre os dedos,
ele se guardou de uma mulher
a outra…

E só,
não mais só,
recolheu o só
da outra, da outra, da outra…
fazendo solidificar uma rede
de infinitas jovens linhas
cosidas por mãos ancestrais
e rejubilou-se com o tempo
guardado no templo
de seu eternizado corpo.
(Recordação: 39-40)

From the third stanza of the poem, the female body changes significance slightly in that the mystic qualities – previously contained in brackets – are now part of how the woman of the poem perceives herself. The secondary significance of the body as a symbol of community is recognized by the woman as she sees in her wrinkles a productive and creative power linked to the expression of a heritage specific to women. In the first of the above-cited stanzas, creativity (born through the skin of the woman) is linked to a

form of production that is innately female (‘nasciam’) and, through the unusual use of a hyphen (‘desenhos-louvores’), to the body as a site of worship. The fact that the skin is imprinted with a visual representation of its existence consolidates the material and the divine in order to create a mystic body. In terms of space and the definitions of limits, this body holds the same paradox as the small room in Prado’s ‘Rute no campo’, in that there is now an immensity of heritage and divinity represented by a single body. By using the skin as the site of mystic representation in the ‘desenhos-louvores’, then, Evaristo directly challenges the limits of the discrete body. The female body of the poem represents an excess of subjectivity, as the mysticism evoked by the wrinkles of the skin call into question the understanding of the body as the limits of a single and discrete subject.

By bringing into the body of this solitary woman a ‘voz-mulher’ that is described as having been silenced for so long, the mystic union becomes a source of politicized community subject-formation, that maintains its materiality through the descriptions of an aging female body. This same hyphenated phrase, of course, is also the title of a poem addressed in Chapter One in which the voices of past generations of women build in crescendo until their final realization in the daughter of the poetic subject who represents the future of socio-political struggle for Afro-Brazilian women. In this poem, the ’voz-mulher’ is similarly absorbed into a single woman, but the use of a more explicit kind of mysticism provokes a more extended process of consolidation between the individual and the communal; the social and the material.

This process of consolidation is most visible in the final two stanzas of the poem, in which the ‘mulher’ completes her self-realization, as a rhetoric of solidarity amongst women is developed. In this final section of the poem, Evaristo repeats the words ‘só’ and ‘outra’ in a way that underlines the contradiction of mystic experience that has been so crucial to understanding both her and Prado’s use of the mystic subject in poetry. The second to last stanza is the site of her completed epiphany. At the beginning of the stanza, the woman is described as ‘só’, attempting to smooth the ‘rugas dos dias’, taking part in an isolated battle to resolve her personal alienation and oppression. The

epiphany that the woman has, however, is a realization that she is not alone, and that her body is in fact the mark of a community of women facing similar experiences. The moment of realization comes as the woman redefines the wrinkles, from a symbol of her own struggles and of time passed (in the second stanza, Evaristo writes of 'os dias gastos'), to a symbol of her contact with 'a outra' – a contact that expands the limits of the solitary female body: 'o tempo não lhe fugiu entre os dedos, | ele se guardou de uma mulher | a outra…'. This is reflected by the shift, in the third stanza, as the mystic body 'acordou o tempo | no tempo', when the concept of time is altered so that the past becomes encompassed in the present-day female body both in terms of the individual experience of a life lived, and in terms of the heritage of a community of women and their voices. Thus, the body in its relationship to time, like the performing body in the Candomblé ceremony, is expanded to encompass an immensity and an eternity epitomized in the mystic space of 'África'.

In the final stanza, the realization of the (simultaneous) existence of a material, individual female body, and a symbolic body of women (within one figure) is epitomized not by engulfing the individuality of each woman, but through the consolidation of multiple experiences into a notion of solidarity. To demonstrate this in the poem, Evaristo plays with the word 'só' and its multiple meanings: 'E só, | não mais só, | recolheu o só | da outra, da outra, da outra…' Here, 'só' can be taken to mean solitary, lonely, only, and isolated, but can also be taken to refer to each individual. Whilst she is still an individual ('E só'), she is no longer alone ('não mais só') as through the mystic union with a community of females she now has a community incorporated in her understanding of her body. This epitomizes the condition of the mystic body. The next line, 'recolheu o só', however, refers to a more active relationship to the multiplicity of subjectivity held within the single mystic subject, consistent with a political rendering of solidarity and community subject-formation. The idea of collecting these individual iterations of women's subjectivity within her is further highlighted through the repetition of 'da outra', and these voices and subjects are then incorporated (without undermining their individuality) into a 'rede | de infinitas jovens linhas | cosidas por mãos ancestrais'. Within this network – reminiscent of the evocation of past and future generations in

'Vozes-mulheres' in Chapter One – the past, present and future, always tied to the physical linhas of the woman's body, come together through mysticism.

The poem ends with the lines 'e rejubilou-se com o tempo | guardado no templo | de seu eternizado corpo.' The use of the past participle of the verb 'eternizar' (rather than the adjective 'eterno', for example) underlines the fact that there has been a *process,* or *act* of identification that the body has undergone throughout the poem. The idea of a body becoming immortalized through the mystic union suggests the expansion of the limits of a human body to something vaster, and yet still embodied. The temporal element of the mystic union has provided not only a form of political solidarity, but also a fundamental change in the understanding of a body that is no longer discrete and alienated in its individuality, but which has employed its materiality to become a performance of the process of gender- and race-identification and the empowerment that this can hold.

The centrality of religion to the poetic representations of gender- and race-identification considered in this chapter underlines the continued centrality and, indeed, variety of religious discourse in Brazil today. In recent years, for example, the problematic association between conservative religious caucuses and mainstream Brazilian politics have become glaring. The significant presence of the *Frente Parlementar Evangélica* in the *Congresso Nacional do Brasil,* with strong ties to the right-wing political movement the *Movimento Brasil Livre,* for example, serves to highlight the influence of Evangelicalism in Brazilian politics, which is often most visible in political opposition to so-called *ideologia de gênero.*[69] What this chapter has highlighted, however, through the more positive engagement of Candomblé with black identity politics and, from a Catholic perspective, the political ramifications of liberation theology and queer theology, is the importance of spirituality to both the shape of modern Brazilian society,

[69] In 2011 congressman Jair Bolsonaro, supported by the Evangelical caucus, opposed the distribution of educational materials confronting homophobic violence and discrimination, producing instead images of a child threatened by the danger of *a ideologia de gênero* – a motif that re-emerged during the violent reception of Judith Butler in 2017 during which Butler was burnt in effigy to cries of 'deixem em paz nossas crianças!' (Miskolci 2018).

and modern subjecthood, reflected in the processes of poetic subject-formation analysed above.

When comparing Evaristo's version of mystic subjectivity with that of Prado, it becomes clear that there is a certain commonality in the way mysticism has been employed as a technique for developing empowered poetic subjects. The complexity of the mystic subject allows for an expansion of the limits of subjectivity, which both poets have then taken forward as a technique for unpicking the limits of the female body as a discrete and rigid notion of the limits of being, and as a source of alienation. It would be careless, of course, to attempt to assimilate these two vastly different poets who account for different kinds of women and bodies as well as cosmologies in their poetry. It would be fair to say, however, that, for both poets, the mystic literary tradition has provided a strong standpoint from which to explore and develop the formation of literary subjectivity for women. For each poet, mysticism functions as a vehicle for the creation of a new space that exists beyond the paradigms of either social or institutional religious hierarchies. The gendered subject and body is the site of this space; just as Teresa of Ávila created the Interior Castle, Prado and Evaristo have looked within the mystic subject and representations of female bodies, using mysticism to expand the subject, providing space to develop counter-discursive notions of femininity, sexuality, gender, race or religion.

Chapter Three: Amorous Subjects

This chapter moves from maternal and mystic love to romantic love in order to investigate techniques used by Branco and Amaral to explore how the way love has been written in the Western literary tradition has led to the dominance of binary structures and the exclusion of marginal voices. Both poets engage critically with existing cultural and literary paradigms of romantic love and the assumptions that support these paradigms. This includes, firstly, the privileged status of the heterosexual relationship and how this privilege maps onto the literary figures of the poet and the muse, informing the politics of voice, and, secondly, the role of language and form in defining poetic, loving subjects. In their poetry, Branco and Amaral both make direct references to pre-existing texts and textual traditions as they situate their own poetic subjects in opposition to the existing hierarchies and literary tropes that have dominated discourse on love. In questioning the meaning of love as it has been written in Western society, therefore, Branco and Amaral draw out the binary structure of love – characterized by the subject/object, male/female and self/other dichotomies – to unveil love as a textual construct, and to consider the power dynamics at play in these hegemonic representations of love.

Furthermore, Branco and Amaral demonstrate a drive to redefine the genre of love poetry based on the changing social demands of subjectivity (and particularly gendered subjectivity) at a time when issues of space, time, gender and ethnicity are frequently understood as crucial factors in determining modern subjectivity and personhood. The poetry studied in this chapter (and indeed the two previous chapters) shows that love can be (and has been) used as a complex lens through which to explore and revise notions of the subject and the object, the self and the other, as well as the association of voice with privilege. Poetry, more than any other kind of genre or discourse, with the formal inventiveness underlying its language, meaning and structure, can open the meanings of love to further interrogation and exploration.

In this chapter, the ‘other’ in question is a romantic partner. Much more than either maternal or mystic relationships, romantic partnerships have proliferated in literary,

artistic and popular cultural products as well as in theoretical texts from a range of perspectives (psychoanalysis, sexuality studies, sociology, anthropology, feminist studies, philosophy, to name a few). The sheer quantity of representations of romantic love poses a challenge to contemporary writers in that the theme is so strongly relatable to classic or canonical texts and the values and structures that these espouse. The most prevalent of these structures is the assumption of the subject-object binarism in literary representations of romantic love which assumes both a binary power structure, and a complementarity in the combination of two opposites into a single unit.[70] The idea of two beings merging through love, does not deny binary structures of gender or being, but reinforces them through their insistence on a complementarity that is necessary for the merging of two beings to be possible – as in the idea that opposites 'attract', for example. Although, frequently the difference between the two poles is mediated by a tradition that values similarity of race, class or creed (as opposed to proponents of miscegenation such as Freyre) within the same discourse of two individuals coming together to make a whole. In theoretical texts, the normalization of this emphasis on complementarity has been called into question over the course of the last century by writers such as Luce Irigaray (1996) who proposes a structure of indirection to provide more equality (whilst maintaining distance and difference) between lovers, expressed through the term 'I love to you' as opposed to 'I love you'. Jessica Benjamin (1988), from a psychoanalytic perspective, recommends viewing relationships as intersubjective in an effort to understand relationships between two people that do not necessitate a drive towards domination or death (in both the Hegelian and the Freudian sense). Equally, in literature, writers (especially women writers and those writing from marginal spaces or communities) are seeking alternative structures upon which to base their poetic manifestations of loving relationships.

[70] The emphasis on romantic partners as a single unit is visible in texts as far back as the Bible (where man and woman were created from the same flesh, with 'woman' as the complement to man) and Plato's *Symposium* (where Aristophanes recounts the tale of the androgynous people). Perhaps it is telling that Aristophanes' comical and over-simplified account of the origins of love can be seen as the most appropriate for describing the problematic reliance on binary structures that have developed over the past two millennia.

Branco and Amaral can be counted among this number and yet, whilst both are writing against a tradition of Eurocentric literary manifestations of love, they each hold a different position in relation to this tradition, with Amaral writing from the former metropolis, Portugal, and Branco from the former colony, Angola. In their poetry, they undertake the challenge of representing an experience of love that remains under-represented in the Western canon of the literature of love. In particular, we will see in this chapter how Branco and Amaral take the idea of a romantic partnership and offer alternative structures of subjectivity through which love can be written either to better represent alternative experiences of love, which often does not map neatly onto the subject-object dichotomy, or to rewrite the meaning of love to provide an ideal alternative that is not bound by the rigidity of these aforementioned positions. In order to do this, Branco makes reference to the traditional form of a love letter in the poem 'A Última Carta' (2004) to represent the poetic subject's struggle with love, highlighting the extent to which the term has become associated with particular hegemonic cultures and the difficulty of discovering one's own definition of love against existing archetypes. We will see in this chapter how the cultural and literary baggage of the term 'love' can become an obstacle to the writing of love, and how Branco represents the struggle undertaken by the poetic subject in the search for a conciliatory relationship with the concept of love. In this chapter I will analyse Branco's poetry as a postcolonial critique of the dominance of European voices in the canon of love literature, firstly through the choice to link her lengthy prose-poem to the epistolary literary form, and secondly as a representation of the search for, and construction of, a literary subject-position.

For Amaral, on the other hand, the struggle in her collection *A Génese do Amor* (2005) is against the poet-muse relationship that has for so long dominated the genre of love poetry (and, indeed, much of Western art and literature) as she seeks to explore the meaning of love through a reconfiguration of these gendered roles. In a collection that simultaneously pays homage to and challenges the Renaissance's quintessential love poets (Luís de Camões, Dante Alighieri, and Francesco Petrarch) and their muses (Natércia/Catarina, Beatrice and Laura), Amaral seeks to trace the notion of romantic love back to its origins whilst casting a contemporary eye on the textual construction of

love that is often considered central to the Western canon. Using a selection of poems written from the perspectives of Natércia/Catarina and Camões, I will analyse Amaral's use of multiple textual subjects and references to literary tradition to understand the contemporary light that the poet throws onto the relationship between love, literature and subjectivity. In doing so, this chapter's analysis of *Génese do Amor* will consider not only the relation between poet and muse, but also how the theme of love can be used to rewrite Bloomian agonistic representations of the poet/precursor relationship by favouring the role of text and, above all, intertext over that of the poet.

This chapter, then, seeks to explore the link that each poet perceives between longstanding Western representations of love and the hierarchical, gendered and (neo)colonial[71] structures that still favour the subjectivity and status of the European white male writer in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Along the way, this analysis will reveal the powerful critique that these poetic texts enact against the long-standing structures that have for so long defined love as a textual construct, in order to find for themselves the poetic space to create amorous subjects of their own.

Ana Branco: deconstructing love

Branco's poem 'A Última Carta' from the collection *A Despedida de Mi(m)* is a relatively long poem which describes a struggle between the poetic subject, an unnamed 'other', and the concept of love. The form of the poem itself appears to move away from the more traditional forms of love poetry that rely much more heavily on a language characterized by lyricism and a strong poetic subject describing the object of its affections. Instead, Branco's poem plays with the idea of the epistolary form (as suggested by the title 'A Última Carta'), using language that lies on the border of poetry and prose, and is written from a subject-position that flits between the singular first person, the collective first person, and the evocative second person forms of address throughout the poem.

[71] Portugal's neo-colonial influence in Angola was unusual as it did not maintain strong political, economic or trade relations with its former colony. The influence of Portuguese culture, Catholicism, *Estado novo* education, and bureaucratic structures, however, remained. See David Birmingham's article 'Angola Revisited' (1988: 7-8).

The epistolary form, evoked in the title of the poem, the forms of address employed by the poet, and the prose-style of the language, bring numerous connotations. From a literary perspective, the love letter is equated with a form of writing that is high in affective content. Furthermore, to designate a text as epistolary (be it fiction or a genuine historical artefact) also encourages the reader to believe in and, indeed, to expect, a certain level of emotional authenticity, even in the most poetic of examples. In terms of its cultural significance within the Lusophone world, the title and form of the poem bring to mind the fifth (and final) letter of *Lettres Portugaises.* First published in French in 1669, the five letters that make up *Lettres Portugaises* were believed to have been written by the Portuguese nun Mariana Alcoforado to her lover, the French chevalier Noël Bouton de Chamilly. Originally, the fifth letter was introduced as 'Lettre V et dernière' or 'Carta Quinta e Última' in the Portuguese translation, and the opening lines of the letter read: 'Esta é a última carta que te escrevo e espero fazer-te conhecer pela diferença dos termos e do estilo dela, que me persuadiste enfim que não me amavas, e portanto que devo cessar de amar-te' (Alcoforado et al. 1900: 41).[72]

Linda S. Kauffman counts the epistolary fiction *Lettres Portugaises* amongst a tradition of texts centred around heroines of epistolary fiction who '[transform] the ordeal of abandonment into a passionate vocation that might be called the vocation of iterative narrative' (1988: 25). In a Derridean fashion, then, the absence of the reciprocated love of the beloved is supplemented by a text, creating from absence a condition of possibility. This possibility derives from the fact that the love letter is written to supplant the absence of the (fictional) addressee, relying on this lack in order to come into being, and yet creating a form of writing that moves away from this absence to become a literary piece of writing (rather than a letter to be sent to the addressee). In many ways this reflects the purpose of writing in general, in that the absence of the lover/addressee creates the possibility for the written text, and yet the text moves away from the

[72] This translation of *Lettres Portugaises* (published in 1900) entitled *Cartas de Amor ao Cavaleiro de Chamilly* is an updated version (in modern Portuguese) of Morgado de Mateus' translation published alongside the French in the 1824 *Lettres Portugaises. Nouvelle Édition* (Guilleragues and Mateus 1824: 183).

absentee lover/addressee to hold its own position alongside the absence (rather than filling the absence) as a literary text. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida writes that

> it is at the moment that the social *distance*, which had led gesture to speech, increases to the point of becoming *absence*, that writing becomes necessary. […] From then on, writing has the function of reaching *subjects* who are not only distant but outside the entire field of vision and beyond earshot. (Derrida 1997: 281)

Derrida's account of writing, then, is useful for understanding the role of the absent love in both epistolary fiction and love lyric, as becomes clear in the above-cited extract from *Cartas Portuguesas* through Mariana's intention to cease loving (and therefore writing to) the *chevalier* ('cessar de amar-te'). Whilst Mariana's love for the *chevalier* comes to an end, the written love of the text can depart from the absence (and potential) created therein. In the case of *Cartas Portuguesas*, for example, the draw of the space that followed Mariana's *última carta* provoked the Three Marias to use the myth of Mariana Alcoforado, and the epistolary fiction that triggered her notoriety, as a springboard for their feminist and anti-colonial critique of the *Estado Novo, Novas Cartas Portuguesas* in 1972.[73] In this sense, the love letter represents a high literary cultural reference that has been effectively adopted for political commentary against the national machismo of a right-wing regime and patriarchal, colonial structures and values within the imperial metropolis.

More recently, the Angolan writer José Eduardo Agualusa's epistolary fiction *Nação Crioula* (1997) ends with an *última carta* from the character Ana Olímpia that both frames and directs the correspondence between Eça de Queiroz and Fradique Mendes. This novel, like *Novas Cartas Portuguesas,* takes off from the open-ended correspondence between Queiroz and his heteronym, using the space left by the original publications as a starting point from which to develop a text in which the dynamics of the epistolary genre are used to call into question the Oedipal and patriarchal structures that dominate the popular imagination of trans-national relations

[73] The Three Marias took up Mariana's plight in *Novas Cartas Portuguesas,* written as an epistolary novel but where the 'letters' cover a number of genres forms, in prose and poetry.

within the 'Atlantic Triangle' between Portugal, Angola, and Brazil (Miranda 2014). Crucially, it is with the *última carta* of Agualusa's novel – written by the Angolan character Ana Olímpia and never delivered to the already deceased Eça de Queirós – that the epistolary form of the book becomes central to Agualusa's critique of the patriarchal structure of transatlantic Lusophone relations. Indeed, the use of feminine subjects and voices such as Ana Olímpia, the multiple protagonists of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas,* and Branco's 'A Última Carta' in itself interrupts the hegemony of male writers and voices in the history and literature of transatlantic Lusophone relations, such as lusotropicalism, the literature of 'discoveries', and the Oedipal son's anti-colonial reclamation of Mother Africa.

Linked to the notion of the 'last letter', is an element of possibility, and an absence (in the Derridean sense) that creates a displacement of the text. Rui Miranda, for example, describes the effect of the undelivered letters in *Nação Crioula*, writing that '[o]s destinos e correspondências sobre o qual se alicerçam construtos, conceitos e discursos de identidade são possibilitados em simultâneo e, no limite, impossibilitados pelo efeito da destinerrância' (2014: 150).[74] The fact that a letter is, by definition, disseminated – 'dis-' from the Latin prefix meaning asunder or separate also means lack, to free something from, the reverse, or the negative and '-seminate' from the Latin stem 'semen' which means seed – means that it can pose a challenge to the binary structures of self/other or addressor/addressee relations (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 2003: 'dis-' and 'disseminate'). The dissemination of a text, but especially of a letter, thus, is particularly powerful as a counterforce to the dominant structures of language and truth in question. Responding to Jacques Lacan's 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"', which uses the motif of the letter in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Purloined Letter' as an allegory for the subconscious mind, Derrida uses Lacan's statement that 'a letter always arrives at its destination' (Lacan 1972: 72) as a point of departure for an

[74] To define 'destinerrância', Miranda uses Miller's description: 'a fatal possibility of erring, by not reaching a predefined temporal goal, in terms of wandering away from a predefined spatial goal' (Miller 2009: 29).

exploration of the meaning of text and its dissemination in his article 'The Purveyor of Truth':

> [n]ot that the letter never arrives at its destination, but it belongs to the structure of the letter to be capable, always, of not arriving. And without this threat (breach of contract, division or multiplication, the separation without return from the phallus which was begun for a moment by the Queen, i.e. by every 'subject'), the circuit of the letter would not even have begun. But with this threat, the circuit can always not finish. Here dissemination threatens the law of the signifier and of castration as the contract of truth. It broaches, breaches [*entame*] the unity of the signifier, that is, of the phallus. (Derrida 1987: 444)

Branco's choice to name a poetic text 'A Última Carta', then, by its incongruity, draws attention to the particularities of letter-writing – its position in the cultural imagination as an amorous literary form, its specific cultural connotations of counter-discourse in the Lusophone world, and its disruption of structures of communication and circulation in Derridean, post-structural terms. Whilst using the epistolary as a theme intensifies these aspects, the use of the poetic form as a vehicle for this theme allows for the exploration of love to turn back upon itself in order to also consider the self and language in relation to the dominant structures. Poetry, as Derrida describes in 'Che Cos'è la Poesia?', like a hedgehog curled into a ball to protect itself on a road, simultaneously offers some knowledge to others (as it attempts to cross the road), whilst turning in on itself and exposing its spines to protect its language, subject and form from being reduced to a singular message through reading or interpretation (Derrida 1991a: 235). As a textual form that is by its nature neither autotelic nor self-enclosed, therefore, Branco's poem reaches out to the *idea* of the love letter – engaging with the aforementioned tradition of Lusophone epistolary fiction – as it interrogates the meaning of text, form, and subjectivity.

With this in mind, the poem's title confirms the importance of language in the poem, as it offers itself up as a Derridean undecidable; containing the double meaning of 'última carta' which can be read as either the *final* or the *previous*, most recent letter – the former meaning suggesting finality, whilst the latter implying continuity. The double

meaning of ‘última’ as well as the juxtaposition of ‘última’ and ‘começo’ in the very first stanza draw attention to the tensions at play in the concept of a letter. Branco toys with the expectations raised through references to the epistolary form by delivering a poetics of introspection through a complex struggle with the existing structures of love. Rather than dealing with the abandonment of a lover/addressee (as that described by Kaufman), any sense of alienation in this poem comes from a feeling of estrangement from the dominant construct of love in Western literary and cultural production:

> Já as palavras do amor são surdas ao toque das línguas
> faladas. Já não se compreende o som dos dedos em
> Português, decido nesta última carta falar-te de amor em
> inglês e começo “**from the very deep inside of me**”.
> […]
> (Branco 2004: 63-64)[75]

Initially, the poem appears to be an iteration of the amorous epistle, as suggested in the title and the use of the second person grammatic form in the first stanza. Equally, the last line of the poem which reads simply ‘Ridícula’, again relates back to the form of the letter in its physical position (as it recalls the signature at the end of a letter). The gendered ‘signature’ (incidentally the only word of the lengthy poem that grammatically signals the gender of the subject) serves as a reminder of the interruption that a literary subject cast as a woman epistler (such as Ana Olímpia and the Three Marias’s multiple ‘Marianas’) can signify against a background of male-authored texts extolling symbolic feminine figures, as in Camões’s ‘Ilha dos Amores’ and anti-colonial literature such as Viriato da Cruz’ ‘Mamã Negra’.

Instead of continuing to address a lover, however, the inferred amorous poetic subject is alienated from both the concept of love and the words they use to write this love. From the first lines, ‘Já as palavras do amor são surdas ao toque das línguas | faladas’, Branco underlines the distance between love as a textual construct – as it is, and has

[75] The edition used in this study is the 2004 first edition of Branco’s *A Despedida de Mi(m)*, published in Luanda by the União de Escritores Angolanos, henceforth referenced as (Despedida).

been, written over the centuries (represented by the 'palavras do amor') – and the phenomenon of love ('o toque das línguas faladas', 'o som dos dedos'). Not only is there a distinction between the language of love and the corporeal experience of love, but the language used to write love (as exemplified by European literary canons), no longer even reflects the language ('faladas', 'som') of many subjects who love. From the beginning of the poem, then, there is a marked conflict between the drive to love and the drive to write love; the latter of which (often conflated with the former) is metatextually worked through in the poem. This is emphasized by the conflict in the poem between the written and the spoken, present in the clash of references to both types of language – 'línguas faladas', words that are 'surdas', 'som', 'carta'. The poetic form, then, as a written form of literature that gains meaning from being spoken because of the importance of rhythm and sound, provides an intermediary space for the exploration of the link between love, language and subjectivity. Meaning would be lost, for example, if this poem were simply a prose letter, as the sound of the language would no longer play such a central role in the overall concept of the text.

The first stanza introduces, then, a search for an adequate form of language that accounts for the poetic subject's experience of love, and for an identity for the poetic subject herself who, as a textual subject, only exists through the text of the poem. The poetic subject engages in a process of iterative failure within the discursive structures of love, searching for an adequate form of literary expression. In the first stanza, the subject moves away from the Portuguese language within which, she claims, love cannot be understood, and turns to the English language. The irony is, moving away from the Portuguese language to the English phrase '**"'from the very deep inside of me"',** sounds at once clichéd and awkward, through the clash of the sonoric qualities of the two languages, reflecting the deafness of written text to the touch of the spoken word. By changing the typeface to bold, and placing the phrase in quotation marks, Branco emphasizes its physical quality as written text. There is also a kind of humour in this line, as the poetic subject, in their search for a more adequate form, chooses a foreign language that is, by its nature, even more alien to the subject, thereby exacerbating the issue they intend to resolve. This first stanza, therefore, revolves

around and repeatedly tests the inadequacy of language for the writing of love, highlighted through synaesthetic language, experimentation with another language, and the playful combination of the poetic and epistolary literary forms.

The opening stanza is thus the first of a series of iterative failures that the poetic subject goes through in this poem searching for an adequate expression for her own subject-position through love. Unlike traditional love poetry, this poem's subject does not define itself in a dialectic relationship with an 'other' or 'beloved'. Instead, the subject seeks to identify according to their relation to the construct of love itself, as their iterative attempts to take on the existing literary structures through which love has been written fail repeatedly: 'decido nesta última carta falar-te de amor em inglês', 'acredito que o amor é feito de fantasias e sonhos'. The fact that the struggle for self-definition is played out against the construct of love rather than a beloved, emphasizes that, as Derrida wrote, 'il n'y a pas de hors-texte' ['There is no outside-text'] (1997: 15). Written by an Angolan poet, in Portuguese and English, the text is caught up in the dominance of phallic and/or Eurocentric structures of truth, language, and being, even through concepts such as love and intimacy which are often represented as transcended of social and political factors.

The struggle between the phenomenon of love and existing textual and cultural constructions of love is conveyed through the notions of deafness ('as palavras do amor são surdas ao toque') and incomprehensibility which imply a certain blockage, obstacle or disconnection ('já não se compreende'). The subject herself represents an intercessor in the relationship between love-as-text and love-as-phenomenon, at once working within the existing structures of love (exemplified by the drive to write love, and the attempts to follow existing conventions and styles) and against them (in the drive to account for her own meaning of love). The tension within which the subject moves and is defined, then, is in the attempt to conciliate these two drives.

In the second and third stanzas Branco juxtaposes an ideal of love, characterized as 'feito de fantasias e sonhos', with 'a crua realidade':

> […]
> Fiquei triste.
> Acredito que o amor é feito de fantasias e sonhos.
> Cores nobres e brilhantes fazem o concerto de Chopin
> saber a pouco. Quando deixamos de amar, a música do
> antigamente passa ameaçadora como o rugir dos leões.
>
> É normal, pois quando nos apaixonamos o sonho leva-nos
> até bem longe nos sentidos e pensamentos. O sabor do
> sexo, o toque das mãos, as línguas frias das costuras das
> camisas mal bordadas, constrói no umbigo vivo da carne,
> a crua realidade.
> […]
> (Despedida: 63)

To express an image of fantasies and dreams as being the components of love is to take a concept reliant on a sentient, subjective individual, and to project it towards a space where it must be mediated by thought and discursive structures. Taken away from the physical experience of touch, taste or smell, for instance, love and the experiences of love are transformed into discourse. In this stanza, Branco continues to draw upon the synaesthetic language of the first stanza in the line 'Cores nobres e brilhantes fazem o concerto de Chopin | saber a pouco'. Whilst the use of synaesthesia in the first stanza created confusion and tension in the poem, however, the synaesthetic imagery here develops a more dream-like, utopian air of beauty. The tension in the second stanza lies, rather, in the threat of leaving the fantasy: 'Quando deixamos de amar, a música do | antiguamente passa ameaçador como o rugir dos leões.' For the fantasy is defined by its position aside from the material, and the material is defined against the fantasy.

Both the reference to Chopin's concerto and the 'palavras do amor' mentioned in the first stanza can be read as representing a westernized discourse of love that has become particularly dominant through the spread of Western culture (and thus cultural references) around the world. This process, of course, began with colonialism: as

European countries began to interact with newly 'discovered' lands and peoples, they began to impose their languages, culture, and points of reference onto newly colonized communities. Love itself, of course, was not unique to Europeans, but the way in which love is expressed through social conventions and cultural products became markers to distinguish between the 'civilized', the 'assimilado' and the 'savage'. Engaging in Western romantic conventions (such as Christian marriage or monogamy) became a kind of currency, in the early stages of colonialism in Angola, for social status with the Portuguese.[76] As European romantic values and social conventions became more common in Angola, they paved the way for certain paradigms of affective cultural products such as music, specific types of European literature, and the language associated with romance in these media, to become absorbed into the colonies' cultures. The final line of the poem, 'Ridícula.', for example, appears to be an intertextual nod to Fernando Pessoa's poem 'Todas as Cartas de Amor são Ridículas', a poem which has also made its way across the Atlantic to be performed by the Brazilian singer-songwriter Maria Bethânia to a piece of music entitled 'Mensagem' (referring to Fernando Pessoa's 1934 collection of poetry that deals with Portugal's 'glorious past') composed by Cicero Nunes and Aldo Cabral. It is as though the global networks (colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial) have resulted in an over-proliferation of representations of love that appear daunting, chaotic and even oppressive when a subject is faced with the challenge of writing love through their own subject voice. The intertextuality with Chopin, Pessoa and Maria Bethânia come together to suggest the saturation of the theme of love as well as the lines of influence that can be drawn between constructs and definitions of love around the world.

[76] On 30th January 1657, ahead of her Catholic wedding, Queen Njinga of Angola is reported to have said 'I want to tell you that the *maniputo* [Portuguese king] has won, and because I am already old I no longer wish to go to war against his people. I am already living in peace with him, and more glory will come to me through the Fathers who have come from Rome and who will reconcile us with the Holy Roman Church […] I will embrace the Holy Catholic faith which before I had professed, and in which I will die' (Heywood 2019: 201). With this speech she links the adoption of Catholic traditions with the political alliance with the Portuguese. Within the same address she proclaimed that she would be baptized and would marry a baptized man, and 'called on everyone assembled to give up their multiple partners and adopt monogamous unions, attend catechism classes, and agree to baptism' (ibid.).

The fact that the subject equates the fantasies of love with a dream-like image of the colours of a Chopin concerto underlines the way in which the essence of love has become inseparable from the cultural products that express it. Furthermore, the music of Chopin is contrasted against the 'rugir dos leões', which brings to mind European depictions of Africa as a 'wild' place. In the juxtaposition of these two images, there is a clear contrast between a so-called 'natural sound' (although this has been transformed into a stereotype in the European context) and a very structured sound linked to a particularly European kind of rhythm and cultural context. Interestingly, in this stanza the trigger for the transformation of 'a música do antigamente' into the threatening 'rugir dos leões', is the removal of love. It is unclear whether the music referred to here is, again, Chopin's concertos or traditional Angolan music that precedes Portuguese imperial presence, but what this stanza does is to posit love as a transformative power rather than culture. Using the collective first-person form of address ('Quando deixamos de amar') gives the statement an air of the universal, as though any music requires love to be beautiful. A revered piece of classical music does not create dreams of 'cores nobres e brilhantes' because of any claim to cultural superiority, but rather becomes beauty 'in the ear of the beholder', as it were, gaining meaning from love.

Despite the fact that the presence of particular structures and cultural expressions of love around the world can be seen as eliding the different experiences of love in various cultures, Chela Sandoval's reworking of Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* in her *Methodology of the Oppressed* is a useful reminder that Western thought (in this case, an understanding of the individuality of love) can be usefully reformulated to acknowledge other contexts such as that of former colonies. Barthes picked up on the individual nature of the perception of love, and the way in which we attribute meaning to love, claiming that real love is necessarily original or '*atopos'* as the beloved becomes 'the singular image which has miraculously come to correspond to the specialty of [the lover's] desire. The other is the figure of my truth, and cannot be imprisoned in any stereotype (which is the truth of others)' (Barthes 2002: 34). This means that love becomes a point of access to a third space – described by Barthes as 'degree zero' – which is a site of possibility, but is equally a painful process during which the integrity of

the subjects themselves is challenged as they become engulfed by this space: ‘The crisis of engulfment can come from a wound, but also from a fusion: we die together from loving each other: an open death, by dilution into the ether, a closed death of a shared grave’ (Ibid., 10-11). For Chela Sandoval, Barthes’s third space and the possibility that this space holds in its rejection of stereotype and insistence on originality, provides the potential for the development of a differential consciousness, which can be harnessed as a site of power in a colonial or postcolonial setting. She writes that

> To fall in love means that one must submit, however temporarily, to what is ‘intractable’, to a state of being not subject to control or governance. It is at this point that the drifting being is able to pass into another kind of erotics, to the amplitude of Barthes's ‘abyss.’ It is only in the ‘no-place’ of the abyss that subjectivity can become freed from ideology as it binds and ties reality; here is where political weapons of consciousness are available in a constant tumult of possibility. But the process of falling in love is not the only entry to this realm, for the ‘true site of originality and strength’ is neither the lover nor the self. Rather, it is the ‘originality of the relation’ between the two actors that inspires these new powers, while providing passage to that which I call the differential. (Sandoval 2000: 141)

In Branco’s poem, we can certainly read the binds and ties that dominant ideology can place upon a subject, particularly in the first two stanzas. On the other hand, the ‘no-place’ of reality that exists beyond these affective discourses and the ‘palavras do amor’ is far from a utopian space of possibility, but is filled with a sense of jeopardy: ‘Quando deixamos de amar, a música do | antigamente passa ameaçador como o rugir dos leões’ (Despedida: 63). The ‘rugir dos leões’ is threatening from the perspective of a dominant colonial ideology as it represents the unknown and the indecipherable, it can also represent a site of resistance as an ‘abyss’. If ‘deixar de amar’ refers to an abandonment of the Eurocentric archetypes of romantic (in the sense of romance rather than romanticism) cultural products, then the ‘música do antigamente’ and the ‘rugir dos leões’ can represent the threatening originality of the oppressed. The cultural products, ‘fantasias’ and ‘sonhos’, are barriers that must be overcome to assert the originality and

individuality of the poetic subject's voice and to access the counter-discursive potential of the 'abyss'. Nonetheless, the drive towards the freedom of love as a transformative power, as suggested by Sandoval, is present in the drive behind the poetic subject's struggle against the limits of both language and culture.

This struggle against a plethora of existing textual loves is further represented in the structure of the poem which, with a chaotic *mélange* of long and short lines, appears to challenge the restraints of printed text, driving towards the outer limits of the page, and towards the limits of a material text. Branco continues to push the boundaries of poetic language in the third stanza, where she disturbs the relationship between love and literature by altering the kind of language used to describe love as the poem veers away from the descriptions of dreams and fantasies in the second stanza:

> […]
> É normal, pois quando nos apaixonamos o sonho leva-nos
> até bem longe nos sentidos e pensamentos. O sabor do
> sexo, o toque das mãos, as línguas frias das costuras das
> camisas mal bordadas, constrói no umbigo vivo da carne,
> a crua realidade.
>
> É bom o sonhar.
> […]
> (Despedida: 63)

In this stanza the tone of the poem changes to reflect the physicality of love and the effects of material conditions; concerns that are seemingly at odds with the metatextuality of the opening stanzas. The use of adjectives such as 'frias', 'mal bordadas', 'vivo' and 'crua' seem to reflect a more neo-realist approach to literary representations of love, such as that favoured by the Angolan poet Agostinho Neto in the 1974 collection *Sagrada Esperança* (Neto 1987), where he applied some of the hallmarks of Portuguese neo-realism to the context of Angola in an effort to express the reality of life as an Angolan in the 1940s (Chabal 1995: 38).

In Branco's poem, though, the line between the dream in the previous stanza and the realist description in this stanza is not as clear-cut as one might expect. The way in which these two apparent poles are represented is ambiguous, and slippery. Whilst the fantasy of love is represented as transcendent, consistent with the dream-like quality of the previous stanza, as it 'leva-nos | até bem longe nos sentidos e pensamentos', the reality of love is not its negative opposite. The crude reality and its components appear to bring a slim sense of clarity to the synaesthetic confusion of the earlier stanzas. The taste of sex, the touch of hands, the coldness of the seams, the flesh of the navel, are refreshingly direct descriptions after words deaf to touch, the sound of fingers and the colour of concertos. There appears to be a striking disjunction between a dream of love, expressed in relation to European cultural stereotypes, and a reality of love that includes the experience of pain, suffering and the mundane and everyday. Despite the tension between the two textual representations of love, neither approach seems to resolve the poetic subject's alienation:

> […]
>
> É bom o sonhar.
>
> Mas de repente preferimos acordar e não deixar que o sonho
> nos leve à luz negra das trevas e escolhemos viver a cruel realidade.
>
> O amor não acaba.
> Muitas vezes nem chega sequer a começar.
>
> Queremos o amor e ao encontrá-lo transformamos o sonho
> em pesadelo. Chegam-nos os filhos juntamente com esse
> amor e o futuro não é cor-de-rosa, lindo, sadio nem maravilhoso.
>
> É misterioso
> É o desconhecido.
>
> O amor perde toda a cor.
>
> […]
> (Despedida: 63-64)

Whilst the voice appears to gain a stronger sense of agency with a firm rejection of the fantasy of love presented in the previous stanzas – ('de repente *preferimos* acordar […] e *escolhemos* viver a cruel | realidade'; my emphasis) – the masochistic tone of the subject's refusal of the dream seems to do little to alleviate her alienation. In the following lines, for example, Branco writes: 'Queremos o amor e ao encontrá-lo transformamos o sonho | em pesadelo'. The subject's choice to live a 'cruel realidade' reflects the sound of 'crua realidade', suggesting that the neorealist focus on a 'crude reality' amounts to little more than a literary form of self-flagellation and self-indulgence. Although the language continues to reflect instability and confusion, the transition into the first-person plural ('deixamos', 'apaixonamos', 'preferimos', 'escolhemos', 'queremos', 'transformamos') reflects at least a slightly lesser state of alienation in that the desires and choices represented by these verbs are no longer those of a solitary individual. The contradictory language in these stanzas such as 'luz negra', and 'O amor não acaba. | Muitas vezes nem chega sequer a começar', as well as the juxtaposition of binary opposites such as 'sonho' and 'pesadelo', however, continue to create a sense of confusion and instability. For the subject and the reader, the meaning of love remains in flux, especially as it 'perde toda a cor' with which it has been represented in earlier stanzas. Neither the European romantic conventions and stereotypes of the early stanzas, nor the neorealism favoured by anti-colonial Angolan writers such as Agostinho Neto have proven sufficient to decipher or adequately express the meaning of love from the subject's perspective.

Branco's representation of the dominance of European literary discourse on love goes some way to demonstrating the fact that colonization need not end with the physical occupation of national space, but that it can, and does, continue in other, predominantly discursive areas. In *The Other Heading,* Derrida uses Paul Valéry's description of Europe as a 'petit cap' of the Asian continent (where 'cap' means geographical cape/headland, head or, in nautical terms, course) to critique the use of Europe as an example that *presents itself* to the universal context:

> Europe takes itself to be a promontory, an advance – the avant-garde of geography and history. It advances and promotes itself as an advance, and it will have never

> ceased to make advances on the other: to induce, seduce, produce, and conduce, to spread out, to cultivate, to love or to violate, to love to violate, to colonize, and to colonize itself. (Derrida 1992: 49)

In *The Other Heading,* Derrida's examples of European advances on the other are not so much material as discursive and include a definition of love which is itself an act of European colonization of the other. With the definitions of love, literary styles, discourses, and European language come the connotations of advancement and knowledge (as well as occupation and pervasiveness) which attribute a higher value to the European even beyond the end of colonial occupation. Love and affect both form part of this discursive neo-imperialist structure, through concepts such as *Lusofonia* and lusotropicalism, further assuaging the hierarchization of European values and cultural products (Chopin, Portuguese language literature, the neo-realist style that was popular in Portugal before Agostinho Neto took it up) against non-European values or literary forms.

Bearing in mind the previous references to European dominance in both language and cultural production, the phrase 'o futuro não é cor-de-rosa' is another reference to the realm of fantasy but also to a stereotypical colour of romance, and social conventions such as stylized romantic gifts or cards in Europe. As well as romantic fantasy, however, from a postcolonial perspective, the line could also be read as a reference to imperial fantasy and the infamous 'mapa cor-de-rosa', which represented Portugal's claim to the strip of land connecting Angola to Mozambique, formulated for the 1884-1885 Berlin conference during the so-called 'scramble for Africa'. Whilst Portugal was forced to concede the land joining Angola and Mozambique to the British following the 1890 ultimatum, the pink space of Angola remained under Portugal's control. Thus, the phrase 'o futuro não é cor-de-rosa' is at once a reminder that life is no longer controlled by the European colonizer, whilst at the same time taking into account the anxiety that accompanies freedom. Refusing the structures of the oppressor, then, leaves the subject facing the 'abyss' described earlier by Sandoval, so that the statement 'o futuro não é cor-de-rosa' refuses both the legacy of the colonizer and the uncritical anti-colonial optimism that has proven to be so inaccurate in the example of Angola.

If we approach the poem as a form of critique of colonialism and subsequent cultural neo-colonialism, the self-reflective opening of the poem which explicitly incorporates the choice of written language into the poem can also be read as a reflection on the link between language and power in the context of colonialism, postcolonialism, and neo-colonialism. The initial alienation between the subject and both the Portuguese and English languages could, therefore, be read as a critique of the continued dominance of colonial languages following decolonization. Whilst the decision to retain Portuguese as a national language in Angola was a pragmatic decision with the intention of uniting the country across ethnic boundaries which, before Portuguese presence, had also been linguistic boundaries, many have criticized the Portuguese discourse of *Lusofonia* as a neo-imperial attempt to confirm Portugal's importance at an international level. As Arenas explains in his article 'Migrations and the Rise of African Lisbon: Time-Space of Portuguese (Post)coloniality',

> [m]any critics of Portuguese or Lusophone postcoloniality consider *Lusofonia* to be an avatar or an ersatz version of Lusotropicalism whose aim is of compensating for Portugal's irreversibly peripheral location in the context of Europe, but also attempting to claim a centrality within a postcolonial community of nations that has not always been historically guaranteed in relationship to Brazil or Angola – especially so today. (Arenas 2015: 358-359)

In the consideration of the adequacy of language to express love, the politics involved in the use of languages such as Portuguese or English are very much a part of how we define ourselves as subjects within or despite modern linguistic networks. From this perspective, Branco's poetic struggle against the limits of language and literature can reflect a sense of alienation in relation to neo-colonial structures such as *Lusofonia* that neglect to account for diverse relationships to the Portuguese language. In this poem, therefore, the link is made, albeit subtly, between historical, territorial colonialism, cultural colonialism, and linguistic neo-colonialism. The references to violence, pain, and struggle for agency that intensify in the second half of the poem, underline the link between freedom and fear, and show that the struggle for love and freedom does not end when they are obtained, but that love and freedom are themselves struggles.

This understanding reflects Sandoval's use of love as 'a political technology, as a body of knowledges, arts, practices, and procedures for re-forming the self and the world' (2000: 4). By viewing the hermeneutics of love as a 'methodology of the oppressed', Sandoval mobilizes the term, reinventing it as a process rather than a static concept – as a 'deregulating system' (ibid., 10). Just as love has been used as a methodology of colonial oppression – as is evidenced in imperialist literature such as Camões's Isle of Love scene from *Os Lusíadas,* and later neo-colonial texts such as those by Freyre, as explained in the introduction– it can also become a vehicle to be reclaimed by the oppressed. As Klobucka acknowledges in her text 'Love is all you need: Lusophone affective communities after Freyre', the link between the concept of love and the hubris of the Portuguese colonial (and neo-colonial) male is problematic for those attempting a literary definition of love from a postcolonial perspective. She argues that for postcolonial Lusophone writers (such as Isabela Figueiredo, author of *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais)*, 'love must first be deconstructed at its most primary core, familial and homophilic, if any kind of postcolonial affective project is ever to occupy its semantic and ideological space' (Klobucka 2014: 43). In other words, the patriarchal structures at the heart of Lusophone colonial and neo-colonial discourse are part and parcel of the construction of love in the Lusophone world and must be worked through to allow a wider range of loving subjects to emerge as lovers and not just beloveds.

The difficult process of reclaiming love from these patriarchal structures is laid out as Branco's poetic subject begins to address an 'other' who appears to be the poetic subject herself. The distance between the subject and her 'self' (evoked through the second-person verb conjugations) suggests a certain absence of identity tied to the subject's lack of engagement with the language and poetic styles thus far performed:

> […]
>
> E tentas a todo o custo segurar a mão do amor e beijá-lo, mais do que o costume.
> E nada.

O teu amor não te corresponde.

E o cansaço acompanha-te por todo o lado.

O amor massacra-te a mente e corpo.

O egoísmo filtra-te o sangue.

Nada que és é bom.

O do amor é melhor, é maior, e razão tem sempre a palavra do amor.

Pior é a traição prender-te à amante que não é tua e ao grito desesperado do

voltar a viver a tua vida.][77]

Já não tens vida, pois vendeste-te ao Diabo.

Não te podes afogar.

Virar as costas e ir embora e pensas no suicídio.

Procura-lo.

Procuras marginais, alguém que goste de matar.

Ninguém aparece, como se o cancro do mundo te borrasse

a pele com vulcões ensanguentados e todos fogem com o medo do contágio.

Pensas elevar-te contra uma parede dura de betão.

Vês a janela aberta a chamar-te para voltares com a morte a

ver as cores lindas do amor. Mas vais permanecendo aqui, exactamente no

mesmo local de sempre.]

[…]

(Despedida: 64-65)

In this poetic letter, the subject and object are not simply lover and beloved, but are instead a dislocated self, separated by the obstacle of love. The relationship described in the above stanzas is a more individual struggle which oscillates from, on the one hand, the self and 'o amor' and, on the other hand, between the two parts of the poetic subject. The line 'tentas a todo o custo segurar a mão do amor' suggests that the 'other' (or the othered part of the self) is attempting to kiss the hand of love rather than a lover.

[77] I have used square brackets to show where text has run on from the previous line due to lack of space.

Whilst ‘amor’ can be used as a term of affection with which to address a person, it is usually preceded by a possessive (‘meu’), so the use of the term ‘o amor’ without a possessive further supports this reading. The drama in these stanzas is driven by an incompatibility not between two people but between the self and a love that ‘não [se] corresponde’, and ‘massacre a mente e corpo’. Love is presented as a source of disconnect rather than a form of connection. The distance between ‘o amor’ and the subject prevents a view of love as inherent to the lover and wielded over the beloved as a determiner of a subject-position. As Beauvoir explains in *The Second Sex*, if we are to follow Hegel’s formulation of relationality, ‘a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object’ (2011: 7). In this traditional subject position associated with love literature, the act of loving results in the beloved becoming the *object* of love so that writing about love has become synonymous with a process of loving the ‘other’ into an object.

The struggle that the poetic subject faced early in the poem with the language of love appears to be overwhelming by this point as the disconnect felt by the subject consumes them, as is expressed through language such as ‘filtra-te o sangue’, ‘massacre-te a mente’ and ‘acompanha-te por todo o lado’. The desperation for acceptance and entry into the structures that define a homogenous notion of love is represented by images that evoke subordination such as the gesture ‘segurar a mão do amor e beijá-lo’, a sign of affection and a quaint element of traditional courtship which can also be read as a symbol of subservience and a physical stance in which one person is below the other. The lines ‘O amor massacra-te a mente e corpo. | O egoísmo filtra-te o sangue’ evoke a violent process that takes over and alters both the body and the mind of the subject. The language used to describe the relationship between the alienated ‘other’ and love recalls structures of oppression and control such as those referred to by Derrida in *The Other Heading* (‘to induce, seduce, produce, and conduce, to spread out, to cultivate to love or to violate, to love to violate, to colonize…’ (1992: 49)). There is also a distinct sense of hierarchy in the language used in the lines ‘Nada que és é bom. | O do amor é melhor, é maior, e razão tem sempre a palavra do amor’. It is as though the being

seeking the approval of love were perceived as inferior in their attempt to woo love, and words such as ‘melhor’, ‘maior’, and ‘razão’ evoke both Eurocentric and neo-colonial attitudes towards communities or economies whose structures do not match that of Western imperial or neo-imperial powers.

Branco’s description of this desperate process of seeking conciliation or approval from love is also saturated with language related to betrayal, such as ‘traição’, ‘amante’, egoísmo’, and ‘vendeste-te ao Diabo’, which suggests that love is something fundamentally alien to the subject’s essence or community. The reader is also reminded that, at the beginning of the poem, love was associated with a particular kind of language and expression as the poem reads ‘e razão tem sempre a palavra do amor.’ Here, Branco repeats the terms used in the poem’s opening metatextual considerations where ‘palavras do amor’ were linked to the subject’s assessment of the suitability of the Portuguese language. In doing so, Branco reminds the reader that the Portuguese language, and the European cultural conventions and products associated with it, was the language of Angola’s colonizers and that, despite initially being adopted as a practical *lingua franca* between disparate language groups, use of the Portuguese language now has socio-political connotations of both elitism and centralism. Similarly, in literature, predominantly Portuguese-language texts represent what is considered ‘national literature’ whilst works written entirely in Angola’s pre-colonial languages are generally perceived as ‘regional.’[78]

Taking this into account, Branco’s repetition of the term ‘palavra do amor’ in this part of the poem, presented in the context of betrayal, could be read as a self-conscious critique of Branco’s own use of Portuguese language (and earlier English as well), enabling the continuation of neo-imperial socio-economic structures in Angola.[79] To apply this reading to the following stanza, if the language is represented as a lover, it is

[78] An exception is the use of hybrid forms of language by writers such as José Luandino Vieira and Viriato da Cruz.
[79] See Domingos Gabriel Dele Zau’s PhD thesis *A Língua Portuguesa em Angola: Um Contributo para o Estudo da sua Nacionalização* on the marketization of the Portuguese language in the context of debates around the status of Portuguese as official language of Angola.

posited as a separate and seductive temptation, in relation to the real life of the subject, reflecting the appealing colours of Chopin in the second stanza of the poem: 'Pior é a traição prender-te à amante que não é tua e ao grito desesperado do voltar a viver a tua vida. | Já não tens vida, pois vendeste-te ao Diabo'.

The 'grito desesperado' associated with the subject's real life, in contrast to the 'palavras do amor', reflects an inability to find an adequate form of expression. The references to language in this stanza are certainly indicative of a level of self-consciousness pronounced enough to promote a reading of this section of the poem as an address to the poetic self – the subject having become alienated even from herself as the self-conscious exploration of language and expression through love has highlighted the textuality of the poetic subjectivity.

This overriding tone of an inability to connect comes to define the relationship between the poetic subject and the imagined addressee of this letter in poetic form. The relationship between the subject and the addressee is never as direct as you would expect from a communication between a lover and beloved but is mediated by the struggle with love. This is true whether we read the poem as an address to a lover, to a general symbolic 'other', or to the self-conscious subject herself (as I have done above). Love takes on a position of power relative to both parties present in the poem, and has its own agency with which it determines worth, creates a hierarchy of values and is presented as a restrictive obstacle to the subjects striving to find a way around the overbearing presence of an unattainable ideal.

Part of the power that love wields in the poem is its defiance in the face of language. In *Tales of Love,* Julia Kristeva describes the difficult relationship between love and the communication of love, echoing the originality that Barthes described in *A Lover's Discourse* but instead on the feelings of an individual rather than the originality of love between a couple:

> Beyond the revelation – yet another one – of the abyss separating the sexes, such questioning hints that love would, in any case, be solitary because incommunicable. As if, at the very moment when the individual discovered himself

> to be intensely true, powerfully subjective, but violently ethical because he would be generously ready to do anything for the other, he also discovered the confines of his condition and the powerlessness of his language. Are not two loves essentially individual, hence incommensurable, and thus don't they condemn the partners to meet only at a point infinitely remote? Unless they commune through a third party […] (Kristeva 1987: 3)

There are certainly elements of Kristeva's notion of the incommunicability of love visible in Branco's lengthy poem in the depth of the subject's struggle to express love; however, in Branco's poem, the disembodied nature of love provides an unusual power dynamic between the subject, love and language. There is indeed a sense of two beings searching for the remote point at which they can meet, and yet the only third party present in the poem appears to be love itself which acts only as a disruptor. The powerful subjectivity of feeling (emphasized by the intensity of terms such as 'desesperado', 'míseras' 'cruel' and 'massacre-te') struggles against the confines of language. In Branco's poem, the individual relationship to love is made all the more difficult by the frustration of not finding an adequate form of expression for the experience of a powerful emotion combined with the insecurity of a subject who does not feel any sense of ownership or compatibility with the words used to write love in the poem.

Although it is not unusual for love literature to focus on the inadequacy of language in expressing such a strong, individual emotion, Branco portrays a further disconnection between the poetic subject and language that exacerbates the sense of frustration stemming from the inability to express love. The relationship between two beings in the poem is further hindered by a difficult relationship to language itself, intensifying the alienation between the subject and the addressee of the 'letter', which is visible in the struggle against the poetic form and the limits of the text itself. It is also perceptible in the inconsistency of tone throughout the poem as the voice seems to be 'trying on for size' a number of different expressions, from the metatextuality of the opening stanzas, to the grandiose images of bright colours and roaring lions, to the harsher, neo-realist-esque 'crua realidade'. The rest of the poem spans the hyperbolic, the paradoxical, the

concise, and the eloquent, with similes, metaphors, and image after image that are, on the whole, difficult for a reader to reconcile. What the poem lacks, however, is any kind of aural comfort in regular rhythm or rhyme. With only the occasional (often tenuous) example of assonance ('lindo, sadio, nem maravilhoso', 'suicídio', 'contágio') to seek solace in, the reader finds little ease of sound in the awkward form and structure of this poem, compounding the inconsistency of tone. The final stanzas, however, seem to suggest that the subject has experienced a kind of catharsis throughout the poem, reflecting the intensity and difficulty of the reading experience:

> […]
>
> Poderia gastar toda a minha vida a ditar o que recebemos
> do amor e nos faz mal, mas não seria justo, porque aprendi
> que não importa o barulho ensurdecedor dos martelos no cu da indecência, o
> amanhã será melhor.
>
> E nada valerão as minhas míseras palavras ao conceito
> de um sorriso choroso da viúva morta e adormecida.
> Pois já até antecedo o pensamento do amor.
> "Ridícula".
> (Despedida: 66)

In these final two stanzas, it seems as though the poetic subject comes to terms with their own voice. There is an ease of expression in these final two stanzas, characterized by a certain level of colloquialism and a lack of contradiction compared to the rest of the poem. The colloquial language, present in phrases such as 'Poderia gastar toda a minha vida…', 'cu da indecência' and the final word '"Ridícula"', conveys a sense of ease to the reader – of understanding *at last* – just as the poetic subject is able to speak *at last.*

This sensation of being able to express oneself 'at last' is picked up by Kristeva in *Tales of Love*:

> Vertigo of identity, vertigo of words: love, for the individual, is that sudden revelation, that irremediable cataclysm, of which one speaks only after the fact. Under its sway, one does not speak of. One simply has the impression of speaking at last, for the first time, for real. But is it really in order to say something? Not necessarily. (Kristeva 1987: 3)

Thus, in this poem, ironically, the moment that the poetic subject seems to find some form of conciliation with the concept of love, is the moment when the written construct of love is, in many ways, rejected. These two stanzas, though, unlike Kristeva's definition of 'speaking at last', seem to represent an end to the 'vertigo of identity' and the 'vertigo of words' that the reader feels in the rest of the poem. The chaotic dynamic of the poem is slowed, reflecting a moment of clarity and the end of the poetic subject's battle against (or journey through) a cacophony of poetic expressions of love which is dismissed as 'o barulho ensurdecedor dos martelos no cu da indecência': a phrase which stands in stark contrast to the romantic ideals evoked early in the poem. With this lesson learnt, comes an expression of hope that 'o amanhã será melhor', recalling Sandoval's theorization of love as a 'methodology of the oppressed':

> Third world writers such as Guevara, Fanon, Anzaldúa, Emma Pérez, Trinh Minh-ha, or Cherríe Moraga, to name only a few, similarly understand love as a 'breaking' through whatever controls in order to find 'understanding and community': it is described as 'hope' and 'faith' in the potential goodness of some promised land […] These writers who theorize social change understand 'love' as a hermeneutic, as a set of practices and procedures that can transit all citizen-subjects, regardless of social class, toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement. (Sandoval 2000)

The space for hope, in this poem, is in the as-yet-unspoken – that which lies in the future ('o amanhã será melhor'), or in the 'potential goodness of some promised land'. What also becomes clear, though, is that this space is one created within the structures that have been characterized as oppressive. In the final stanza of the poem, the language used finally belongs to the poetic subject ('as *minhas* míseras palavras') as the process of writing the poem has also been a process of appropriation and creation – creation

not only of a text, but of a poetic subject and a *written* identity. Written in the Portuguese language – as much text as the oppressive text of the colonizer or European 'advancement' – this poem bears the same relation to the reality of love (represented by the 'sorriso choroso da viúva morta e adormecida') as the concertos of Chopin, or the 'palavras do amor' described as being 'surdas ao toque das línguas faladas'. The difference lies, however, in the inclusion of the poetic subject within this system of the cultural construct of love. As opposed to the subject who finds herself alienated by the dominant structures of language which have colonized the theme of love, the poetic subject has now not only found a form of expression, but is able to move within the same discursive space as the existing literature on love and undercut the structure from within. In presenting herself as an antagonist of the textualization or 'pensamento' of love (by projecting herself as 'Ridícula' in Love's eyes), she is also now projecting herself as a stable subject.

The poetic subject's position transitions from that of the oppressed to one that suggests a forward movement of knowledge (such as the European 'advance' described by Derrida in *The Other Heading*) in the act of anticipation: 'Pois já até, antecedo o pensamento do amor. | "Ridícula"'. By anticipating, or speaking ahead of, 'love' in defining her poetic self, the subject pre-empts and displaces the text of the dominant written structures in which the marginalised other is so often objectified. The fact that it is 'o *pensamento* do amor' that the subject disrupts in this final line (rather than simply 'o amor', further implies the textualization of love as well as the exclusion that love can represent as a set of cultural values. By anticipating and disrupting love as a textual and cultural construct, then, Branco's subject removes the possibility of future discourse, creating a lack and therefore the potential for her own voice to find its place. The act of anticipation opens a space for the voice of the poetic subject and calls into question the stability of the once separate and discrete construct of love.

The final line '"Ridícula".' brings the readers back to the textuality of both the poetic subject and the concept of love, both through the use of quotation marks and the intertextual reference to the Fernando Pessoa's (Álvaro de Campos's) poem which

begins ‘Todas as cartas de amor são | Ridículas’. The fact that Álvaro de Campos is a heteronym further underlines the distance between poetic subjectivity and the world. Branco also turns the phrase around so that ‘Ridícula’ refers to the poetic subject herself rather than to a love letter, which draws a link between the subject and literary form. Furthermore, the final line, as a single word followed only by blank space, accentuates the simultaneous lack, or trace, of text, and the possibility of another ‘última carta’.

This link between the poetic subject and literary form is key to understanding Branco’s ‘love poem’. As Terry Eagleton reminds us, ‘Literary forms have a history of their own; they are not just the obedient expression of content’ (2007: 66) and Branco precisely, and to great effect, explores the history of the form and genre of love poetry. Not only does she create a poem that moves away from the traditional styles of love poetry by using a prose-like style and an irregular, jarring structure, but she also toys with references to the epistolary form. Branco uses the nature of romantic love as a concept which is paradoxically defined by cultural products, such as literature and music, and yet often assumed to transcend social structures, to uncover the extent to which our experiences are dominated by linguistic structures. Branco’s poem deconstructs the concept of love by drawing upon the counter-discursive history of the epistolary form, highlighting the structures of neo-imperialism at play in literary language, and displacing the dominant discourses behind love in order to carve out a space for the emergence of her own poetic subjectivity.

Ana Luísa Amaral: rewriting love

Understanding love as a construct is similarly crucial to Amaral’s collection *A Génese do Amor* (2005). Whilst Branco focused on the saturation of the term love and the difficulty of expressing an individual, original emotion in a language that feels alien, however, Amaral addresses the gender imbalance in the history of romantic literature with a particular focus on the dichotomous poet-muse relationship and the way this relationship is usually mapped onto the gender binary. *A Génese do Amor*, then, can be read as a response to the question; what would love be if not for the binary oppositions of subject/object and male/female? As the use of the term ‘Génese’ in the

title suggests, the collection retraces love back to the very beginning; a beginning firmly rooted in text as the title shares its name with *Genesis,* the opening book of the bible.

The poems in *A Génese do Amor* come together as a challenge to the European tradition of love poetry overwhelmingly written by men with a silent feminine muse as the object of their love. The collection contains a lengthy introductory poem entitled 'Topografias em quase dicionário' (as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis), followed by nineteen poems under the heading 'A génese do amor'. Besides the final poem of the collection, which takes its title from that of the collection, the remaining eighteen poems are written as a series of dialogues between Camões, Dante, and Petrarch and their muses Natércia/Catarina, Beatriz, and Laura. The way in which the dialogues are presented varies, as some contain the voices of two lyric subjects (e.g. 'Diálogo entre Natércia e Camões'), others contain the voice of one subject speaking to a single other (e.g. 'Beatriz fala a Dante'), others are 'meditations' of a single subject (e.g. 'Meditação de Catarina'), and some are linked to previous poems as though part of a conversation (e.g. 'Dante responde a Beatriz'). The dialogues are not exclusively between a poet and his corresponding muse, and the 'poet' characters are not the only voices accounted for. This destabilizes the long-standing binary relationship between a subject poet or lover, and an object muse or beloved.

Amaral's *A Génese do Amor,* then, brings together the voices of muses and poets, allowing for a diachronic dialogue that both exemplifies and (through anachronism) subverts the chain of influence that has edified an understanding of love that relies on binary structures. The inclusion of the voices of both poets and muses undercuts the way in which the binary pairs of subject/object and poet/muse have become normalized in Western literary canon (of which Dante, Camões and Petrarch are undeniably a part) and, subsequently, in the way in which love is understood as both a textual construct and a human phenomenon. Furthermore, in suspending both time and space in order to bring together Camões, Petrarch and Dante, Amaral questions the hegemony of a certain type of lyric (that of the male poet describing a silent muse) and the influence that this lyric has had over the way in which society perceives love. The combination of

a diachronic structure and the incorporation of the voices of the muse, who talk back to their poets and amongst themselves, also represents a queering of traditional conventions of literary influence through a more complex use of intertextuality.

The choice to use poetic amorous relationships between Camões and Natércia/Catarina, Dante and Beatrice, and Petrarch and Laura places Amaral's poetry within a tradition of women writers who have used poetry to give a voice to the muses. These writers include Elizabeth Barrett Browning who wrote the poem 'Catarina to Camoens'. In this poem, a dying Catarina responds to Camões's poem 'Quem vê, Senhora, claro e manifesto', from which Barrett Browning takes the line 'O lindo ser de vossos olhos belos' (Camões 1963: 295), as a repeated motif.

> […]
> But, ah me! You only see me,
> In your thoughts of loving man,
> Smiling soft, perhaps, and dreamy,
> Through the wavings of my fan;
> And unweeting
> Go repeating
> In your revery serene,
> "Sweetest eyes were ever seen."
> […]
> (Barrett Browning 1889: 294).

Christina Rossetti, continuing in Barrett Browning's footsteps, also used poetry to give a voice to the anonymous muses in her collection 'Monna Innominata' which she introduces with reference to Laura, Beatrice, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem. Rossetti acknowledges in the literary heritage of male poets lies a heritage of muses who were not afforded voices of their own: 'These heroines of world-wide fame [Beatrice and Laura] were preceded by a bevy of unnamed ladies, 'donne innominate', sung by a school of less conspicuous poets' (Rossetti 1906: 58). Rossetti goes on to wonder what a literature written by the muses might appear:

> Had such a lady spoken for herself, the portrait left us might have appeared more tender, if less dignified, than any drawn even by a devoted friend. Or had the Great Poetess of our own day and nation only been unhappy instead of happy, her circumstances would have invited her to bequeath to us, in lieu of the 'Portuguese Sonnets,' an inimitable 'donna innominata' drawn not from fancy but from feeling, and worthy to occupy a niche beside Beatrice and Laura. (Ibid., 58)

Both Barret Browning and Rossetti, therefore, give the impression that our knowledge of love is incomplete given the gap exemplified by the muse and her lack of voice or subjectivity, and seem to attempt to fill this gap through their work. It is notable, however, that Rossetti should make a link between the figure of the muse and unrequited love when she compares Beatrice, Laura and the other 'donne innominate' to Barrett Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese',[80] which expresses her love for her husband, Robert Browning. Interestingly, though, Barrett Browning's adoption of Camões's Catarina in 'Catarina to Camoens' *does* contain an element of the absent beloved, as is stated in her preface to the poem: 'Dying in his absence abroad, and referring to the poem in which he recorded the sweetness of her eyes' (Barrett Browning 1889: 294). The absence of the poetic subject's chosen other (beloved) is a common feature of the traditional poet-muse poetic (exemplified in the poetry of Camões, Dante and Petrarch). What Amaral's poetry offers in contrast to both the canonical, male poets and the later female poets who give a voice to the absent women of traditional love lyric, is the presence of the voices of both parties, resulting in a structure that reads more like a series of 'selves' rather than pairs of self-other and poet-muse. The structure of the collection, then, leads us to question the meaning of the terms poet and muse, and which (if any) voice(s) from the collection may be considered as representing a muse.

The question of the absence of the muse in literary canon is best critiqued in the poem 'Natércia fala a Catarina', in which two versions of the same muse interact with each

[80] Letters show that Barrett Browning and her husband chose the title *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, aware of the possible misinterpretation of her poems as translations. It is speculated that they did so to obscure the personal nature of the love poems that were in fact written to her husband. Barbara Neri explores the references to Camões in her article ''Cobridme de flores:' (Un)Covering Flowers of Portuguese and Spanish Poets in 'Sonnets from the Portuguese'' (Neri 2006).

other. Natércia has long been presumed to be an anagram of Dona Catarina de Ataíde (sometimes spelled Caterina),[81] and so Amaral's choice to use the characters of both Natércia and Catarina in her collection highlights the textuality of the muse. The fact that Catarina is one degree removed from the textual muse could explain why she does not directly address any of the other characters in any of the poems in the collection; of the two, only Natércia enters into dialogue with Camões and Laura. In the poem 'Natércia fala a Catarina', Natércia describes the alienation she feels from existing only in the form of poetic object:

> Nunca eu por inteiro,
> embora a meio,
> assim me és:
>
> tu, corpo, de verdade,
> eu, na verdade:
>
> nada
>
> Musa, se o for sequer,
> ou coisa amada
> que se deseja em verso,
> mas não morre
>
> Desejo a morte
> que tu podes ter,
> porque podes ser carne
> e sangue, e pele
>
> Eu sou só essa
> que sonhou aquele
> que entre sonhos

[81] The earliest writer to speculate on the identity of the objects of Camões' affection is thought to be Manuel de Faria e Sousa (1590-1649). Dona Catarina de Ataíde first appears in commentaries written by Sousa for his edition of *Os Lusíadas* (1639) and *Rimas* (Camoes 1685: 13).

e versos
me sonhou

Reúne-te comigo,
minha amiga,
minha metade
que desejo inteira

E ao teres o dom da fala,
diz-lhe a ele
que eu anseio por ser
o que tu és

Sem desejar ser tu:
inominada.
(Génese: 43-44)

In bringing Natércia and Catarina together, then, Amaral separates the textual object of Camões's poetry from any idea of a 'real' woman, and therefore a textual representation of love from the phenomenon of love. This has a similar effect to the beginning of Branco's poem and the distance between 'as palavras do amor' and 'o som dos dedos'. Drawing attention to the use of pseudonym in Camões's poetry also highlights the textuality of a muse in general. The muses of Dante and Petrarch, whilst having been tentatively linked to historical figures by literary critics and historians, may also have been pseudonyms or simply textual creations. The link between the muse and the poet's creative inspiration means that the most satisfying narrative is often one that ties the textual construct to a 'real woman' who, by existing outside of the poem, can (silently) inspire the words of the poet. In isolating the aspect of the muse which exists only within the text (the pseudonym Natércia), Amaral emphasizes the gap that a muse signifies by existing only through the words of a male poetic subject. The point that this poem makes is that in a traditional love poem, the object (muse) exists only in the form of its absence.

On the other hand, in the ironic style that characterizes much of Amaral's poetry, Natércia, a representative of the most absent of muses, by representing her own absence from the position of a poetic subject, in fact becomes a textual 'presence' as she describes the non-presence that she represents. In doing so, Amaral challenges the association of the binary poles of poet and muse with gender as, by becoming the subject and a presence in the poem, Natércia is no longer a muse, even as she continues to describe her absence as a muse. Amaral uses the opposition of Natércia and Catarina, alongside the concepts of presence and absence, life and death to expose the fallacies of the poet-muse relationship epitomised in Camões's poetry and the tradition of poets evoking absent muses.[82]

The poetic subject of this poem (Natércia) laments her non- presence in Camões's poetry in terms of 'reality' or 'truth' comparing herself to the 'reality' or 'truth' of Catarina: 'tu, corpo, de verdade, | eu, na verdade: | nada'. Read otherwise, however, the 'verdade' that Catarina represents can be read as a valorization of the 'real' over the textual. This becomes particularly evident in the final two stanzas where it is revealed that despite being 'carne', Catarina does not (yet) have language: 'E ao teres o dom da fala, | diz-lhe a ele | que eu anseio por ser | o que tu és | Sem desejar ser tu: inominada'. Catarina, unlike Natércia, does not have a subject position ('o dom da fala') nor a textual presence, and thus is 'inominada'. Amaral thus contrasts the notion of presence in 'verdade' and 'carne' with a textual presence.

Using the terms 'de verdade' to describe Catarina and 'na verdade' when referring to Natércia (the poetic subject) undermines any reading as one as more 'true' or 'real' than the other. This recalls Derrida's account of writing as supplement, where the written text 'adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence' (Derrida 1997: 144) and yet at the same time '[i]t adds only to replace. […] As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief,

[82] The evocation of absent muses recalls the Pessoan heteronym Ricardo Reis, and the poetic masking and *fingimento* involved in the production of heteronyms. Pessoa's poetry is often evoked in Amaral's poetry and, in her theoretical texts, is used to explore the relationship between poetry and the world (Amaral 2017: 243-4).

its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness' (ibid., 145). If text is a supplement,[83] then we can see that in the third stanza, Amaral's use of the term 'verdade' encourages us to read Natércia as a written subject who sees herself as a supplement to Catarina. Amaral is commenting, then, both on the problems associated with uncritically reading poetic muses as real women (which has contributed to the historic privilege of the male subject over the female subject), and on the inseparability of the phenomenon of love from the structure of love. Whilst the term 'de verdade' suggests legitimacy – the quality that Derrida critiques as being traditionally associated with speech over writing (Derrida 1997: 144) – the use of the preposition 'em' with 'verdade' places an emphasis more on presence as actuality. Moreover, choosing two phrases that are so similar, and yet both represent nuanced versions of presence, seems to prevent the reader from reading Natércia and Catarina as binary poles.

Throughout the poem there are several points where Amaral similarly subverts the prevalence of binary structures in Western representations of love. The choice to include the voices of two women in a poem based on the emotion of desire (the verb 'desejar' is used three times in the poem) is an important one – especially as the collection is named *A Génese do Amor*, which recalls the book of Genesis from the Bible, including the creation story which insists upon the binary union of male and female: (Genesis 2: 21-24)

In the fourth and fifth stanzas, however, Amaral moves from a focus on living or existing towards the concept of death. This playful change in terminology, however, seems to be made in jest as, despite the transition from one concept to its apparent opposite, the meaning remains the same. By nullifying, in this way, the polarity of the notions of life and death, Amaral is pointing out the textuality of a so-called 'muse' who, encased in the existing structures of European literature, is not 'alive' and also can never 'die', but

[83] As Derrida explains in *Of Grammatology*, 'When Nature, as self-proximity, comes to be forbidden or interrupted, when speech fails to protect presence, writing becomes necessary. It must be *added* to the word urgently' (1997: 144).

exists as part of the structures through which the ‘alive’ women, like Catarina, are defined, perceived and experienced:

> […]
> Musa, se o for sequer,
> ou coisa amada
> que se deseja em verso,
> mas não morre
>
> Desejo a morte
> que tu podes ter
> porque podes ser carne
> e sangue, e pele
> […]
> (Génese: 43)

The link between Catarina and death also recalls an untitled sonnet by Camões, believed to have been written about Dona Catarina de Ataíde upon her death:

> Deba[i]xo desta pedra sepultada
> Jaz do mundo a mais nobre fermosura,
> A quem a morte, só de inveja pura,
> Sem tempo sua vida tem roubada,
> Sem ter respeito àquela assi[m] estremada
> Gentileza de luz, que a noite escura
> Tornava em claro dia, cuja alvura
> Do Sol a clara luz tinha eclipsada.
> Do Sol peitada fôste, cruel Morte,
> Pera o livrar de quem o escurecia;
> E da Lũa que, ante ela luz não tinha.
> Como de tal poder tiveste sorte?
> E, se a tiveste, como tão asinha
> Tornaste a luz do mundo em terra fria?
>
> (Camões 1963: 529)

In Camões's poem, death, by denying life, denies the possibility of love, which is visible in the use of language fixated with possession and the removal of a possession ('inveja', 'tem roubada', 'eclipsada', 'livrar', 'não tinha'). In fact, the desire evoked in Camões's poem is for the revocation of Catarina's death which, in some ways, is achieved through the supplementation of Catarina with the poetic text. For Amaral's Natércia, though, the possibility of death is linked, instead, to the drive for love in that it is an affirmation of life, as is highlighted by the words 'carne | e sangue, e pele'. In this stanza, then, desire is associated with the material body – alive through its capacity to perish – which seems distant from Camões's elevation of the muse through the metaphor of a celestial body. The definitions of love, desire, life and death are, thus, rethought. When Amaral writes that the 'Musa' or 'coisa amada' 'se deseja em verso, | mas não morre', she playfully draws upon both the distinction between muse as text and muse as living subject, and highlights the contradiction in this distinction by bringing into play Catarina's textual death in Camões's sonnet.

Posing an opposition between 'Musa' and 'coisa amada' can also be read as a remark on the changing meaning of the 'muses' from their origin in Greek mythology as beings with voices who spoke to the poets, to the more modern idea of a muse as the object inspiring a piece of literature or art.[84] The muse as object is exemplified, for instance, in Camões's poem 'Transforma-se o amador na cousa amada' in which the 'cousa amada' serves principally to develop the lyric subject and remains un-named and without voice; never more than a 'cousa' (object or thing). The classical figure of the muse, on the other hand, is perceived as having a voice with which to inspire the poet, and yet, as 'inspiration', this voice becomes part of the male poet's and its validation, thus reflecting more upon the status of the male poet than the wisdom of the muse. The transformation of the classical muse into the muse as a heterosexual object of yearning, however, is rooted in the dynamics of the male gaze, according to which the limited agency of the

[84] *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* writes 'in contrast to poets of more recent times, who have tended to appeal to their Muse as a source of poetic afflatus, ancient poets place more emphasis on the wisdom and knowledge of the Muses, as deities who know all that is worth telling and can give the poet the ability to tell it, and also to remember it […]' (Hard 2003: 205).

classical muse is removed, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis explains in 'Marble Paper: Toward a Feminist 'History of Poetry'', theory on the male gaze:

> attempts to state why hegemonic culture will sometimes limit the full range of female agency in its depictions, or stylize the depictions in certain conventional ways, even if actual women, historical women, have had a considerable amount of agency and, like other human beings, are always in negotiation with power, needs, blockages, abilities, limits, their own fetishization, and repositionings that address their agency. (DuPlessis 2004: 104)

The removal of agency can be seen as a kind of death or prohibition of living and is reflected in Amaral's choice to include a consideration of life and death in the poem. Amaral's use of the death/life binarism, in a way that undercuts Camões's sonnet whilst destabilising the structures that his work underpins, plays into the wider critique that the poem 'Natércia fala a Catarina' makes against the reliance on binarity and the notions of romantic complementarity and unity. In naming the collection *A Génese do Amor*, Amaral positions her poems as an alternative *Genesis:* an alternative to the binary and heteronormative creation story, the structures of which are repeated in the literary traditions challenged in Amaral's collection.

Harking back to an earlier example, in Plato's *Symposium* the comedian Aristophanes describes the historic human form as having been cut in two by the Gods so that 'love of one person for another has been inborn into human beings, and its role is to restore us to our ancient state by trying to make unity out of duality and to heal our human condition' (Plato 2008: 24). Whilst Aristophanes's story was intended as a comedic prelude to Socrates's consideration of love, in which Socrates, reporting the teachings of Diotima,[85] presents a much more complex description that places love in an intermediary position causing constant change, much of the sentiment of Aristophanes's simplistic imagining of the origins of love have remained over the centuries. It is with

[85] Irigaray comments on the role of Diotima, who, although not present at Plato's 'meal among men' (1989: 32), challenges Socrates' knowledge as she 'teaches the renunciation of already established truths' (ibid., 33) and creates an image of love as 'the mediator of everything […] Never completed, always evolving' (ibid.).

reference to this tradition of ‘two halves make a whole’ that Amaral’s poem begins, with the lines ‘Nunca eu por inteiro, embora a meio, assim me és:’ (Génese: 43). Whilst this sentiment seems in line with the existing discourse on love, we should not underestimate the significance of two women addressing each other in this poem.

Unlike the traditional discourse of two individuals uniting as one, Amaral’s poem begins from the impossibility of the two women forming a complementary unity (‘Nunca eu por inteiro, | embora a meio, | assim me és:’) and, rather than adhering to the rules of complementarity in binary opposition, the pair are linked instead by similarity and indirection in the line ‘assim me és’. In this unusual construction, ‘me és’, the subject can be read as a direct or an indirect object, both of which suggest incompletion as, from Natércia’s perspective, Catarina is only half like herself, or is only half to Natércia. The slight grammatical ambiguity of the line, though, creates an element of tension between the two, leading us to question the frontier between a ‘woman’ and a woman’s representation in text. In these lines Amaral brings to light the fallacy of the assumption of complementarity and unity by highlighting the overlap (always in constant tension) between ‘woman’ and representation.

Bringing together Natércia and Catarina through a relationship of similarity and indirection, each defined by their separation and incompletion, makes it difficult to assume that these two sides of a coin can ever be considered a whole between them. As readers, we can infer that Catarina is not the opposite that Natércia may perceive her to be. Later in the poem, Natércia’s desire for wholeness is repeated as she implores Catarina, ‘Reúne-te comigo, | minha amiga, | minha metade | que desejo inteira’ (Génese: 44). This stanza contains yet another contradiction, as in order to unite, both Natércia and Catarina must each be only a part of a whole. What this stanza does evoke clearly, though, is the desire to undo the mutilation of the woman into a male-authored text; highlighting the fact that Natércia (and Catarina) as written by Camões, are reduced to the male voice, acknowledging the double movement where the reality and the structure both affect and adapt each other. Women are defined by the poet who

writes his muse into existence, just as the women are supposedly represented in the poetry.

The poem ends with a nod to the 'dialogue poems' of the collection and a neat exemplification of the need to reconfigure the structures that define love, as Natércia says to Catarina: 'E ao teres o dom da fala, | diz-lhe a ele | que eu anseio por ser | o que tu és | sem desejar ser tu: | inominada' (Génese: 44). Here we are reminded of the feminist impetus to give the muse a voice, as female authors such as Barrett Browning and Rossetti (cited above) began to take on the identity of the 'muse talking back'. The poem also makes the link between the muse (Natércia) and the woman (Catarina) – who, as we have seen, are not opposites – and the fact that the representation of women only as objects in poetry excludes them from the role of amorous subject. In another playful twist, the phrase 'diz-lhe a ele' makes the absence of Camões's name conspicuous by repeating the indirect object pronoun in two forms, before defining Catarina as 'Inominada'. In turn, this recalls Rossetti's 'Monna Innominata', and the question of how love poetry would appear had the woman been afforded a voice through which to express *her* love.

It is precisely this scenario that we find accounted for in the 'dialogue poems' between Natércia and Camões.[86] The three poems 'Diálogo entre Natércia e Camões', 'Diálogo entre Camões e Natércia' and 'Terceiro diálogo entre Natércia e Camões's all contain two poetic subjects in dialogue with each other. With no explicit identification of the speaking subjects, the reader sees only very occasional gendered adjectives and appellations such as 'minha amiga e amada' and 'Corre, brando e sereno, amor, amado,' (Génese: 34, 35) from which to discern the identity of the two subjects. This means that, at times, it becomes difficult for the reader to keep track of which parts of the poem belong to which subject. The effect of this is that the power that voice allows the subject is shared between the masculine and the feminine personae, and so the distinction between the genders becomes of less importance to the understanding of

[86] The only other 'dialogue poem' is 'Diálogo entre Natércia e Laura'.

the poem, and of the love that the two subjects share. The following stanzas from the first of the dialogue poems to appear in the collection, are a good example of this:

> – Partilhemos a taça
> onde transborda
> a água mais perfeita
> da cisterna melhor
>
> E como se os meus dedos
> navegassem,
> em brilho leve,
> sobre os teus cabelos,
> eleva-me à doçura
> de algum céu
>
> – Como se o Tejo
> Se rompesse em ondas
> Ou o sulcasse uma ternura
> De astros,
> Assim te amei,
> Me foste branda musa
>
> – Partilhemos do mel
> E do destino,
> Esse em que nem futuro
> Nem passado
> São de promessa prendas
> […]
>
> (Génese: 25-26)

The use of the first-person plural ‘partilhemos’ in the imperative mood to open the poem means that both the first speaking voice (which appears to be Natércia) and the invoked other (Camões) are present from the beginning of the poem. This grammatical form asserts the voice of the self, whilst ensuring that both self and other are brought forward as subjects of the action of the verb so that the grammatical structure of the verb, as

well as the semantics of the notion of sharing, puts the self and other on an apparent equal footing. In terms of imagery, the sharing of 'a taça | onde transborda | a água mais perfeita | da cisterna melhor' provides an alternative metaphor for creativity to the unilateral model of the muse giving inspiration to the poet. Not only do both female and male protagonists have access to the 'água mais perfeita | da cisterna melhor', but the cup that they are both able to take inspiration from is overflowing, suggesting an abundance of inspiration to be shared. In the fourth stanza of the poem, the act of sharing is repeated in relation to honey and destiny. The impact is to view the act of sharing and enjoying (with the reference to honey bringing sweetness and luxury to mind) as an act that neither requires sacrifice in return nor elicits shame. Without diminishing the value of the poetic word, it is also characterized by generosity, excess and fluidity.

The poetic word in this case also refers to the role of the partners in a loving relationship. Neither the eroticism of Natércia's invitation for Camões to share the cup with her, nor the parallels to be drawn between this image and that of Eve offering the apple to Adam in the garden of Eden, can be ignored. Using this well-known story of the 'first couple', Amaral appears to take us back to the genesis (as well as *Genesis*) of love with an alternative reading of the biblical scene as symbolic of generosity and equality rather than temptation and shame. Had Eve's offering the apple to Adam been read as a gesture of generosity and shared desire rather than sinful temptation, would the prevalent structure of loving partnerships be closer to equality, based on sharing rather than possessing?

The problematic power of a subject over an 'othered' object is further highlighted by the use of vocabulary relating to navigation and discovery, consistent with Amaral's evocation of Camões's epic poetry. In Amaral's poem, however, Natércia, in the second stanza, takes the metaphorical helm, imagining her fingers navigating the hair of the romantic partner, contrasting the erotic exploration of a lover's body with the nautical exploration of *Os Lusíadas.* In *Os Lusíadas,* after Vasco da Gama and his men enjoy the pleasures of the Isle of Love, the Goddess reveals to them the 'máquina do mundo',

drawing a link between the men's carnal enjoyment of the female bodies offered to them and the divine right of the Portuguese man to colonial domination (Camões 2000: 460). This scene also sets up the figure of the muse-goddess as complicit in the offering of both bodies and land to be dominated, reflective of the unilateral relationship between muse and poet in the gifting of poetry and knowledge. In this poem, however, Amaral uses the verb 'navegar' as an example of the flexibility of language and a process of resignification. The reader still understands that the use of the verb 'navegar' evokes the tradition of imperial literature of which Camões is a part, even as they notice that the verb has been displaced and is now wielded by Camões's muse. The reference to colonialism, whilst acknowledged by association, is replaced with a reference to love, elevation and desire. This first voice, then, represents a particular view on love, language and literary history: the contemporary, revisionist view, characterized by an insistence on the present moment, the ideal moment and the near future (suggested by the use of the imperative).

This is contrasted by the second voice to appear in the poem (that, presumably, of Camões) which, also from a contemporary perspective, continues to view love as something in the past: 'assim te amei, | me foste branda musa'. In the third stanza of the poem, the introduction of the past tense creates a tension between the two voices of the poem. Whilst the first voice offers a structure of desire and language in which the two subjects appear equal, the second demonstrates the difficulty of writing beyond the structures maintained via literary tradition, and an inability to separate the beloved from the muse. This changes later in the poem as the voice transitions to the present tense, positing Natércia as the subject of the verb 'navegar':

> […]
> – Agora me navegas
>
> como sempre,
>
> rompe-me agora
>
> o verso mais ardente

a memória

de ti

[…]

(Génese: 26)

However, the introduction of the concept of memory (Mnemosyne, the Goddess of memory is the mother of the nine Greek muses) again throws the actions of the muse into non-presence as, in the act of remembering, the writing subject has control over the mediation of the past actions of the muse into voice. The use of the term memory denies the presence and life of the muse in a way that recalls the lamentations of Natércia in 'Natércia fala a Catarina'. The voice of Camões appears to only be able to utter poetry set in the past, where the subject can hold its presence over that of the object they depict, as opposed to the engagement suggested by Natércia's use of the imperative mood and present tense. This insistence on the past is an aspect of the muse-poet highlighted by Fernando Pessoa in his heteronym Ricardo Reis who is a character captivated by Latin and Ancient Greek literary style and beliefs (such as stoicism and epicureanism). Pessoa's heteronym, set in the early twentieth century (as well as José Saramago's ironic portrayal in *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*), appears as an out-of-place figure, exacerbated by his self-exile to Brazil. The jarring relationship between the voice captivated by the past and the voice trying to bring the other into the present echoes this sense of being antiquated and outmoded.

The disjunction between the two voices in Amaral's poem – an effect achieved through the mismatch of tenses – depicts both an unwillingness on the part of the masculine voice to move outside of existing archetypes of poetic expression, and the difficulty of overcoming the impulse to dominate by reducing the feminine character to an object. In this way, Amaral's dialogue poem can be said to represent a struggle for recognition set within a loving relationship in order to examine the roles of domination and submission in the writing of love and between two lovers. This struggle is picked up by Jessica Benjamin in *The Bonds of Love,* where she reinterprets psychoanalytic theory to

question whether modern relationships are still structured according to a binary of dominance and submission:

> We might call this the dialectic of control: if I completely control the other, then the other ceases to exist. A condition of our own independent existence is recognizing the other. True independence means sustaining the essential tension of these contradictory impulses; that is, both asserting the self and recognizing the other. Dominance is the consequence of refusing this condition. (Benjamin 1988: 53)

The condition of the muse fits into this long-standing pattern of domination and submission. 'Diálogo entre Natércia e Camões', however, depicts the tension between the impulse to dominate and the desire to recognize described by Benjamin. According to the Hegelian dialectic, the drive to domination (played out through the master and the slave) constitutes a struggle to the death. Whilst we can consider the absence of the muse in the traditional poet-muse relationship as representing a death of sorts, Amaral's poem maintains two subject positions, even if the tension between dominance and recognition seems to prevent easy interaction. It would be more useful, then, to avoid what Benjamin describes as the 'splitting' of the whole, where 'the two sides are represented as opposite and distinct tendencies, so that they are available to the subject only as alternatives' (ibid., 63), and consider the two voices instead in terms of Benjamin's intersubjective theory. This perspective is more suitable as it offers a structure which, first, accounts for the two voices of Amaral's poetry and, second, does not presuppose a binary or opposite relationship between the two voices.

The intersubjective view, as offered by Benjamin, 'maintains that the individual grows in and through the relationship to other subjects. This perspective observes that the other whom the self meets is also a self, a subject in his or her own right' (ibid., 19-20). Amaral's poetic texts, therefore, offer a space within which two subjects co-exist, even as they maintain a tension against each other. The disjunction between the enunciations of each voice highlights the separation of two subjects, and their definition as different, whilst allowing them to maintain connection to each other as they express their love through poetic dialogue. By maintaining tension between the two subjects, therefore,

the poem maintains their individuality and sovereignty, preventing one from being subsumed into the other.[87] Benjamin describes the dynamics caused by the drive towards domination when considering relationships from an intersubjective perspective (presuming the existence of two subjects rather than one subject and one object):

> In this view, the circular movement from numbness to exhaustion which characterizes domination is a manifestation not of the death instinct toward zero tension, but of the breakdown of recognition between the self and other. Domination presumes a subject already caught in omnipotence, unable to make 'live' contact with outside reality, to experience the other person's subjectivity. But this apparent first cause is itself the result of an earlier breakdown between self and other - which, though pervasive, is not inevitable. (Ibid., 67-8)

Camões's drive to dominate, in Amaral's poem, through his continual recourse to the past tense and memory, is not enough to culminate in 'the death instinct toward zero tension', as the 'recognition between the self and other' remains in the dialogical structure of the poem. The tension in the relationship between the two voices, whilst maintaining the beauty of the amorous dialogue, also prevents the poetic discourse from slipping into an uncritical utopianism. Without tension, there would be little to define the relationship between the two subjects as the concept of love is defined by the drive of the individual towards an (or multiple) other(s) subject.

Similarly, referring to poets who have become mythologized in the popular cultural imagination and values associated with these popular figures (colonial exploration, male voice, heteronormativity) precludes a utopian, easy relationship between the two voices. Amaral's collection insists on approaching the challenge of rewriting love from within. In doing so, it challenges existing conceptions of love, and alters the meaning of the terms with which relationships have been imagined – from the temptation of the apple, to the sharing of a cup – as well as the link between language and the unhealthy dominance

[87] In Hegel and Freud, the drive towards domination is part of the death instinct. The elimination of tension between self and other (master and slave) results in the dissolution of the dialectically maintained self.

of the Western male: from the male navigator, lusotropically conquering and claiming the lands and people of the world, to Natércia's tender navigation of the lover's hair.

A key element of the structure of love that the collection *A Génese do Amor* highlights is the chronological line of influence between the poets and the muses. In the poems 'Camões fala a Dante' and 'Diálogo entre Natércia e Laura', Amaral uses the theme of inheritance to depict the way in which the structures of voice and power have become normalized: 'De ti herdei talvez | artes de amar' (Génese: 19); 'De ti herdei | a feroz tradição de ser cantada' (ibid., 45). As part of the project to rewrite love, not only does this collection draw on the counter-discursive tradition of women writers such as Rossetti, Barrett Browning and Maria Teresa Horta, but Amaral also uses the collection as a whole to shine a light on the role of literary influence and canon in both the maintenance of existing structures of being, meaning and language, and in the creation of new poetry, language and structures. In the article 'Que Língua Fala a Poesia?', Amaral explains her dislike of the Bloomian model of literary influence because of the emphasis on the 'conquista (transacção) da musa' where 'a musa (noiva) é transaccionada entre sujeitos masculinos, transmitida do mais velho para o mais novo, seu rival, mas também seu sucessor' (2017c: 32). Amaral goes on to explain how the structure of *A Génese do Amor* is informed by the tension between the influence that those 'canonical' texts (such as Pessoa, Camões, Blake and Shakespeare) have had on her poetic style, as well as her drive to challenge the limits of what is considered to be 'the canon' and the male dominated structures of influence that inform this delimitation:

> Há-de haver um ponto qualquer de consenso entre o legado da tradição literária e a sua avaliação (pelo que esta nos ensinou a pensar, a sermos melhores seres humanos) e a revisão desse mesmo legado, quanto mais não seja pelo seu alargamento de fronteiras, de gostos, de sensibilidades. […] Assim, e falando da minha poesia, o passado e a tradição são-me fortíssima razão de ser eu, aqui e agora, mantendo com a tradição uma relação que a vê como eminentemente plástica. Por isso o meu livro *A Génese do Amor* oferece voz a Natércia/Catarina, ela, que fora somente musa em Camões. (Ibid., 33)

In *A Génese do Amor,* then, the muse and the poet, and the loving relationship between them, are used to exemplify Amaral's attitude towards literary tradition both through the influence that she acknowledges, and in her perceived duty to improve and engage critically with the traditions of love literature. In order to do this, Amaral first highlights the importance of citation and influence of canonical works, and then she intensifies the inclusion of newer elements into literary tradition by drawing on the other poems of this same collection, as well as the other women writers who have critiqued the representation of gender in the poet-muse tradition. Let us take, for example, the second dialogue poem of the collection, 'Diálogo entre Camões e Natércia':

> Se soubesses do fio,
> dessa vaga memória dos teus olhos,
> a que me faz pedir-te
> assim, agora:
>
> – Chega, sem me chegares,
> vem, sem partires,
> meu brando amor
> que, ao desejar,
> sonhara
>
> E não fales de mim:
> fala comigo
>
> – Eu falarei
> com mais suave voz
> de ti, amada,
> porque tanto amada
> […]
> (Génese: 33-34)

This poem continues in the same vein as the first dialogue poem when it comes to the dynamics of power and voice. Once again, there is some ambivalence as to the identity of each subject, which intensifies at the end of the poem as the sections of dialogue

become shorter, giving the sensation of a faster pace, and become harder to identify due to rapid changes and a lack of gendered adjectives or pronouns:

– Corre por mim,
e chega onde chegares

– Se soubesses do fio

– Se soubesses de dentro do amor

– Essa vaga memória dos teus olhos

– Seria só olhar.

E chegaria
(Génese: 35)

Furthermore, the character of Natércia speaks more directly in this poem as she requests that Camões speaks with her rather than of her ('E não fales de mim: | fala comigo') whilst Camões continues to defend his poetry for the love that it contains ('Eu falarei | com mais suave voz | de ti, amada, | porque tanto amada').

In this poem, however, Amaral plays with influence beyond the reconfiguration of voice in the traditional poet-muse relationship. Amaral uses this poem to unveil the structures that result in the creation of literary canon and certain archetypes of genre (such as the role of the poet to speak *of* the muse rather than *with* the muse). She does this by also including references to and phrases from the other poems in the collection, in a similar way to Amaral's citation of her own mother-daughter poems in 'Um pouco só de Goya: carta a minha filha', as we saw in Chapter One. The first stanza of 'Diálogo entre Camões e Natércia', for example, is positioned at the right of the page, giving it the appearance of an epigraph, but is not attributed to a particular poet. Upon closer inspection, however, the epigraph is constructed of lines taken from other poems in *A Génese do Amor* and assembled to create a stanza of their own. 'Se soubesses do fio' also appears in the poem 'Natércia fala a Camões' (Génese: 24), and 'vaga memória dos teus olhos' appears in 'Camões fala a Natércia' (Génese: 22), whilst the final two

lines are added to form a complete stanza *with* the cited lines at the same time as working *against* them as they encourage a critical response to the first two lines from a contemporary perspective: ‘a que me faz pedir-te | assim, agora:’ The use of the colon then suggests that the poem that follows constitutes a contemporary poet’s response to the cited text which, ironically, of course, happens to have come not only from the same poet but also the same time and space of the current collection of poetry. This playful move draws attention to the way in which canon, literary tradition, and concepts such as love are constructed, thought and written, and it also demonstrates a will on the part of the poet to adapt and build upon the existing canon by incorporating more marginal voices. To use Amaral’s own words, she turns the concept of literary influence into something ‘eminentemente plástica’, queering the association of influence with particular, binary, gender relations and linear structures of paternalism within which these sit. The decision to position the text as an epigraph also seems to work as a commentary on the iterability of written language itself in the creation of meaning.

In ‘Diálogo entre Camões e Natércia’, Amaral uses the citationality of language to subvert the rigidity of literary canon and promote the act of re-reading and re-writing. The mixing of cited lines and repeated ideas from within the same collection, into a stanza placed so as to appear or perform as a completed stanza written by somebody else, can be read as a commentary on the role of the poet as part of a dialogue. The role of an epigraph is usually to create a visual intertextual link between a contemporary poet and an existing text that has influenced or represents a tradition of thought in line with the current piece of literature. In performing a citational loop using lines from the same collection, Amaral demonstrates the inherent iterability of language and links this to the notion of influence and canon. This enables Amaral to subvert the sanctification of texts as canon, showing that everything written is always already in a constant process of iteration in that it is always both tied to and separated from its context of origin. Furthermore, in piecing together different cited lines, Amaral creates a stanza that has its own meaning in the context of the rest of the current poem. This is a way of demonstrating the malleability of text and meaning needed for Amaral’s ambitious project of re-defining and rewriting *o amor*.

The same lines that form the epigraph also reappear in yet another iteration at the end of the poem:

> – Corre por mim,
> e chega onde chegares
>
> – Se soubesses do fio
>
> – Se soubesses de dentro do amor
>
> – Essa vaga memória dos teus olhos
>
> – Seria só olhar.
>
> E chegaria
>
> (Génese: 35)

At this point, Amaral also adds the line 'se soubesses de dentro do amor' as a counterpart to the 'se soubesses do fio' which, together, suggest two different perspectives which each subject wishes to share with the other as part of the desire to connect. The added line that did not appear in the epigraph-style opening stanza of the poem comes from the poem 'Camões fala a Natércia':

> […]
> E sei que te matei
> por amor dentro,
> pela vaga memória dos teus olhos,
> desde que, de repente
>
> os meus também
> ficaram só antigos
> (Génese: 22)

In 'Camões fala a Natércia' the poetic subject (Camões) appears to acknowledge the effects of writing *of* the muse which is, like in 'Natércia fala a Catarina', written through the motif of death. The idea of 'amor dentro' brings to mind the position of the muse

within the voice and subject of the male poet, having been assimilated into the male 'self' rather than existing separately as their own subject (as they do in Amaral's dialogue poems). In this poem, the voice of Camões seems to experience a moment of epiphany where he realizes that this gendered, binary literary tradition is *passé,* as he states that his eyes 'ficaram só antigos'.

The trope of eyes and the romantic gaze play an important role in both 'Camões fala a Natércia' and 'Diálogo entre Camões e Natércia' where the theme is picked up through citation and revision. In 'Que Língua Fala a Poesia?', Amaral writes that 'o olhar [é] fundamental na poética camoniana e renascentista, em geral, como veículo de troca amorosa, ou somente de contemplação do objecto amado' (Amaral 2017c: 29), and it is this element of the gaze in its relationship to love that the poet chooses to reconceptualize in these two poems. If at the end of 'Camões fala a Natércia', Amaral critiques the problematic and antiquated gender roles of the gaze in traditional love literature, in 'Diálogo entre Camões e Natércia' she seeks a way of expressing the love and desire to connect that can be represented by the lovers' gazes. Just as the two subjects seem to long for a shared perspective (that of the 'fio' and 'de dentro do amor') the seemingly combined voices (as the voices have become so difficult to separate) evoke a desire to find a connection that does not result in the objectification of either. The objectification of the muse is represented by the muse's eyes appearing only as a 'vaga memória', held as an object within the imagination and text of a subject-voice. The next line, 'seria só olhar', however, suggests a removal of the power dynamics of the gaze. Furthermore, in using a combination of the conditional and the infinitive, neither of the voices is afforded a subject position, grammatically suggesting the possibility of equality. This is further underlined by the possibility of conciliation in the final line of the poem, 'E chegaria'. This suggests that removing the binary power dynamics from the 'olhar' would permit the intersubjective connection between lovers that the subject-object relationship precludes.

Whilst the overall structure of Amaral's collection subverts the poet/muse dichotomy of Western canon, the incorporation of multiple voices also challenges the ingrained

structures of poetic subjectivity that have been assumed as a result of this tradition. The poems of *A Génese do Amor* offer alternative paradigms of romantic love, as well as an alternative form of poetic enunciation that does not privilege a single, stable subject, and so does not map onto binary gender roles. Instead, Amaral demonstrates the beauty of love as a connection that flourishes between two subjects, reflected in the life of the dialogue poems in comparison to the motif of death associated with the objectification of the muse. Retracing love back to its origins, Amaral replaces the existing structures of amorous literature, reflective of a drive to possess the other, substituting an intersubjective structure of recognition that better represents the human drive for connection.

When considered side by side with Branco's love poem, it becomes clear that an exploration of the meaning and the possibilities of love functions more at a structural level than a thematic level. For both Branco and Amaral, the use of love in poetry has provided a space to interrogate the structures of power that underpin the binary oppositions of subject/object and self/other which have come to define what we understand as love, and that have also become the foundations of our relationship to language in Western culture. In the context of restrictive structures of colonial and neo-colonial power struggles, Branco seeks relief from the dominance of both Eurocentric and phallocentric voices in cultural representations of love, through an iterative process of 'writing' as she searches within herself to find her own amorous subject beyond the structures that have, for so long, restricted the black Angolan woman to an object-position. Amaral's poetry also highlights the iterative quality of language, and the role of literary tradition in forming lasting archetypes of genre, form and language. *A Génese do Amor* is as much about the human connection that we call love as it is about the structures that, at times, hinder this connection. Each poem of this collection contributes to Amaral's objective to retrace love and to consider how love between people could be configured were we not assuming that it relies on the same structures offered by ancient texts such as Plato's *Symposium* or the *Bible.*

Both poets also place themselves and their work within an alternative literary tradition, strongly related to a counter-discursive consideration of the theme of love. For Branco this tradition is the love letter, playing off both the European tradition of women's writing as well as the tradition of anti-colonial discourse represented in epistolary texts such as *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* and *Nação Crioula*, whilst Amaral evokes the tradition of women writers such as Barrett Browning and Rossetti who chose to take on the position of the muse 'writing back'. In relation to these alternative traditions, however, both poets delve deeper into the meaning of writing, legacy and language – the way in which meaning is created in text and the ways in which it can be altered. In unearthing the rigid binary oppositions that have for so long defined the way in which Western society views romantic love, both Branco and Amaral are able to deconstruct and reconfigure them in order to create poetic amorous subjects and a language that better expresses the love of twenty-first century women.

Conclusion

Relationships heavily colour our subjective experience of the world. The way we view ourselves as subjects is skewed by the position we hold in relation to others (as mothers, as religious subjects, as romantic partners, and so on and so forth) and the power dynamics at play in these relationships. This is reflected in the way we comprehend and discuss larger, more abstract concepts, which are often viewed through the lens of symbolic familial or kinship relationships. As was discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, this is particularly true when it comes to the way we have interpreted nations, nationhood, and languages in relation to identity formation. Repeatedly, narratives have emerged within which women are cast in symbolic or supportive roles, just like Jocasta in the Oedipal family drama, as metonyms for larger group identities linked to notions of nationality, language, race, empire and postcoloniality.

In the introductory chapter I demonstrated how femininity and symbolic feminine figures have played important roles in paternalist narratives of identity that equate the use of symbolic patriarchal relationships with intimacy and affection. In the Portuguese *Estado Novo,* this came in the shape of the glorification of femininity in a state discourse that placed women firmly in the private realm. The Portuguese right-wing regime also feminized alterity in a colonial discourse based on a family narrative that at once included racial and colonial others in the nation-family and subordinated them to the unquestioned power of the white, Portuguese patriarch. In Brazil, on the other hand, race was much more central to Freyre's imagination of a national identity predicated on physical and cultural miscegenation, as is clear in the figures of the enslaved black housemaid and wet nurse. Freyrean discourse, as explored in the introduction to this thesis, played a central role in creating a troubling discourse that softened a violent history of slavery by inserting it into a nostalgic scenario of patriarchal affect that structures a notion of Brazilian national identity based on cultural miscegenation. Freyre's narrative of lusotropical affect is still visible in Brazil in the seismic differences between the experiences and representations of black and white womanhood. The paternalist narratives prominent in Angola since the mid-twentieth century, however,

such as representations of Mother Africa in anti-colonial rhetoric (discussed in Chapter One), were informed by the feminization of land first in Portuguese imperial discourse (such as Camões's *Os Lusíadas*) and later by the *Estado Novo's* incorporation of Freyrean lusotropicalism into Portuguese colonial ideology and rhetoric.

Whilst the poetic texts compared in this thesis do not deal directly with concepts of the nation or nationality, they have all been published in societies that have absorbed these paternalist narratives and symbols of intimacy as part of their national and cultural identities. As has been demonstrated in this study, the damaging gender stereotypes inherent to these narratives, and the paternalist structures that they support, have made it difficult for women to assume subject positions in social and political terms, as well as in terms of literary authorship. Building upon the work carried out by scholars such as Owen and Alonso (2011) and Klobucka (2009) in their studies of female authorship in Portuguese literature, and taking into account the growing interest in studies on gender and sexuality from across the Lusophone world (Owen and Rothwell 2004; Quinlan and Arenas 2002; Owen and Klobucka 2014), this study has explored in more detail the link between intimate relationships and poetic subjectivity, assessing the alternative relationships women writers from the Portuguese-speaking world have created. In doing so, I have shown that poets such as Amaral, Branco, Evaristo and Prado have used the poetic form to create alternative paradigms of intimacy and relationality that can empower, rather than subordinate, women as speaking subjects. These paradigms have revealed not only the common importance of poetry as a form for challenging restrictive representations of womanhood and intimacy, but also the diverse ways in which subjectivity, intimacy and womanhood can be experienced by women of different racial identities and nationalities.

By considering the formation of maternal, mystic and amorous subjects in selected poems, this study has demonstrated how love has become textualized and incorporated into hegemonic and patriarchal structures of knowledge, being and literary influence, affecting the way relationships are represented in literature and how we view and interact with others and the world around us. This means that, beyond presenting alternatively structured images of intimacy, the literary corpus analysed in this study has

been read as a challenge both to structures of literary subjectivity and to ingrained notions of the self and other that have become central to the way we formulate and define group identities and belonging in the Western world.

The comparative approach of this thesis – looking at four poets from three different Portuguese-speaking countries and who represent diverse trajectories through the Lusophone world and language – has revealed the cross-cultural and inter-cultural significance of symbolic intimate relationships. In this sense, the study has responded to a gap in existing scholarship regarding the sustained comparative analysis of women's writing in the Portuguese language from different national backgrounds. There is a growing body of monographs analysing representations of gender on individual Lusophone nations (Owen 2007; Jones 2017), or multiple African Lusophone nations (Tavares 2018) and Ana Margarida Martins has produced a comparative study of literary works on Portugal and Mozambique (Martins 2012a). This study has, instead, brought together a group of writers from three nations and, indeed, three continents, picking up on the ties between the construction and deconstruction of gender stereotypes across the Lusophone world and language.

*'*Chapter One: Maternal Subjects'*,* for example, brought together Amaral, Evaristo and Branco and analysed their poetic responses to the interconnected and yet nuanced representations of motherhood in Portugal, Angola, and Brazil, as well as in the wider Lusophone context. I found that in each national context motherhood has been co-opted to serve the definition of national identity and culture, predominantly in the service of higher, masculine power. The poetry addressed in this chapter, however, reconfigures motherhood so that it becomes a space where the power and voices of women are prioritized. The first part of the chapter focused on Amaral and Evaristo's representations of family narratives that stand in opposition to patriarchal structures of family and literary influence. In this section I showed that, for both poets, motherhood represents a basis for the inclusion and embracing of other women, present in a poetic voice that is fundamentally multi-faceted, allowing for the reconfiguration of binary and unilateral notions of inheritance and literary influence. For Amaral, the link between an intimate relationship between mother and daughter in 'Testamento' and 'Um pouco só

de Goya: carta à minha filha' is part of a larger legacy of women's writing. By highlighting this legacy, Amaral places the mother-daughter relationship into the narrative of literary influence, but through a more reciprocal and symbiotic dynamic, geared towards the empowerment not only of both mother and daughter, but also of past, present and future women, as opposed to the encroachment of the son upon the father inherent in Bloom's more individualist model of paternalist literary influence. Evaristo, whilst constructing a similarly inclusive poetic subjectivity, incorporating the voices of her foremothers and daughter in 'Vozes-mulheres', draws upon the particularity of black women's resistance in Brazil, placing an emphasis on the revelation of previously unheard voices through a poetic representation of community. The poetic analysis revealed stark differences between Evaristo and Amaral's poetry, however, where Evaristo draws upon the particular history of motherhood, inheritance and, indeed, resistance, in Brazilian slavery that cannot be ignored as a crucial factor in understanding the meaning of black motherhood in Brazil. The analysis of Evaristo's poetry, through an engagement with black feminism, revealed a more militant maternal subject. It became clear that by creating embodied, black gendered voices in her poems, Evaristo could reconceptualise the black body as a site of empowerment and creative agency, counteracting the history of physical violence against black women in Brazil.

The second part of this chapter analysed the link between motherhood and language in closer detail, demonstrating a number of tactics for destabilising the longstanding equation of literary authority and the male body. Branco, for example, employs the childbirth metaphor for literary creation in her poem 'A Despedida de Mi(m)' in order to mock the hallowed figure of the male thinker, queering the association of authorship and childbirth through the mechanization of gendered imagery in the childbirth metaphor, whilst repositioning the mother-figure as modern poet rather than object to be claimed and reclaimed, as in many cultural representations of Mother Africa. Close reading of Branco's poems revealed that, in doing so, Branco not only subverts gender expectations in representations of literary parenthood, but she also destabilizes the Eurocentric bias in global artistic and intellectual production, undercutting the glorification of artistic creation. In this sense, Branco's poetry represents, from the

perspective of a displaced Angolan woman writing in Portuguese, a postcolonial struggle with identity and language that is all too present in arguments against overarching concepts such as Lusofonia. The struggle represented in Branco's poetry highlights not only gendered notions of authorship but also Eurocentric notions of cultural identity that are more highlighted than combatted by institutions such as the CPLP that reaffirm rhizomatic linguistic structures linking former colonies to the former colonial power.

Amaral, on the other hand, in her poem 'O que não há num nome', uses the poetic form to lay bare the limits of language and the symbolic realm. Challenging the primacy of the paternal space of the symbolic realm, using blank spaces and sound to gesture towards a privileged space of semiotic meaning situated within the mother-daughter bond, Amaral subverts patriarchal familial structures by subverting the paternal function of the naming process, using sound and the suggestion of touch as a focal point for the creation of meaning. Evaristo's poetry also hints at a subversive, semiotic relationship between women but, again, relies upon a more embodied representation of the maternal subject; one that challenges white, paternal dominance of symbolic language through representations of black bodies as ancient and powerful, positioning black motherhood as a new metaphor for language.

This chapter showed that each poet has adapted the shape and dynamics of motherhood in response to the hegemonic symbolic representations of motherhood present in their respective contexts, refusing stereotypical gender roles determined by biologically essentialist social and national discourses, as well as the glorification of particular archetypes of motherhood as symbols of national strength. Through the analysis of Amaral, Evaristo and Branco's poetry it became clear that it is vital not only to change the way mothers are evoked in literature, but also to find a place for motherhood in the context of literary subjectivity as a source of literary voice; a space denied to women within paternalist narratives of literary influence and canon. Whereas women's allotted places in patriarchal structures of kinship, national identity and literary influence often exclude them from power, each poetic representation of motherhood

addressed in this chapter revolved around a sense of inclusion, collectivity and solidarity.

This chapter, more than any other, highlighted the presence of the Oedipal family drama throughout the Lusophone world in gendered discourses of motherhood and national identity. In creating alternative maternal subjects in their poetry, Branco, Amaral and Evaristo have complicated the continued alienation of the symbolic 'Jocasta' – simply passed from father to son, with no voice of her own – who becomes empowered through varied and nuanced poetic subjects in the works of these poets from Portugal, Angola, and Brazil. Close reading has shown that the oppositional and empowered maternal subjects of the poems studied in this chapter can provide a framework for the recovery and growth of alienated mother figures. The objects of paternal language has become, through this resistant and subversive body of work, the subject of their own maternal languages.

In 'Chapter Two: Mystic subjects', I turned to the use of religious mysticism in the formation of poetic subjects. This chapter considered the effects of using mystic relationships between women as poetic and religious subjects, and a god or gods, as a counterpoint to the alienation of women in institutionalized religious practice, for Prado, and in a society in which black women represent a particularly vulnerable social category for Evaristo. Despite representing two very different sectors of Brazilian society and two diverse religious traditions, this chapter revealed how, for both Prado and Evaristo, the moment of expansion necessary for the creation of a mystic subject can be harnessed to establish a critical distance and space from which to challenge restrictions on women's subjectivity and traditional representations of female bodies. The focus on religion in Brazilian society also highlighted the extent to which religion (both hegemonic and marginal practices and discourses) continues to play an important role in Brazil, shaping the development of (national) subjects and subjectivity as well as political discourses on race and gender relations, in positive and negative ways, through institutional and popular religious devotion.[88] Despite the proliferation of religious

[88] Whilst neither Branco nor Amaral focus on religion to this extent, there is an opportunity to consider the presence of religion in contemporary Lusophone women's

discourse in Brazil, however, by comparing Evaristo's version of mystic subjectivity with that of Prado, it became clear that, even from drastically different socio-political stances, there was a certain similarity in how each poet employed the mystic relationship as a poetic device for the empowerment of women as poetic subjects. They both used the complexity of the mystic subject to expand the limits of subjectivity, harnessing this expansion to consider the limits of the female body and its role in defining poetic subjectivity. Both poets also position their gendered subjects in a way that is reminiscent of the centrality of Mariology and the worship of saints in Brazil. For Evaristo, in particular, popular Saint worship was particularly pertinent given the prevalence of black female icons such as Brazil's patron saint *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* and *Escrava Anastácia* which are often worshipped in conjunction with Afro-Brazilian deities such as *Oxum* and *Yemanjá*. Evaristo's poetry picks up on the veneration of black women through these religious icons as a source of empowerment through the acknowledgement of the historical suffering and survival of enslaved ancestors.

Despite both poets employing mysticism as a poetic device for the empowerment of their poetic voices, close reading showed that this empowerment takes on different meanings in different contexts. Whereas black women represent a particular position of intersectional vulnerability and alienation in Brazilian society, Candomblé and the syncretic devotion to female saints in conjunction with *orixás*, widely practised in Afro-Brazilian communities, is a rare context in which black women can occupy positions of leadership and veneration. They can even transcend the representational burden of black female bodies, taking on the identity of male and female gods alike during rituals of spirit possession. Catholicism, on the other hand, is an institutional religion within which women are predominantly silenced in representations of Eve (implicitly demonising the female body) and the Virgin Mary (an impossible standard of feminine purity) compared to the repeated performance of the male body in the Catholic Church, especially through the priesthood and the sacrament of the Eucharist. To counteract this hierarchical structure, Prado's poems use subjects that are more aligned with

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writing in comparison to the Brazilian poetry studied here. The works of the Angolan poet Paula Tavares, for instance could provide some fruitful comparisons.

Mariology but, through mysticism, Prado creates an alternative union between her poetic subjects and God that subverts the hierarchical Catholic Church.

The first part of this chapter homed in on the way both Prado and Evaristo positioned their poetic subjects, using mysticism, and framed their poetic production as social critique. For Prado, the authority conferred upon the poetic subject through the mystic union, allowed her to engage intertextually with texts that represent male authority in Brazilian literature and religion. In the Catholic religion, mysticism (in saints and mystic writers) is a form of individual religious worship and expression that lies outside of institutionally sanctioned forms of devotion enacted within the Church community – and yet, from this marginal position, has the potential of impacting upon and shaping the centre. The historical positioning of mysticism, highlighted by the often-difficult relationship between mystics and the Church, provides a space for Prado's poetic subject from which she can engage critically with texts and figures considered to represent an authority in religion, Brazilian society, or Brazilian literature. In 'Com licença poética', for example, Prado defines her poetic style, and introduces her gendered mystic subject, through a parody of Drummond's 'Poema de Sete Faces'. It became clear in the analysis of this early poem that Prado has engaged critically with the male-dominated Brazilian modernist movement as well as simplistic and negative representations of women in Catholicism. This critical engagement with Catholic ideals of femininity is also present in 'Rute no campo', which is a prime example of Prado's sexual and erotic representations of female bodies within a religious context. I found that in this poem, the expansion of the mystic subject (replicating the dynamics of Saint Teresa of Ávila's 'interior castle') allowed Prado to expand not only the limits of the physical space and the individual body, but also the representational limits of female bodies in a Catholic context. It thus became clear that Prado uses the freedom and authority of the mystic union to alter the role of women in the Catholic religion, not only by affording the biblical figure of Ruth a voice, but also by incorporating sexuality and erotic love into her gendered representation of religious devotion.

This chapter showed that Evaristo, on the other hand, used the already-central position of women in Candomblé, as well as the link between Candomblé and the resistance to

slavery in the *quilombo,* as a source of empowerment for a gendered poetic representation of Afro-Brazilian community that refers back to its origins in the slave trade as well as to the African cultures from which slaves were removed and enslaved. This chapter's analysis of 'Meu rosário' showed how Candomblé, as a socially marginal practice within Brazilian society, can become a site for the development and empowerment of an Afro-Brazilian community, and the critique of hegemonic Brazilian culture. Through close reading it also became clear that the syncretic practice of Candomblé and Catholicism is represented in a way that places the Afro-Brazilian religion in the context of Brazilian society as both a marginal practice and a kind of solace for Afro-Brazilian girls and women who feel alienated by Brazilian society as a whole. The centrality of black women to the syncretic practice of Candomblé and Catholicism is adopted by Evaristo as an organising principle through which to explore the legacy of slavery and resistance in Afro-Brazilian communities from a gendered perspective. In this poem, the subject's recourse to Candomblé, as well as the practice of syncretism, becomes a form of resistance against the particularly vulnerable position that black women occupy in Brazil. It became clear in the analysis of this poem that the expansion of the subject for Evaristo went beyond access to the single *orixá* as experienced by a *filha de santo* in ritual spirit possession, by giving the subject access to mystic Africa – an idealised ancestry that defines a community. The mystic energy *axé* has been harnessed by Evaristo in the service of a militant poetic that expresses a hunger for change and action as, enabled by the dynamics of Candomblé mysticism, she incorporates a collective voice into the voice of the poetic subject. Viewed through the lens of Nascimento's *quilombismo,* it becomes clear that the syncretic representation or Candomblé within Catholic ritual falls in line with the political resistance of the ambivalent position of the *terreiro* and *quilombo* as a site removed from the hegemonic centre of Brazilian culture, but with the critical capacity to shape the centre from the margins. In this first section of the chapter, then, by combining a consideration of Prado and Evaristo's socio-political criticism of gender and racial stereotypes in Brazil with the counter-discursive possibilities of mysticism in Certeau's elaboration of the complexities of mystic illocution, it became clear that both Prado and

Evaristo harness the counter-discursive potential of marginality in order to empower their poetic subjects.

The second part of Chapter Two focused on representations of female bodies in Prado and Evaristo's poetic renderings of mysticism. I identified in Prado's poem 'A necessidade do corpo', through an articulation with queer theology, a radical repositioning of women's bodies in Christianity through a reconfiguration of the gender dynamics of the Eucharist. Prado's poem uses the mystic encounter between the poetic subject and God to subvert the primacy of the male body in Catholic scripture and ecclesiastic ritual by employing the combination of an existing rhetoric of transformative mystic love and a language steeped in eroticism. Analysis of Prado's poetry revealed that the use of mystic subjectivity elevates an embodied, gendered subject to a privileged position in relation to the word of God and subverts the demonization of women's sexuality in the Catholic church. Evaristo's poem 'Na mulher, o tempo…' was also read as a poetic representation of a mystic female body that exceeds and transcends the limits of the social conditions associated with the material experience of femininity. Evaristo's poetic subject undergoes a process of self-veneration that resembles an introspective form of the veneration of black women through popular devotional icons such as *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* and *Escrava Anastácia.* Evaristo's poem about the beauty of aging female bodies and of Afro-Brazilian self-conscious identity formation, when read from the perspective of Candomblé mysticism, represents the empowerment of female bodies through their access to a mystic plane. As opposed to the eroticism of Prado's poem, the body represented in Evaristo's poem reflects more than the physical suffering and lived experience evoked by its lines and marks, but also, through a rhetoric of radical inclusion and shared experience, a sentiment of solidarity and collectivity that empowers the poetic subject. It became clear in this section that the potential for the mystic union to surpass the limits of time and space has allowed Evaristo to represent bodies that exceed their alienation as individual and discrete subjects. By performing processes of gender and race identification, the bodies represented in Evaristo's poems transform an alienated female body into a source of

political solidarity, fundamentally rooted in, and driven by, the corporeality of the black woman's body.

This chapter, therefore, highlighted how mysticism can expand the limits of subjects and bodies, but that the body occupies diverse experiential and representational spaces depending on racial and religious identity in Brazil. In depicting mystic relationships between women and a god or gods, Prado and Evaristo have made space to develop new paradigms of religious and poetic authority, within which women can hold a privileged position. Each drawing upon marginality in their own way, they make the mystic union into a relationship that places women, and women's voices, firmly in a position of power, reinforcing their social critiques and reconfiguring existing archetypes of gender, race and religious devotion. The focus on women's bodies in this chapter also served to highlight the importance of considering the diverse material conditions lived by women when analysing the formation of poetic subjects, as the comparison between Prado and Evaristo's poetry has reflected the stark differences in the experience of being a woman in Brazil.

The third and final chapter of textual analysis turned from mystic and maternal love to romantic love for a comparison of Branco's lengthy poem about love 'A Última Carta' and Amaral's collection *A Génese do Amor*. When reading this poetry, it was crucial to emphasize the difference between love as a textual construct, and love as a phenomenon or lived experience, whilst making it clear that the two are intertwined, as each affects and sustains the other. This was reflected in Amaral and Branco's poems as they engaged critically with the existing, predominantly Eurocentric, discourses that have shaped the way love is read, written and understood in the Western world. Despite occupying different positions in relation to Eurocentric literary tradition – Branco writing from a former colony, and Amaral from a former colonial power – both poets have undertaken the challenge of representing an experience of love that is not accounted for in this tradition. Intertextuality emerged, in this chapter, as being central to establishing each poet's approach to the theme of romantic love and defining the alternative forms and structures through which they communicate and perceive love.

It became clear that, by evoking the epistolary form in Lusophone literature, Branco placed her poem into contact with an existing tradition of feminist, anti-colonial and postcolonial critique. Close reading of this poem focused on the references to the form of the love letter which position 'A Última Carta' within a tradition of women's voices by making reference to a form of written expression which has historically remained open to women, and which also recalls counter-discursive fiction in texts such as *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* and *Nação Crioula.* It became clear in the analysis of Branco's poem that her reference to the epistolary form signified a disruption, both through its juxtaposition with the poetic form, and as a Derridean disruption of binary structures of communication and circulation – a disruption which has been central to the use of the epistolary form in the aforementioned fictional critiques of colonial and neo-colonial structures. Branco's poem thus highlights the politics of language by representing a postcolonial identity struggle from the perspective of a mixed-race Angolan woman writing, from a position of relative privilege, but in the language of the former coloniser. Throughout the lengthy poem, framed by the destabilization of literary form, Branco's poetic subject engages in a process of iterative failure as she searches for an adequate language and structure for the poetic subject, repeatedly demonstrating the incompatibility of existing textual structures of love with the love experienced by the poetic subject. The weight of intertextual references in this poem, including references to Chopin and Pessoa, heightens the sense of a struggle for poetic identity and voice within the poem. Using Sandoval's reading of Barthes's 'third space' I showed how the theme of love, pushed to its textual limits in Branco's continuous reiteration, provided an open space for the transformation and differentiation of poetic subjectivity, from a postcolonial perspective.

Amaral, on the other hand, chose to return to the notion of origin, in *A Génese do Amor*, engaging more directly with the characters and historical figures associated with the traditional love lyric. In doing so, Amaral challenges the gender imbalance in the history of romantic literature by rewriting the relationship between poets and muses, developing multiple iterations of an alternative meaning and structure of love. In this section of Chapter Three, I found that the dynamics of subject-object relations are replaced in

Amaral's reconfiguration of literary love by intersubjective relationships, both in the way the poem is written with multiple poetic subjects, and in the structures of romantic love that she creates. In terms of intertextuality, Amaral's collection interacts not only with the canonical Dante, Camões and Petrarch, and their muses, but also with a tradition of women's writing that, in the works of writers such as Barrett Browning and Rossetti, seeks to uncover the voices of the muses. Amaral builds upon this tradition, however, by queering the binary subject-object relationship between poet and muse as well as the line of influence between poet and precursor, creating poetic conversations that traverse the boundaries of poetry, time, space and textuality. Close reading revealed that Amaral's love lyric exists on multiple axes and is structured multilaterally in terms of the dynamics of power and voice, challenging the rigid, binary structures of the traditional poet-muse relationship and going further than a simple reversal of gender roles. Amaral's poetic representations of romantic love are configured in a way that precludes the drive for omnipotence present in a subject-object dialectic, resulting instead in a multilateral drive towards human connection.

This chapter showed that, for Amaral and Branco, love represents more than simply a literary theme, but also a structure of relationality that shapes the formation of poetic subjects as well as affective connections between individuals. Both poets also highlight the iterative quality of language, and the baggage carried not only by larger cultural and literary concepts such as love, but also by language as a whole. In understanding the impact of literary tradition in forming lasting archetypes of genre, form and language in relation to love, Branco and Amaral demonstrate how particular power structures serve to maintain the marginalization of particular voices. For Amaral, the marginalized voices that fall prey to these structures are women's voices and, in particular, that of the literary muse. Branco's poem, however, also accounts for the remnants of colonial power structures in determining a hierarchy of culture, and in the creation of postcolonial literatures.

In particular, the analysis undertaken in this final chapter revealed the extent to which romantic relationships relate to the power dynamics of voice, authorship, and subjectivity, and demonstrated how Branco and Amaral's poems, which challenge and

deconstruct the discourses that define love in a literary context, also challenge gendered notions of authorship and subjectivity. In previous chapters, it became clear that maternal and mystic subjects have been developed by these selected poets in a way that empowers women's voices by restructuring the dynamics within relationships that have traditionally been represented in a way that leaves women alienated, objectified, or silenced. This final chapter on romantic love, however, showed that empowered gendered subjects have been able to emerge only once the relationships have been deconstructed and rewritten in a way that refuses the traditional structures of dominance and submission which do not necessarily reflect the way in which contemporary women experience relationships.

The subjects identified in the poetry analysed in this study are, therefore, empowered by their intimate and loving relationships to other women, to a god or gods, and to their poetic lovers, rather than disempowered in favour of the dominance of a paternal figure. If traditional representations of relationships have fallen in line with patriarchal structures, underlined by the privilege of male authorship, and upheld by the absorption of symbols of intimate familial and kinship relationships, then, in many ways, they have already been politicized. The feminist argument that we should view the personal as political has encouraged us to look for the presence of structures of oppression within the private realm and has also highlighted the fact that the power dynamics of intimacy are often central to larger, societal structures of oppression. The poems studied in this thesis have looked back to the intimacy of relationships. Seeking forms of love that are empowering, they propose alternative structures (that are neither heteronormative, binary, paternalist, or institutional) with which to consider human connections that can challenge the paternalist foundations of Western societies, knowledge, and cultures. In doing so, as Sandoval highlights in her reading of Barthes's third space in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Sandoval 2000: 141), the intimacy of love is situated differentially to the rest of the world, in a position of its own privilege (privilege of the phenomenon of love between two beings rather than the privilege of one subject over an object) so that it can become a site of resistance and empowerment.

Each chapter demonstrated how Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo's maternal, mystic and amorous poetic subjects have used intimate connections to establish critical opposition to existing discourses on women's relationships as well as to male-dominated literary traditions and canon. In this body of poetry, maternal, mystic and romantic relationships have served as complex lenses through which these poets have been able to explore forms of poetic subjectivity that are empowering to women. By creating alternative structures of intimacy, they revised the way subjects are formed, avoiding structures that define subjects in opposition to an object, so that the voice of one need not encroach upon the space of an-other. On the contrary, the subjects constructed in the poetry considered in this study enable, empower and often invoke the voices of other women. This means that, along with the power dynamics associated with symbolic relationships, the dynamics of literary subjectivity are altered and the heretofore-privileged site of poetic voice and subjectivity is expanded.

The comparative analysis of this thesis showed that, by giving women a subject position, long-standing tropes that dominate the way we have imagined and textualized the nation, national identity and the relationships between people, language and space, become more difficult to sustain. Alternatively imagined relationships, such as the examples addressed here, can also form the basis of a reconfiguration of the meaning of national subjectivity – also frequently viewed through symbolic familial and kinship relationships – by perceiving the boundaries of gender, encounters between the self and the other, and human connection *de outra forma.* Whereas we often perceive nationalist or imperial imagery as negative perceptions of the other, Benedict Anderson reminds us, in *Imagined Communities,* that 'nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles' (2006: 141). If we accept that nationalist and exclusionary definitions of belonging and nationhood are based on love, love itself and structures of intimacy must be rethought to alter the limited and potentially damaging opposition of self and other. In other words, we must unpick the privileged realm of the 'self' in order to create space for others. Leela Gandhi refers to the love that forms communities according to a criterion of

exclusion as *'homophilia'* (based on the Aristotelian model of *philia)*. She highlights, however, that *homophilia* creates a sense of the 'political' that relies on 'the domestic space of the family, thereby perpetuating in public life the perennial romance of self-repetition, similarity, resemblance, the order of the same' (Gandhi 2006: 28). Thus, the exploration of love as a non-hierarchical and positive force based on inclusion, as we have seen in the poetry analysed in this study, upsets the patriarchal structures at the core of this kind of conceptualization of the nation-space.

At this point I turn once more to the poem with which I opened this thesis, 'Topografias em quase dicionário' from Amaral's collection *A Génese do Amor,* which explores the link between space, identity and love. As the title, and the name of the collection that this poem introduces, suggest, this poem proposes a dual process of both *remapping* and *redefining* love, challenging both what love has come to mean in the Western world, and how it is situated in relation to the subject. The importance of the poetic form as a space for this project of *remapping* and *redefining* is also revealed by a close reading of Amaral's poem. 'Topografias em quase dicionário' not only provides us with a poetic reimagining of love, but also describes and sets the scene for a series of feminist projects of reconsidering, through poetry, the structures of relationality that underpin the construction of both gender and national identity. Examples of these feminist projects can be glimpsed in the poetry analysed in this thesis, where Amaral, Branco, Evaristo and Prado have challenged existing, restrictive representations of womanhood through their own diverse representations of relationality that aim to better represent a wider range of experiences of both affect and subjecthood. Whilst Amaral's poem 'Topografias em quase dicionário' is written from the (not unproblematic) perspective of the former colonial power in the Portuguese language – which her poem recognises and undercuts, to a certain extent, through a resignification of language associated with 'literature of the discoveries' – her poem usefully pinpoints the link between narrow representations of love and affect and understandings of national identity. This link is something that is also highlighted by the poetic corpus studied in this thesis, although from different perspectives based on the particular intersections of race, gender, national identity, class or community each poem and, indeed, every reader, represents.

To this end, the poem begins with a clear statement of intent by Amaral, describing the process of revision that her collection represents, but which can also relate – albeit loosely given the different ways these processes play out and the different pressures they respond to – to the literary projects of other women writers such as those addressed in this thesis:

> Reaprender o mundo
> em prisma novo:
> pequena bátega de sol a resolver-se
> em cisne,
> sereia harmonizando o universo
>
> Só o vento sucumbe
> à demais luz,
> e só o vento,
> como alaúde azul,
> repete devagar os mesmos sons:
>
> Não interessa onde estou,
> não me faz falta um mapa
> de viagem
> […]
> (Génese: 9)

In these initial stanzas the poetic subject refuses a map, but also resituates love as a 'prisma' through which one can '[r]eaprender o mundo'. In much canonical poetry, such as those works of Dante, Petrarch and Camões revised by Amaral in this collection, love is transitive, relying upon the opposition of the lover ('amador') and the object of their affections ('cousa amada') as two separate beings occupying specific roles in the imagined relationship and the poetic enunciation alike (as in Camões's 'Transforma-se o amador na cousa amada'). In Amaral's poem, however, love, explored through the poetic form, enables the poetic subject to confront and revise the way in which we relate to the world and others. Crucially, the placing of love between the subject and the world, rather than belonging to the speaking subject, evades the damaging assumption that

relationships and our experience of the world rely on binary structures such as that of subject and object, dominance and submission or male and female. The first stanza includes a series of images that, together, suggest a theme of transformation, change, and destabilization. The image of the prism, for example, suggests a transformation of light into an array of colours, or a transformation that is in fact a revelation of the true nature of light. The mention of the prism is followed by the transformation of a beam of sunlight into a swan and a mermaid or siren. Further to the theme of transformation introduced through the prism, this stanza suggests a shift of meaning through the mermaid and the swan, which represent both silence and voice or song. The swan, according to popular belief, was thought to be mute throughout its entire life, only emitting a beautiful and tragic song before dying (as Amaral writes later in the poem, 'Diz-se que só na morte | o cisne canta' (Génese: 12). The mermaid or siren, on the other hand, is known both for their song (particularly in Greek mythology) and for the removal of their voice in Northern European folklore and fairy tales such as that of Hans Christian Andersen. The contradictory meanings suggested by the swan and the mermaid as well as the shifting forms – from sunlight to characters, to sound and silence in the songs of the swan and the mermaid – act to create a feeling of destabilization.

In the second stanza, Amaral persists with the use of popular imagery from folklore and fairy tales, through the personification of the wind, which is posited as an opposite to 'luz' evoking Aesop's fable describing a struggle between the sun and the North Wind. In Aesop's story, often told to children, the sun's warmth prevails over the North Wind's force, which can be read as a vindication of the transformative power of love over violence in the context of this poem. Moreover, the fable by Aesop brings to mind the image of the traveller removing his clothing, which evokes the rejection of social conventions of gender representations. The wind in Amaral's poem is also aligned with a particular literary tradition by the 'alaúde azul', which evokes the roots of lyric poetry, originally accompanied by a lute or lyre. This is further underlined by the following line in which the lute 'repete devagar os mesmos sons'. The wind, like the ray of sunlight, however, is transformed as it succumbs to the 'demais luz'.

In these stanzas, the fluidity between light, vision and sound subverts the privilege of an ocularcentric economy reliant on binary subject/object oppositions, just like the muse-poetry addressed in Amaral's collection (explored in Chapter Three). The second stanza, in which the wind becomes transformed by an excess of light, depicts the shift in perspective with which the poem opens ('Reaprender o mundo | em prisma novo:') as the sounds produced by the blue lute do not refer back to the tradition of muse poetry, but underline the transformative power of poetry, and the potential for disruption and destabilization that the poetic form contains. The third stanza of the poem uses the redundancy of a map to depict the freedom offered by the poetic word, highlighting that love and life are deconstructed, rewritten and restructured as *otherwise* (*de outra forma, 'em prisma novo')* through poetry. Amaral herself writes in a later essay that the *mapa de viagem* of this poem, 'sendo o mapa da poesia, era também o do corpo e do amor, ou seja, o da vida, transposta em poesia' (Amaral 2017a: 244). Here, and in the above stanzas, Amaral highlights the importance of *fingimento* – a Pessoan term most often discussed in relation to the poem *'Autopsicografia'* and variously translated as 'feigning', 'lying', 'pretending', 'inventing' and 'faking' (Miranda 2017: 81-2) – to the deconstructive power of the poetic form. [89] In the same essay, Amaral writes that poetry allows one to 'pensar e sentir dentro da língua':

> É disso que se trata: trabalhar, na famosa formulação deleuziana, uma língua estrangeira, desfamiliarizada, desconhecida mas reconhecível – ou construir muitas línguas dentro de uma língua. Três eixos, ténues fios de orientação: o alfabeto, com maior ou menor variação, é sempre aquele com que falamos e escrevemos no espaço do mundo e da experiência; os limites da gramática, disponíveis que estão para ser transgredidos, não deixam de ser limites, fronteiras que, se totalmente transpostas, incorrem na passagem para a terra da incompreensibilidade; as formas são coreografias, ditadas não só por quem escreve, mas também pelo tempo em que se escreve; finalmente, de vez em quando, ou de séculos em vez, o salto no vazio do tempo acontece: as formas

[89] In her essay, Amaral considers the relationship between life and poetry, opening the essay with reference to Pessoan *fingimento*. Amaral's adoption of Pessoa in this and other poems – such as 'Fingimentos Poéticos' and 'Soneto Científico a Fingir' (Inversos 151, 215) – highlights the textuality and performativity of poetry.

> mudam, a colocação da voz altera-se, revê-se o papel e os sentidos da palavra poética. (Ibid., 244-245)

In poetry, the ‘mapa de viagem’ (along with the social and literary forms and structures that the map represents) becomes redundant because of poetic *fingimento.* In creating a *fingimento* of life and the terms that define it in poetry, in changing the language used to write and textualize life, as Amaral writes, the forms, the structures and the voice of authority and authorship change.

In the opening lines of the poem, the word ‘prisma’, employed so as to suggest another perspective, encourages the association of poetry with disruption or intervention, also bringing into play an element of feminist legacy which represents precisely a disruption of the unquestioned privilege of male writers in the literary canon of love poetry. Not only does the use of the motif of the prism represent a different way of viewing and writing the relationship between the subject and love, but it also recalls the poetry of Dickinson as the word appears (with a capital P) in two of her poems, ‘I see thee better – in the Dark’ and ‘Pursuing you in your transitions’:

> I see thee better – in the Dark –
> I do not need a Light –
> The Love of Thee – a Prism be –
> Excelling Violet –
> […]
> (Dickinson 1960: 662)

> Pursuing you in your transitions,
> In other Motes –
> Of other Myths
> Your requisition be.
> The Prism never held the Hues,
> It only heard them play –
> (Ibid., 662)

In both poems, the prism is characterized by excess. In the first poem the prism is a love that cannot be contained in itself, 'Excelling Violet' even in the absence of light to refract. In the second poem the prism can be read as poetry itself, never containing the hues of its lyric, which exceed the limits of the poem itself. The excess suggested by Dickinson's prism plays into the disruption proposed by Amaral's to suggest a movement of expansion that, in relation to the dynamics of voice in Western canon, creates space for poetic subjects written by women. Both Amaral and Dickinson's poetics incorporate other senses – especially sound, which reflect the specificity of the poetic form – as a challenge both to the ocularcentrism of Western culture and to the problematic gender relations that accompany binary subject-object relations. This means that the refraction and projection initiated by the placement of a prism is not limited to light and colour, but also to that which exceeds the limits of vision. The expansion and refraction, then, involves the proliferation and the radical inclusion of voice – the voice of subjects, the voice of poets and voice in poetic terms. The prism as love and life through poetry is a device for the revelation of these voices – a dynamic that has been present throughout this thesis, in the multiple subjects and now vocal muses of Amaral's *A Génese do Amor,* the dramatic formation of the subject in Branco's *A Despedida de Mi(m),* the revelation of generations of black Brazilian women's voices in Evaristo's *Poemas da recordação e outros movimentos*, and the development of a gendered, feminine voice of religious authority in Prado's prolific poetic production. For each poet, the poetic love of maternal, mystic and amorous subjects has been transformative and expansive; creating new spaces and landscapes for the subjectivity of women.

Positioning love as a prism introduces an element of indirection, holding an intermediary position that enables the retention of two separate, individual subjects within a relationship. This is similar to Irigaray's call for 'relations founded upon a form of indirection or intransitivity. And so: I love to you, rather than: I love you' (1996: 102). Whilst, in this case, Irigaray refers to romantic love, this process of indirection and the act of making room for subjectivity and voice is, nonetheless, also present in the various loving relationships reflected in the poetry covered by this study by Amaral, Branco,

Prado, and Evaristo. As prisms, the different kinds of love represented in this body of poetry project and expand the spaces occupied by the poetic subjects so that intimacy and connection can be played out in a different power dynamic. This change in dynamic allows for multiple self-conscious beings, so that the emerging relationships have tended to be characterized by proximity and the sharing of space rather than the possession of both an object and of the subjective site of the poem.

In ‘Topografias em quase dicionário’, this change is clear, as there are two poetic subjects, each of whom has their own poetic voice, each with their own stanzas, interacting in a way that seems more indirect than a standard dialogue – often touching upon the themes raised by the other voice, or picking up on the same images without directly engaging with the text of the other. The sharing of subjective space is represented by the presence of two voices, and also by the fact that, within the space of the poem itself, the two subjects are distinguished typographically by the use of italics for one subject, and a standard roman typeface for the other. This evades the traditional narrative of the unison of two individuals into one subjective space through love, as is encouraged by ideals of a couple as a single and completed unit, two bodies becoming united, or one body or subject taking possession of a submissive other or object. Irigaray’s description of the ‘two lips’ of the female sex expresses a similar respect for the boundaries between two beings:

> (Two sets of lips that, moreover, cross over each other like the arms of the cross, the prototype of the crossroads *between.* The mouth lips and the genital lips do not point in the same direction. In some way they point in the direction opposite from the one you would expect, with the ‘lower’ ones forming the vertical.) (Irigaray 1993: 18)

As a chiasmus, the two lips represent both a meeting or entrance and a parting or departing and, as such, are a threshold to the body. In viewing the female body as such, Irigaray provides a paradigm of subjectivity based on the temporary encounter of two subjects rather than the sustained encroachment of one subject onto (into) another (an-other). She describes the ‘threshold which has never been examined as such: the female sex’ as ‘[a] remaking of immanence and transcendence’ (ibid).

From this perspective, the proximity of the subjects in ‘Topografias em quase dicionário’ and in the poems addressed in previous chapters of this thesis, allows each subject or voice to become an agent of change in relation to other subjects. The contact that these relationships create is one of positive transformation, and therefore allows for the empowerment of other subjects, rather than the possession (and therefore disempowerment) of ‘others’. In Amaral’s ‘Topografias em quase dicionário’, the two voices of the poem are not gendered. This negates the role of sexual difference in defining poetic subjects and, combined with the presence of two subject voices, subverts the alignment of binary gender roles with the figures of the poet and the muse. This challenge is carried through the rest of Amaral’s collection in the continued reiterations and reconfigurations of gendered subjects.

In changing the structure of subjectivity in this way, Amaral (like, in their own ways, the other poets studied in this thesis) goes beyond alternative poetic representations of women in different relationships. As Amaral expresses in ‘Topografias em quase dicionário’,

> […]
> Diz-se que os gregos
> tinham cinco formas para falar
> de amor.
> Nós temos uma só, onde não cabe
> o quase paradoxo
> de que amor é tudo o que dele sabemos.
> Nada mais
> […]
> (Génese: 10)

Amaral makes it clear that love is a textual construct, defined by the epistemological context of the time of writing about love. Just like the five forms of speaking about love in Ancient Greece, so the present structures of knowledge that rely upon binary oppositions may change over time – and, indeed, given recent developments in gender studies and queer theory, are in the process of changing. To reiterate the paradox with

which I began this thesis, love is, at any given time, at once all of 'o que dele sabemos' and limited to 'o que dele sabemos'. Thus, as our knowledge changes, our language changes, and so we can re(con)textualize love by writing it differently, and by finding new forms and structures for love as language and text. For instance, when we use the word 'love', we tend to think first of romantic love between two people, despite the overwhelming number of different kinds of love (including maternal and mystic) that we experience as affective subjects on a daily basis.

The wide-reaching implications of altering the structures that generate the meaning of a concept such as love are further exemplified in the way Amaral uses the theme of space in this poem. The link between poetic space, subjective space (or proximity) and physical space is underlined through the physical contact described in the poem in a way that prevents the incorporation of one bodily subject into another: '*Os teus dedos traçaram* | *ligeiríssima rota no meu corpo* | *e a curva topográfica…', 'e o corpo* | *reconhece-lhe o toque* | *desses dedos'* (Génese: 9, 12). In these lines, a relation of proximity is maintained where two bodies recognize each other. These lines also reflect a move away from the ocularcentrism of poetry, and thus the problematic dynamics of the gaze, reliant upon the subject-object binary by focusing instead on touch, as we saw earlier in the opening stanzas and Dickinson's 'I see thee better – in the Dark –'. As opposed to the possession of the male gaze, moving towards touch (as in Irigaray's touching pairs of lips) suggests an encounter of two individual subjects in proximity to each other. Using language related to cartography, discovery and physical space to describe a different way for subjects to relate to each other also alters the way we understand terms such as 'rota', 'mapa', 'paisagens', 'trajecto' and 'topografia' which connote the legacy of the literature of discoveries (or the literature of 'discoveries') represented by the work of writers such as Camões. This language also evokes the erotic poetry of Horta in poems such as 'Geografia' in the collection *Minha Senhora de Mim* in which the poet uses topographic language to refer to the exploration of bodies and sexual desire (Horta 2009: 346). In the use of topographic language, then, Amaral evokes both the literature of the discoveries and a body of feminist work that challenges the representation of women in this literary canon.

As Ahmed explains in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* we tend to conflate our understanding of the national body with a particular image of an individual body. She points out, however, that

> [i]t is not the case […] that anybody within the nation could inhabit this 'you'. [This depends] on longer histories of articulation, which secure the white subject as sovereign in the nation, at the same time as they generate effects in the alignment of 'you' with the national body. (Ahmed 2010: 1-2)

I would add to Ahmed's statement that this white subject is also predominantly male, given the tendency to objectify women by feminising territory in national and imperial rhetoric. With this in mind, altering the way in which subjectivity is structured within relationships, as is achieved in Amaral's poem and the works of other writers studied in this thesis, also alters the shape and identity of the 'you' represented by the 'national body'. In Amaral's poem, the routes, landscapes and topographies laid before the reader are not presented within an economy of ownership (of bodies, subjects or land) nor are they described in terms of the subject/object or self/other binary relationships through which the imperial subject perceived and wrote their encounter with the world. Deviating from this binary vision of the world challenges ideals of unity and exclusion that are at the heart of both Gandhi's '*homophilia'* and of the strong link between the rhetoric of love and nationalism or national identity described by Benedict Anderson. Amaral's poem, of course, only represents one response to the restrictive structures of affect and nationalism discussed by Gandhi and Anderson, whilst Evaristo, Prado, and Branco, considered together or apart, represent diverse responses to different representational pressures, ideas of national identity, and racial or mixed-race identities. It is clear that the experiences of womanhood, nationhood, and subjecthood represented by the four poets studied in this theses (and, of course the vast spectrum of experience that is not present in this corpus) are incommensurable in their diversity, but it is also clear that, as Anderson and Ghandi highlight, in terms of identity formation and representation, these poets aim to challenge (diversely) narrow and exclusive definitions of love and affect.

As Yuval-Davis writes, ‘gender relations are at the heart of cultural constructions of social identities and collectivities as well as in most cultural conflicts and contestations. Feminism has raised our awareness of such processes taking place as well as of resistance to them’ (Yuval-Davis 1997: 39). The poetic projects encompassed in the works of Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo do fulfil the two roles of both raising awareness of the existence of structures that restrict the subjectivity of women through damaging relations, and of revising, and resisting, these same structures by constructing poetic subjects that define themselves differently relative to others and to the world around them. In doing so, they may alter the structures at the root of what we understand as ‘the nation’ or ‘national identity’, as the familial and kinship relationships used to symbolize and conceptualize these notions are unveiled as being cultural constructions that can, ultimately, be deconstructed and reconfigured. Yuval-Davis goes on to write that

> Cultures are not just arbitrary collections of values, artifacts and modes of behaviour. They acquire, to a greater or lesser extent, ‘stabilizing properties’ which are inherent in the practices of their social reproduction. These practices of social reproduction are not just processes of cloning, but processes of social interaction in which motivation and desire play their part. As a result, cultural models become resonant with subjective experience. They become the ways individuals experience themselves, their collectivities and the world. (Ibid., 42)

Thus, the values, symbols and behaviours that combine to form the meaning of a nation or a national identity, are formed, and adapt, in part, according to the way in which we relate to each other. This explains why interpersonal relationships figure so frequently in symbols of nationhood. What this also means, though, is that when these relationships are reconfigured, and when subjectivity is experienced otherwise (*de outra forma*), and more freely by a variety of subjects, the values, symbols and behaviours that we associate with nations, and also the limits of what we call a nation, are open to change.

Whilst writers such as Yuval-Davis have already noted the link between relationships and different notions of the nation at a historical and a social level, what has been

neglected is the role of poetry as a source of structural and linguistic innovation in altering paradigms of subjectivity. For the writers addressed in this thesis, poetry provides room to experiment textually with alternative structures for understanding the relationships that we live. The resulting loving subjects are empowering and provide scope for a textual restructuring of relationships that might offer new paradigms of subjectivity that, given the centrality of familial and kinship relationships to our view of the world, have the potential to expand beyond the limits of the poems. As a textual space centred on the drama of subject-formation, the writers studied in this thesis have used poetry to shine a light on the effects of love and relationships in constructing subjects and have used their own representations of affective ties as devices that drive alternative processes of subject-formation. Poems thus become privileged sites for the revision of structures of subjectivity even as these poets are also unveiling the textuality of relationships and love, and the extent to which love and affect exist on two levels: as a text, and as phenomena. The diversity of the corpus of this thesis also highlights the extent to which both text and phenomena are fundamentally shaped not only by gender, but also by race, nationality, community-identity and class, as well as the relationship to the language of the text and counter-text in question.

While the text of love has been constructed around, and has also enacted, the bolstering of male subjects and the continuation of a phallocentric and paternalist vision of literary heritage, Amaral, Branco, Prado and Evaristo have been shown to offer alternative texts. These four poets have developed alternative texts that give space to empowered poetic subjects in a variety of forms to represent diverse experiences of womanhood, subjecthood and authorship. Although love and intimacy are reworked in the texts included in this thesis, they are reworked in varied ways taking into account the racial, national, linguistic, post-colonial and neo-colonial structures in which these poems move. These texts deconstruct restrictive binaries such as male/female, subject/object, us/them, and other paradigms that have characterised restrictive notions of love, authorship and subjectivity for so long, and bringing them together has emphasised the value of shared space and plurality in the range of other forms of identity-formation and affect that these poems open up.

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