

Transformations of Desire:
An Essay on Portuguese Erotic Poetics

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Prolegomena
(What Must Be Said First)

In the subtitle of this essay I use the expression “erotic poetics” instead of “love poetry.” Readers might ask why. I say “erotic” in place of “love” because the phenomena we find are broader, in emotion and sexuality, than what we usually call love. And why do I speak of “poetics” instead of poetry? Because by poetics I mean both the study of poetry and the force behind it, and I am trying among other things to discern the force behind the poems—which is not some hidden meaning, but a matrix, a kind of generating system out of which poems are produced. Poetry from any period is grounded in what came before and what is going on at the time. Metrical forms, kinds of situations, actions and utterances, ways of saying things, all this was a given (with built-in variables), and the poet worked within what he was given, only rarely (until modern times) transgressing its limits. Poetics means, in part, seeing poetry against a matrix. Just as we can only understand a word within its phrase, and a phrase in its wider social context, so too we can only truly see a poem against the background of the social and poetic matrix out of which it sprang. That’s why poetics must be comparative and historical, so that we have a broad frame of reference.

There are eight hundred years of Portuguese love poetry, and some of it bears comparison with anything written anywhere in Europe, especially in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries and during the modern period (from around 1800 to the twentieth century). This poetry deserves to be more widely known, and the present essay is for those who know little or nothing about it—which means nearly everybody—and who would like to read some of the best (the poets I have chosen are almost unanimously considered tops in their respective periods). I have mainly avoided using technical terms, and when I do I try to explain them clearly. An effort has also been made not to burden the reader with references to commentaries and studies, although in the chapter on Camões the extraordinary seventeenth century commentary of Manuel de Faria e Sousa is repeatedly cited. Another reason for the dearth of references is that these are *my* readings of the texts.

Portuguese love poetry should not be taken out of the European context. Outside influences on Medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric—from Provençal, Old French and Andalusí Arabic poetry—are significant, but have often been overstated. Ancient literature and philosophy become an important factor beginning in the Renaissance. And in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and (at the time) modern texts influenced Bocage and Fernando Pessoa. Still, I’ve tried to keep down the number of references.

All the poems are presented in my own English translations, and I also provide the original texts for those who know Portuguese or who, knowing some other Romance language (or Latin), will be able to make some sense of it.

The reader should be warned only that the poetry here is very well written, that some of it is highly erotic or obscene, and that as much attention is paid to the obscenity of Johan de Guilhade and Bocage as to the erotic philosophy of Camões and Pessoa.

Index of First Verses in Portuguese

Johan Garcia de Guilhade

Martin jogar, que gran cousa
 Martin jogar, ai Dona Maria
 Elvira Lopez, que mal vos sabedes
 Elvira Lopez aqui noutro dia
 Vistes, mhas donas, quando noutro dia
 Amigas, tamanha coita nunca sofri pois foi nada
 Cada que ven o meu amig' aqui
 Se m' ora Deus gran ben fazer quisesse

Camões

Os dias na esperança de hũ soo dia
 Como quando do mar tempestuoso
 Quando o Sol encuberto vay mostrando
 Transforma-se o amator na cousa amada
 Pede o desejo dama que vos veja
 No tempo que de amor viver soía

Bocage

A teus mimosos pés, meu bem, rendido
 Não dês, encanto meu, não dês, Armia
 Noite, amiga de Amor, calada, escura
 Se tu visses, Josino, a minha amada
 Não lamentos, ó Nise, o teu estado
 Dizen que o rei cruel do Averno imundo

Fernando Pessoa

Passei toda noite, sem dormir, vendo, sem espaço, a figura dela (Alberto Caeiro)
 Vem sentar-te commigo, Lydia, à beira do rio (Ricardo Reis)
 O meu sentimento é cinza (Fernando Pessoa)
 Dorme enquanto velo (Fernando Pessoa)
 Meu pobre amigo, não tenho compaixão que te dar (Álvaro de Campos)

Index of First Verses in English

Johan Garcia de Guilhade

Martin the strummer, what a bummer
 Lady Maria, Martin the strummer
 Elvira Lopez, how little you're able
 Elvira Lopez, here, the other day, poor thing
 You saw, my ladies, when the other day
 Friends, I haven't suffered such sorrow since I was born
 Every time that my boy comes here
 If God now wanted to do me a big favor

Camões

Jacob served as shepherd seven years
 As when from the tempestuous sea
 When the fading sun begins to show
 The lover is transformed in the thing loved
 Desire, my Lady, asks that I see you
 In the time when I lived for Love

Bocage

Surrendered at your tender feet, my love,
 Do not, my charmer, my Armia, do not cast
 Night, friendly to Love, quiet, dark
 Oh Joe, if you ever saw my girl
 O Nise, please don't bemoan your state
 They say that the cruel King of filthy Avernus

Fernando Pessoa

I spent all night, sleeping, seeing, beyond space, her figure (Alberto Caeiro)
 Come sit with me, Lydia, on the bank of the river (Ricardo Reis)
 Sleep while I stay awake... (Fernando Pessoa)
 My feeling is the ashes (Fernando Pessoa)
 My poor friend, I have no sympathy to give you (Álvaro de Campos)

Chapter 1
Johan Garcia de Guilhade:
Some Other Naughty Thing

Before saying anything about the poetry of Johan de Guilhade (fl. 1240s), a perennial favorite of readers and critics, I should say a word about poetic form, in the sense of shape. And for all the poetry in the first three chapters of this essay (and most even in the fourth) that means strophic form. So what is a strophe? A strophe is a pattern of sound that recurs throughout a song, logically enough, since the words must fit that same pattern throughout. And why not just say “stanza?” “Strophe” is an ancient Greek word, while “stanza” is more modern, coming from Italian, but there is not much difference between them. Still, “strophe” referred to such patterns as they occurred in ancient Greek songs, while “stanza” was from the beginning used to refer to written poetry, so I prefer the word “strophe” for the medieval songs I will be discussing in a moment, and will continue to use it throughout the essay, even when “stanza” might be more appropriate, since the poetry of Camões, Bocage, and Pessoa was meant to be read or heard read, not to be heard as a musical performance.

The very earliest and simplest strophic form in European literature—found, of course, in Greek—is aab. A unit *a* is followed by a metrically identical unit *a* and this in turn is followed by a unit of another design, called *b*. If we add rhymes and make *b* a refrain we come up with a form like this:

I saw her at the end of day
she looked at me, then ran away
and I was sad.

But she came back that very night
and kissed my lips, and held me tight,
and I was sad.

The initial two verses, which rhyme with one another, form the body of the strophe and are often called a distich (Greek for “two verses”), while the third verse (the *b* element), metrically different from those in the distich, is called a refrain because it is repeated exactly in both strophes. When we write the form of a strophe the refrain is designated by a capital B. So the form above is aaB with rhymes (whereas in ancient Greek the form was aab without rhymes). We could also note that the verses in the body of the strophe (as I call it) have eight syllables each, while the refrain has four. So we could designate this form as aaB, with a syllable count of 8-8-4, an a-rhyme *-ay*, and a B rhyme *-ad*. This is exactly the sort of form we’ll be looking at in a moment.

Inside the form of the strophe, as if against a grid, action and emotion are expressed by words. To the use of language to perform an action or express a feeling I give the name rhetoric. The study of action, including persons, situation, acts and emotion, I call pragmatics. Form, pragmatics and rhetoric were tightly interwoven in the earliest Galician-Portuguese lyric. And despite lingering debate over the origins of this school, there must have been a native tradition of song that included three kinds (or *genres*, to use the consecrated French word) of poetry: love-lyric with a male voice; love-lyric with a female voice; and the lyric of insult and mockery (note that “lyric” has nothing to do with sweetness). It is in the female-voiced poetry that we find the best evidence for origins, especially (but not only) in the frequent use of aaB in the earliest

period. But in whatever genre we find aaB, we can see intimate interconnections among form, pragmatics and rhetoric.

Two songs of insult by Johan Garcia de Guilhade illustrate these interconnections with shocking clarity. As you read them, bear in mind that in this genre what we find are poetic imitations of insults (almost never real ones), and that they are (nearly) always meant to be comical (*CEM* nos. 207-208).

Cantigas de Mal Dizer

Martin jograr, que gran cousa:
ja sempre convosco pousa
vossa molher.

Veedes m' andar morrendo,
e vós jazedes fodendo
vossa molher.

Do meu mal non vos doedes,
e moir' eu, e vós fodedes
vossa molher.

Martin jograr, ai Dona Maria,
pousa convosco ja cada dia
e lazero m' eu mal.

Ando morrend' e morrendo sejo
e el ten sempr' o cono sobejo,
e lazero m' eu mal.

Da mha lazeira pouco se sente;
fod' el bon cono e jaz caente,
e lazero m' eu mal.

Martin the strummer, what a bummer,
She's always lying with you—
Your woman.

You see *me* here dying,
and *you* lie there fucking
Your woman.

You don't care about *my* pain,
and I die, and *you* just fuck
Your woman.

Lady Maria, Martin the strummer
lies with you now every day

and I'm in pain.

I keep dying, I'm nearly dead,
and he always has plenty of cunt
and I'm in pain.

He doesn't care about my pain:
He fucks good cunt, basking in the heat,
and I'm in pain.

These songs are literary parodies. They heap scorn on the typical “courtly love” poem, in which a man woos a woman of a higher social class, often often the wife of a lord, praising her virtues and lamenting her inaccessibility. Here Guilhade sings instead of the sexual desirability of the wife (or woman) of a man who stands socially beneath him, a minstrel (*jograr*), Guilhade being a knight (*cavaleiro*), and moreover one in the service of a powerful family. And instead of lauding the lady's beauty, intelligence and moral qualities, he sings the praises of her *bon cono* (“good cunt”). Yet still he pretends to maintain the pose of a wronged lover for whom his lady has no mercy (or at any rate, not enough *bon cono* to go around).

Obscenities are placed with great care. In the first poem, addressed to the woman's man or husband, forms of the verb “fuck” *foder* (*jazedes fodendo* and *fodedes*) occur at the end of the second verse just before the refrain in the last two strophes (vv. 5 and 8).

jazedes fodendo

fodedes

The careful collocation of crude words is a regular feature of the rhetoric of this genre. Here, as in antiquity, the art of the comic insult requires setting up the punch line and delivering it in climactic position in the form.

Yet another kind of emphasis is placed on these phrases, since they contain transitive verbs, and so need a direct object, and the connection of verb with object occurs precisely at the transition from the body of the strophe to the refrain. The verb in each case is “you fuck” and the object is “your woman.” So much for courtly love. But crudeness is required by the rules of the game. This kind of poem, the *cantiga de maldizer*, by definition employs open obscenity.

In the second poem in the sequence he addresses the woman. He complains that while he is suffering the mortal pains of love, *Martin Jograr* “always has plenty of cunt” (second strophe) and “fucks good cunt and lies there steaming” (third strophe). And here the word *cono* (“cunt”) repeats in the same position as *foder* (“fuck”) in the first poem—at the end of the distich, just before the refrain in each of the last two strophes.

It could be asked if the poet is not in some fashion praising the woman. But could a man use this kind of language about a woman he meant to praise? That may seem theoretically possible, but in this context the conventions of the genre rule it out, since insults are obligatory and thus apparent praise can only be ironic. In both songs,

then, the poet insults both *Martin Jograr* and *Dona Maria*, even as he pretends to be praising the “lady” and envying her man.

This mini-sequence, though not exactly a tribute to courtly love, certainly depends for the success of its humour on the audience’s familiarity with the conventions of love at court, insofar as it was represented in literature during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by authors composing in Occitan, French, and Galician-Portuguese. It specifically mocks the local variety of male-voiced love lyric, the *cantiga d’amor*, a genre which even its greatest modern editor, Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, called “monotonous.” The Galician-Portuguese poets who practiced this genre (and Guilhade was one of them) managed to talk about male desire and female attractiveness in a kind of code in which, for instance *ben*, a noun literally meaning “good,” could refer euphemistically to the female genitals, and *fazer ben*, literally “to do good,” “to do a favor,” can mean “to grant sexual favors.” So in effect Guilhade is saying openly what the *cantiga d’amor* often says in elaborately round about ways. And the parody, including both the use of aaB (extremely rare in the *cantigas d’amor*) and blunt sexual obscenity (absolutely forbidden there), forms part of a poetic game that the poets played with the genres they inherited.

The closely related *cantiga d’escarnho* or “song of mockery” uses indirect means to deliver the insult. There obscenity is basically banned, and yet highly sexual and even obscene things can be said surreptitiously. Guilhade provides two splendid examples in another pair of poems (*CEM* nos. 205-206, slightly modified).¹

Cantigas d’Escarnho

Elvira Lopez, que mal vos sabedes
vós guardar sempre daqueste peon
que pousa vosco e á coraçon
de pousar vosc’, e vós non lh’ entendedes;
ei mui gran medo de xi vos colher
algur senlheira e, se vos foder,
o engano nunca lho provaredes.

O peon sabe sempr’ u vós jazedes
e non vos sabedes dele guardar:
si quer poedes <en> cada logar
vossa maeta e quanto trajedes;
e dized’ ora, se Deus vos pardon,
se de noite vos foder o peon,
contra qual parte o demandaredes?

Direi vos ora como ficaredes
deste peon que trajedes assi
vosco pousando aqui e ali
e vós ja quanto que ar dormiredes
e o peon, se coraçon ouver
de foder, foder vos á, se quiser,
e nunca del o vosso averedes.

¹ In the translation I have rendered *peon* (a common or low-class person, a “pawn”) by “clone” in order to maintain both the condescending tone and the rhyme-sound. This is admittedly taking a license, but I hope with comic effect.

Ca vós diredes: “Fodeu m’ o peon!”
 e el dirá, “Bõa dona, eu non!”
 e u las provas que <vós> lhi daredes?

Elvira Lopez aqui noutro dia,
 se Deus mi valha, prendeu un cajon:
 deitou na casa sigo un peon
 e sa maeta e quanto tragia
 pos cabo de si e adormeceu
 e o peon levantou s’ e fodeu
 e nunca ar soube del contra u s’ ia.

Ante lh’ eu dixi que mal sen faria
 que se non queria dele guardar
 <e> sigo na casa o ia jeitar
 e dixi lh’ eu quanto lh’ end’ averria,
 ca vos direi do peon como fez,
 abriu a porta e fodeu ña vez
 <e> nunca soube del sabedoria.

Mal se guardou e perdeu quant’ avia
 ca se non soub’ a cativa guardar,
 leixô-o sigo na casa albergar
 e o peon fez <como> que dormia
 e levantou s’ o peon traedor
 e, como x’ era de mal sabedor,
 fodeu a toste e foi logo sa via.

E o peon viron en Santaren
 e non se guarda nen dá por én ren,²
 mais lev’ o demo quanto én tragia.

Elvira Lopez, how little you’re able
 to keep up your guard against this clone
 who reposes with you, and would just love
 to *repose* with you, and you don’t seem to get it,
 and I’m really afraid, if he grabs you there
 and fucks you over alone somewhere,
 that you won’t ever be able to prove the trick.

This clone always knows where you spend the night
 and you just can’t seem to keep up your guard,
 why you even put down any old where
 your special package and all you’ve got
 and now tell me this, so help you God,

² The almost certain emendation *guarda* is due to Nobiling 1907. One manuscript has *auãda* while in the other the word is missing. Monaci 1875 had ventured *avanta*, which was accepted by Lapa 1970.

if, by night, the clone should fuck you over good,
against whom will you be filing suit?

I'll tell you how you'll end up
with this clone, that you hold so dear,
reposing with you, both there and here,
and eventually you'll have to sleep a bit,
and the clone, if he's eager
to fuck, if he likes, will fuck you over,
and you will never recover any of it.

Cause you will say, "I've been fucked over by the clone!"
And he will say, "Lovely Lady, not I, I own,"
and where's the evidence you can adduce?

Elvira Lopez, here, the other day, poor thing,
so help me God, had a mishap second to none:
into her house she invited this clone,
and her special package and all she was carrying
she put down and fell asleep, and, wow,
the clone leapt up and fucked her over somehow
and she never did find out where's he'd been heading.

But earlier, I told her she'd be crazy,
that she couldn't always be on her guard,
and she was going to let him stay in her backyard
and I told her what would happen – nothing amazing –
'cause I'll tell you what the clone did, klutz,
he opened the door, fucked her over once,
and she never knew anything more of his doings.

She didn't keep guard, and lost all she was keeping,
'cause the poor girl just couldn't stay on guard,
she let him stay in her own backyard,
and the clone just made believe that he was sleeping
and then this traitor clone arose
and knowing what every evil-doer knows,
he fucked her over good and went off skipping.

And they saw the clone in Rittenhouse Square,³
he's not on his guard; he just plain couldn't care,
but he was clean, not a goddam thing on him.

Here we find an apparently simple sequence of events. In the first text the speaker warns Elvira Lopez to be careful of a certain *peon*, an insignificant person. In the second, he says, "I told you so." But the texts are laden with sexual symbolism,

³ Rittenhouse Square is in central Philadelphia. The sense is that the man (*peon*) doesn't care about being seen in a very public place, such as Santarem, which was often home to the (still ambulatory) Portuguese court.

such as the woman's *maeta*, her bag, or as we might say, "suitcase" or "luggage", which symbolizes her sexual organ (hence my rendering "special package" in the translation). On the other hand, the one apparently obscene word, *foder* ("fuck"), is used here to mean "steal from."⁴ So what might not appear obscene (the *maeta*) is indeed sexual, while what is apparently sexual (*foder*) is used at the primary level as non-sexual slang ("to rob"), and with that meaning does not violate the convention that forbids obscenity in a *cantiga d'escarnho* (a poem that uses obscene words to mock or insult is a *cantiga de mal dizer*). These two songs give a good idea of the rhetorical craft of the whole school in larger forms (such as strophes of seven verses). And once again we find the verb *foder* in key positions: in the first poem it is used in the sixth (penultimate) verse of the first two strophes, twice in the sixth verse of the third strophe, and then in the first verse of the *fiinda* (the small concluding section). In the second poem we find it again in the sixth verse of the first two strophes, then in the seventh (last) verse of the third (but not in the *fiinda*). The effect is that at the same climactic point in each strophe the verb recurs, each time meaning both "rob" and "fuck." And the last occurrence of the verb is saved for the last verse of the last strophe of the second song.

Throughout this mini-sequence the rhetoric makes careful use of legal language, especially in the first poem, where the final verse of each strophe contains a legal turn of phrase:

- I: "that you won't ever be able to prove the trick."
- II: "against whom will you be filing suit?"
- III: "and you will never recover any of it."
- IV: "and where's the evidence you can adduce?"

This strategy is designed to maintain the pretense that the subject of the poems is theft—a future theft, in the first text; a past theft, in the second—which would maintain the illusion that *foder* merely means "to rob" and not "to fuck" in all its occurrences in the two *cantigas*. And in the *fiinda* of the second poem the alleged theft is again referred to in the final phrase: "but he was clean, there was nothing on him."⁵ With nearly geometric precision in the positioning of obscenity, the poet superimposes a sexual level on the legal question of theft in order to construct a sustained piece of comic mockery.

Cantigas d' Amigo

The *cantigas d' amigo* takes place in a world of female speech and action. The speaker is nearly always a girl, her mother, or the girl's girl friend, (the boy speaks only in dialogs with the girl) and the subject is always something called *fala* ("talk"), which is not quite equivalent to our "wooing" since usually only a man can be the subject of the verb "woo," whereas the girl, her mother, or her girl friend can "talk." Talk, in this sense, means negotiations for marriage, though marriage is hardly ever mentioned. And although the speaking persona always performs an action or expresses an emotion (or both) related to these negotiations, sexuality itself is always talked about indirectly: by code-words, such as "see" (*veer*), "talk" (*falar*), "do a favor" (*fazer ben*); by symbolism

⁴ This was first noted by Nobiling 1907: 4.

⁵ This phrase was misunderstood by Lapa (1970), but the expression, easily paralleled, means that the *peon* ("clone") "had nothing," that is, he had no incriminating evidence (of the alleged theft) on his person.

(in a few dozen songs); and by the general logic of what is said. But here again Guilhade differs from the rest (Cohen no. 6).

Vistes, mhas donas, quando noutro dia
o meu amigo comigo falou,
foi mui queixos' e, por que se queixou,
dei lh' eu enton a cinta que tragia,
mais el demanda m' i outra folia.

E vistes que nunca tal <cousa> visse:
por s' ir queixar, mhas donas, tan sen guisa,
fiz mi tirar a corda da camisa
e dei lh' eu dela ben quanta m' el disse,
mais el demanda mh al, que no<n> fexisse.

Sempr' averá don Johan de Guilhade,
mentr' el quiser, amigas, das mhas dōas,
ca ja m' end' el muitas deu e mui bōas;
des i terrei lhi sempre lealdade,
mais el demanda m' outra torpidade.

You saw, my ladies, when the other day
My boyfriend talked with me
He complained a lot, and since he complained
I gave him the belt that I was wearing,
But now he asks for some other foolish thing!

And you saw what I wish you hadn't seen:
Since, my ladies, he complained so recklessly
He made me take the string out of my shirt
And I gave him as much of it as he wanted,
But now he asks for something else he shouldn't!

Sir Johan de Guilhade will always have
Gifts from me, friends, as long as he likes,
'Cause he's already given me many fine ones,
And so I'll always be loyal to him,
But now he demands some other naughty thing!

The girl in his poems alludes rather clearly to sexual activities. And this is a perfect example. When they were “talking”, the girl gave the boy her belt (or sash), but he demanded “some other folly”, a thinly veiled reference to sexual favors.

The gift of a belt, sash (or girdle), symbolizing sexual surrender, was common enough in ancient poetry.⁶ A Roman fresco shows a man and a woman together in a room. Standing near him, she holds a belt. He sits on a chair, nude, reaching out his hand to take the belt from her.⁷ In the *cantigas d'amigo* only a dozen poems refer to gifts, yet six of them are by Guilhade, and five (4, 5, 6, 8, 17) mention a “belt”. So we

⁶ See, for instance, Homer, *Odyssey* 11.245; Pindar, *Olymp.* 6.39; Catullus 2.13, 61.52-53, 67.28.

⁷ A reproduction can be found in Duby & Perrot 1993: 513.

can be confident of the symbolism. And, curiously, the girl says the boy does have exclusive rights to her thanks to the many gifts he has given (v. 14). So with the exchange of gifts on repeated occasions the boy and girl are confirming their commitment to one another and to the prospect of marriage. But the boy wants to go too far, evidently thinking that his gifts have earned him the right to engage in sexual activities with the girl. What these are we can't know. Take the expression "something else, that he shouldn't" (v. 9), which hovers between two opposite poles: the belt, an acceptable gift, since it is merely symbolic, and "some other foolish thing" (*outra folia* v. 5), or "some other naughty thing" (*outra torpidade* v. 15), which are kinds of trade-off that she rejects out of hand. The girl (and the poet) is teasing the audience by means of this lexical elusiveness, which merely hints at the kind of sexual acts the boy wants. We can infer only that they are something nice girls just don't do.

In its form, *abbaa*, this *cantiga* is not typical of its genre, since it has no refrain and so qualifies as a *cantiga de maestria* (master song). The next has a much more traditional form (Cohen no. 7).

Amigas, tamanha coita nunca sofri pois foi nada,
e direi vola gran coita con que eu seja coitada:
amigas, ten meu amigo
amiga na terra sigo.

Nunca vós vejades coita, amigas, qual m' oj' eu vejo,
e direi vos a mha coita con que eu coitada seja:
amigas, ten meu amigo
<amiga na terra sigo>.

Sej' eu morrendo con coita, tamanha coita me filha,
e direi mha coita é coita que trag' a gran maravilha:
amigas, ten meu amigo
<amiga na terra sigo>.

Friends, I haven't suffered such sorrow since I was born,
And I'll tell you the great sorrow that's made me sad:
Friends, my boyfriend has
A girl with him where he is.⁸

May you never feel sorrow, friends, such as I feel,
And I'll tell you my sorrow, that's made me so sad:
Friends, my boyfriend has
A girl with him where he is.

I'm dying with sorrow, such great sorrow grips me,
And I'll tell you my sorrow is sorrow I can't handle:
Friends, my boyfriend has
A girl with him where he is.

⁸ Literally, "with him in the land."

In addition to the girl, her mother, the girl's girl friend and the boy, there is a persona who plays an important role in the world of the *cantigas d'amigo* but is almost never seen onstage: the other girl.⁹ The developing oral contract between girl and boy forbids any "talking" with another (boy or girl), and there is good evidence that such a violation of contract gave the offended party the right not only to break off the negotiations (*fala*) but even to take revenge—and this right is reflected in medieval Portuguese compilations of oral law (*foros*), as well as in Germanic legal codes. Short of revenge, the girl can renounce the boy for speaking with (let alone loving) another girl. Here, Guilhade's girl does none of that, though in other poems she shows herself capable of a good insult. She merely laments the fact, describing her suffering and mentioning the cause in a delicate way: "My boy has a girl with him." And this mention of the other girl comes in the refrain, again showing the tendency to place the most significant thematic material in the most privileged positions of the poetic form (at the ends: the end of the body of strophe and the refrain).

This poem seems to consist of nothing but a lament that the boy has another girl, but let's glance back. In the immediately preceding song the girl refused to give the boy what he wanted, that "naughty thing." Now he has found a another girlfriend. Might this be pressure that he is applying to get what he wants? *Cantigas d'amigo* by other authors suggest that this could be the case. If that were so, the density (so to speak) of the "plot" would be greater. There is in addition compelling evidence that all twenty-two of Guilhade's compositions in this genre form one large sequence, so we probably should read each poem in the context of the others, even if they are not organized as a drama.¹⁰ That would give this poem more point, since we know that the girl knows that she has lost the boy because she would not yield to his requests for amorous favors, for "another naughty thing," whatever that might be.

Guilhade is famous for his sense of humor. In another of his songs the girl states the conditions under which she will believe her boy's protestations of love (Cohen no. 15).

Cada que ven o meu amig' aqui
 diz m', ai amigas, que perd<eu> o sen
 por mi, e diz que morre por meu ben,
 mais eu ben cuido que non ést' assi,
 ca nunca lh' eu vejo morte prender
 nen o ar vejo nunca ensandecer.

El chora muito e filha s' a jurar
 que é sandeu e quer me fazer fis
 que por mi morr', e, pois morrer non quis,
 mui ben sei eu que á ele vagar,
 ca nunca lh' eu vejo morte prender
 <nen o ar vejo nunca ensandecer>.

Ora vejamos o que nos dirá,
 pois veer viv' e pois sandeu non for;
 ar direi lh' eu: "Non morrestes d' amor?"
 mais ben se quite de meu preito ja,
 ca nunca lh' eu vejo morte prender

⁹ On the other girl, see Cohen, forthcoming (chapter 6).

¹⁰ Cohen 1996.

<nen o ar vejo nunca ensandecer>.

E ja mais nunca mi fará creer
que por mi morre, ergo se morrer.

Every time that my boy comes here
He tells me, oh friends, that he's gone crazy
For me, and says he's dying for my favors,
But I don't really think that this is so,
Because I never see him die
And I don't ever see him lose his mind.

He cries a lot and begins to swear
He's lost his mind, and he'd have me believe
That he's dying for me, and since he's not dead
I just think he's taking his sweet time,
Because I never see him die
And I don't ever see him lose his mind.

Now let's see what he'll say to us
When he shows up alive and hasn't lost his mind,
And I'll say to him, "Haven't you died of love?"
But he can forget about anything with me,
Because I never see him die
And I don't ever see him lose his mind.

And he will never make me believe
That he's dying for me, unless he dies.

The girl's boyfriend says his is dying and going crazy, but he never seems fully to do either. If he were telling the truth he would go mad and die. When he shows up, sane and breathing, she will say, "What, aren't you dead yet?" Since his being alive is proof of his falsity, she formally renounces him (v. 16). He cannot be trusted. This is a parody of another courtly love them, "dying of love"—and also of losing one's mind with desire for the beloved. In his usual fashion, Guilhade defies the conventions of the genre and mocks the poetic practice of his time.

Cantiga d' Amor

The average *cantiga d' amor* tends to say more or less the same thing. Poetic invention is shown in form and rhetoric, but not normally in pragmatics. Usually the man woos the woman, praising her beauty, swearing his fidelity and love-service, complaining of his suffering and her cruelty, and directly or indirectly asking for amorous favors. Sometimes he may be leaving or coming back, a few times he gets angry and renounces her, so there is some variety. But what poets mainly aim at is elegance of form and subtlety of argument in handling a few fairly fixed kinds of situation. Rare is the poem in this genre that stands out for the situation it represents. But this one is unique:

Se m' ora Deus gran ben fazer quisesse,

non m' avia mais de tant' a fazer:
 leixar-m' aqui, u m' ora 'stou, viver,
 <e> do seu ben nunca m' el outro desse,
 ca ja sempr' eu veeria d' aquí
 aquelas casas u mha senhor vi,
 e catá-la<s>, ben quanto m' eu quissese.

Daqui vej' eu Barcelos e Faria,
 e vej' as casas u ja vi alguen,
 per bõa fe, que me nunca fez ben,
 vedes por que: porque x' o non queria.
 E, pero sei que me matará amor,
 en quant' eu fosse d' aqui morador
 nunca eu ja d' el morte temeria.

Par Deus Senhor, viçoso viveria
 e en gran ben, e en mui gran sabor
 vee-las casas u vi mha senhor,
 e catar alá quant' eu cataria;
 mentr' eu d'aquesto ouvess' o poder
 d' aquelas casas que vejo veer,
 nunca én ja os olhos partiria.

E esso pouco que ei de viver,
 vive-lo ia a mui gran prazer;
 ca mha senhor nunca mho saberia.

If God now wanted to do me a big favor,
 He wouldn't have to do more than this:
 to let me live right where I am now,
 and He need never grant me another boon,
 for from here I could always see
 those houses where I saw my Lady
 and gaze at them as much as I wanted to.

From here I can see Barcelos and Faria,
 and see the houses where I saw someone,
 in good faith, who never did me a favor,
 you see why not: she just didn't want to.
 And though I know that Love will kill me,
 so long as I could live around here
 I'd never need to be afraid of death.

By Our Lord God, I'd live merrily,
 and full of joy, and in great pleasure,
 looking at the houses where I saw my Lady,
 and I'd gaze at them as long as I could gaze;
 and as long as I were able
 to see the houses I see now

I'd never take my eyes away from them.

And that little I have left to live—
I'd live it in the greatest joy,
Since my Lady would never even know.

The speaker has gone back to the place where he used to see his Lady and now wants nothing more than to gaze at those houses and remember. Where does this motif come from? How did it get into a *cantiga d'amor*, where references to the physical world are so rare?

A great Portuguese scholar, Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra, once said that there appears to be no Classical influence whatsoever in Galician-Portuguese lyric. But it is just possible that there is a reference here to something Ovid says in *The Remedies of Love* (*Remedia Amoris* 627ff.).¹¹ The master advises the lover who would renounce *not* to return to the places where he had been with the beloved; and that is just what Guilhade says he has indeed done, is doing, and is the only thing he wants to do. We might on the other hand be tempted to see a tinge of real sentimentality in these verses, as though they referred to the poet's life. But if they are literary, does that mean Guilhade had read Ovid? Or might there have been an intermediate source? In any event, this poem seems to put literature at the service of life, in a kind of lapse from wholly fictitious poetry into a rather "poetic" reality.

Johan Garcia de Guilhade represents a highpoint in the development of all three genres, male- and female-voiced love lyric, and the lyric of mockery and scorn. In the normally low-tech *cantigas d'amigo* he makes liberal use of more high-tech forms, parodies the pragmatics and rhetoric of the genre, and constructs a sequence of twenty-two songs organized with a logic that admits of arithmetic proof.¹² So he stands as far as any poet of his school from the traditional social and poetic matrix. And yet even that is not very far. Despite absorbing formal and thematic influences from Occitan and Old French poetry, Galician-Portuguese lyric had its own tradition, its own native forms, scripts (who says what to whom), and rhetoric (repetition with variation, inversion of words and clauses, expansion and contraction of expressions, etc.). And though he tests the limits in all these dimensions Johan de Guilhade usually remains within them and never strays far from them. He is a *trovador* of his time and place, brilliant and original not despite but thanks to the genres he practiced, since they provided him with rules he could wrestle with, forms he could exceed in technical virtuosity, scripts and a rhetoric he could vary, transform and also mock.

We can see from the very different personae he adopts in the three genres that there is no one Johan Garcia de Guilhade: the voices in the songs should not be taken to be his voice, even if he claims a given voice with his own name. This invention of different personae or selves, even of one's own self or persona, is an interesting feature of the Galician-Portuguese lyric and is especially highly developed in Guilhade, who uses his name seven times in twenty-two *cantigas d'amigo*—where the voice cannot be his since a girl is speaking.¹³ We will see in the last chapter, when we look at texts by

¹¹ There may be a couple of other cases, particularly in a song by Osoir' Eanes, where either Ovid or Propertius could be the source. Osoir' Eanes may have studied in Paris, so there would be an explanation. Ovid was also known in the Castilian court at this time, and many poets from Portugal went there during the Portuguese civil war of 1245-1247 (in Portugal there are almost no manuscripts of Classical poetry).

¹² Cohen 1996: 30-31.

¹³ Cohen 1996: 29-34.

Fernando Pessoa, how a poet working in different genres can assign a different voice, different form, style, thematics, to each, and even a different name.

Guilhade's greatest achievement may be his series of twenty-two songs in female voice. The two mini-sequences on *Martin Jograr* and *Elvira Lopez* show he knows how to link two poems thematically in sequence. The twenty-two *cantigas d'amigo* demonstrate his ability to construct an edifice that arches far above mere thematic coherence and to make poetic art into architecture on a fairly grand scale.

Chapter 2
Luis de Camões:
My Matter Wants Your Form

Luís Vaz de Camões (?1524-1580) is widely held to be the greatest poet in the Portuguese language, much as Shakespeare is in English. We know next to nothing about his life except that he got into a brawl, went into exile to the Far East, got into trouble there, was imprisoned then released, and returned poor to Lisbon, where he published his epic *Lusiadas*, received a small stipend from the King, and died in poverty. His lyric poetry far exceeds the epic in quantity, but since there are questions about the authenticity of many poems we cannot calculate the total. Maybe something like ten thousand verses ascribed to him are actually his. At any rate, a prolific poet, who quickly won a reputation in the Iberian Peninsula and was highly regarded throughout Europe. Here I can only give an idea of the range of his sonnets and have chosen ones with different sources—for all poetry in this period had its sources. Sources, and the poems that sprang from them, had become equivalent to the earlier medieval matrix found in Galician-Portuguese lyric. Camões' sources in these sonnets include the Hebrew Bible, Greek philosophy, Roman poetry, Petrarch (1304-1374), and the early sixteenth century Spanish master Garcilaso de la Vega.

But first I should say a word about the sonnet, which appears in Italy in the early thirteenth century and dominates European poetry right down to the dawn of the twentieth. A sonnet is a poem of a single strophe, but paradoxically the form cannot properly be called strophic because the pattern does not repeat (a sonnet sequence would be a strophic poem in the technical sense, in that the strophic form repeats). It begins with a section *a*, which then repeats, forming *aa*. This, in the Italian sonnet, is followed by a part *b*, which is subdivided into *bb*, so the overall form is *aabb*, corresponding to the common Galician-Portuguese strophic form *aaBB* (as in Guilhade 7, above), with the crucial difference that in the medieval *aaBB* form each letter represents a single verse, whereas in the notation of the sonnet that I have suggested, namely *aabb*, each *a* signifies a quatrain (group of four verses), and each *b* signifies a tercet (group of three verses), each with various possible rhyme schemes. Just as with Galician-Portuguese lyric, so too with the sonnet we see a close interrelation between strophic form, pragmatics, and rhetoric. But the sonnet, with its fourteen verses, affords much more space, and the rhetoric can grow accordingly in complexity (which is also true, though to a lesser degree, of the larger strophic forms in the medieval *cantigas*).

Now we go back a few thousand years to what could well be called the oldest book in western culture, a book that did not originally belong to this culture at all, the Hebrew Bible. Since it was adopted by Christianity (and translated into Greek and Latin) it became part of European culture, some would say a fundamental part. During the Middle Ages the Hebrew Bible and the (Greek) Christian Bible were put to myriad uses. Just as medieval representations of Jerusalem are likely to show medieval European cities, medieval and Renaissance uses of the Hebrew Bible reflect the society and culture of Europe during those periods. Here, then, is a love story from an unlikely source, the narrative of the lives of the Patriarchs in the book of Genesis:¹⁴

Sete annos de pastor Jacob servia
Labão, pay de Rachel, serrana bella

¹⁴ The text of most of the sonnets of Camões presented here is taken from Berardinelli 1980, but this one is from Askins 1979: 20, slightly modified.

Mas não servia ao pay servia a ella
E a ella por soldada pretendia.

Os dias na esperança de hũ soo dia
Pasava contentandose com uella
Porem o pay usando de cautela
Em lugar de Rachel lhe dava Lia.

Vendo o triste pastor que por enganoso
Lhe fora assi negada sua pastora
Como se a não tivera merecida,

Tornando ja a servir outros sete anos
Dezia, “Mais servira se não fora
Para tam longo amor tam curt’ a vida.”

Jacob served as shepherd seven years
for Laban, father of Rachel, lovely girl,
but he wasn’t serving him, he was serving her,
and she was all the payment that he sought.

He spent his days awaiting a single day
happy just to be able to gaze on her,
but the father, using a stratagem,
instead of Rachel gave him Lea to wife.

When the shepherd saw that he’d been tricked
and in this way denied his shepherdess
as if he had not really earned her

He began to serve for another seven years,
saying, I’d gladly serve more, if this life
were not so short for so great a love.

Where to begin?—when we are so close to the beginning! Abraham had come from Ur and gone to Canaan. In Genesis 28 Abraham’s son Isaac tells his own son Jacob, “Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddah-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother’s father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother’s brother...”¹⁵ And so Jacob goes. And there he sees Rachel (Genesis 29): “Behold Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep...” Jacob lifts up the stone so the sheep can drink, and before long (Genesis 29.11) “Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.” And here we find the story that Camões retells in his sonnet (Genesis 29.16-30.30).

Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Rachel was of beautiful form and fair to look upon. And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said: “I will serve thee seven years for Rachel

¹⁵The Biblical translations here are taken from *The Holy Scriptures, According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917).

thy younger daughter.” And Laban said: “It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man; abide with me.” And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban: “Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled.” And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went into her. And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid unto his daughter Leah for a handmaid. And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah; and he said to Laban: “What is this thou has done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then has thou beguiled me?” And Laban said: “It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the first-born. Fulfil the week of this one, and we will give the other also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.” And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife. And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her handmaid. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

The seventeenth century Portuguese commentator Manuel de Faria e Sousa (writing in Castilian, as many Portuguese did at the time), cites a poem of Petrarch (*Rime* 206) which alludes to Raquel and Lia (as she is called in Italian). But Camões does not merely allude; he tells the story, briefly and clearly, and with just a few extra touches produces a sonnet that was much admired and imitated in the Iberian peninsula and even translated into Italian (this popularity annoys Faria e Sousa, who does not think the sonnet one of the poet’s best). One move is especially clever: the poet takes a Bronze Age shepherd and transforms him into a courtly lover in a pastoral setting much to Renaissance taste.¹⁶ Camões has several other pastoral sonnets and also composed eclogues in the line of Iacopo Sannazaro (1457-1530), behind whom stand Virgil and Theocritos.

The original story is not very erotic, which is hardly surprising given its context. But in the Hebrew text there is at least one tender (we might almost say romantic) touch: it was “because of his love towards her” (my literal translation) that the seven years Jacob served for Rachel seemed to him like just a few days. Now, the lover’s distorted sense of time (which passes quickly when one is with the beloved, but agonizingly slowly when one is absent) is a theme of European love poetry from the start. But here the Hebrew text says something slightly different: it was not because he was with her (presumably he was not) but because he loved her that the long stretch of seven years’ labor seemed to pass quickly. And this is picked up by Camões “He spent his days awaiting a single day / happy just to be able to gaze on her” (vv. 5-6), where the shepherd lover *is* able at least to see his beloved.

But if the poet took his cue from the account in Genesis, there is a non-Biblical echo in the fifth verse, where Faria e Sousa cites Petrarch (*Rime* 264, vv. 45-47):

Ella l’accese, et se l’ardor fallace

¹⁶ There is a striking parallel in Samuel Usque (1554): “Sabereis yrmãos que eu sam aquelle antiquissimo pastor, que [...] e pelos amores dhũa fermosa pastora sete e sete años nos viçosos pastos de mesopotamia apascentei” [fól. 5v] (“You will know, brothers, that I am that very ancient shepherd, who [...] for the love of beautiful shepherd girl fed my flock for seven and then seven more years in the lush pastures of Mesopotamia.”)

Durò molt'anni in aspettando un giorno...

She set it aflame, and if the deceptive fire
Lasted many years, waiting for one day...

The commentator also cites a verse of the sixteenth century Castilian poet Boscan, which looks more like the direct model: “suffering many days for a single day” (*muchos dias sufriendo por un dia*). At any rate, Camões must have taken this verse from one of these sources or from another like them, here again mixing Renaissance poetics into the Biblical narrative.

An even more striking allusion, overlooked by Faria e Sousa, appears to echo some verses of Propertius (1.19. 25-26):

Quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes:
Non satis est ullo tempore longus amor.

And so, while we can, let's be lovers and enjoy ourselves:
A long love is never enough, no matter how long the time.

Propertius did not invent the phrase “long love” (*longus amor*) but what he does with it is noteworthy: he means that a great love (this is the sense of *longus amor*) doesn't fit into any amount of time, however long. And this is what Jacob implies at the end of Camões' sonnet.

We have seen (if I am right) a classical reference in the sonnet above, though its main source is Biblical. Many Camonian sonnets are based directly or indirectly on ancient Roman poetry. Take his use of the consecrated image of the erotic shipwreck.

Amor, co'a esperança já perdida,
teu soberano templo visitei;
por sinal do naufrágio que passei,
em lugar dos vestidos, pus a vida.

Que queres mais de mim, que destruída
me tens a glória toda que alcancei?
Não cuides de forçar-me, que não sei
tornar a entrar onde não há saída.

Vês aqui alma, vida e esperança,
despojos doces de meu bem passado,
enquanto o quis aquela que eu adoro:

nelas podes tomar de mim vingança;
e se inda não estás de mim vingado,
contenta-te co'as lágrimas que choro.

Love, with hope already lost,
I visited your sacred temple,
And as token of the shipwreck I'd been through,
Instead of clothing I hung up my life.

What more do you want of me, now you've destroyed
 All my glory, the bliss I had attained?
 Don't think you can force me: I cannot
 Go back to a place from which there's no way out.

You see hanging here soul, life and hope,
 Sweet spoils of my past happiness—enjoyed
 While the girl whom I adore was willing.

With these you can take vengeance on me.
 And if you still are not avenged,
 Content yourself with all the tears I'm weeping.

One of the most famous examples of this theme in antiquity is a poem of Horace (*Odes* 1.5) in which the speaker, denouncing a certain (courtesan) Pyrrha, says he is grateful to the god of the sea that he has escaped from love's shipwreck, and that in token of gratitude he has hung up his sopping clothes on the temple wall along with a votive plaque (he also mocks the new lover about to go sailing on the treacherous sea of her love). This ode has enjoyed immense popularity through the ages.

Then again, the influence could have been mediated by this sonnet of Garcilaso de la Vega (Rivers no. 7).

No pierda más quien ha tanto perdido;
 bástate, amor, lo que ha por mí pasado;
 válgame ora jamás haber probado
 a defenderme de lo que has querido.

Tu templo y sus paredes he vestido
 de mis mojadas ropas y adornado,
 como acontece a quien ha ya escapado
 libre de la tormenta en que se vido.

Yo habia jurado nunca más meterme,
 a poder mio y a mi consentimiento,
 en otro tal peligro como vano;

mas del que viene no podré valerme,
 y en esto no voy contra el juramento,
 que ni es como los otros ni en mi mano.

Whoever's lost so much can lose no more.
 Love, what I've gone through must be enough for you.
 It ought to help me now that I never tried
 To sidestep anything you've ever wanted.

Now I've adorned and decked your temple
 And its walls with all my sopping clothes,
 Just like someone who's finally slipped

Free from the tempest where he'd been trapped.

I'd sworn that I would never again
Put myself, if I had any choice,
In any such danger, since it made no sense.

But I can't guard against this coming storm,
And that doesn't mean I'm breaking my oath,
For it's not like the others, nor in my hands.

Here the sopping clothes on the temple wall (v. 5) come directly, still dripping wet, from Horace. One way or another, whether any given classical reference in Camões is based on his own reading of ancient Roman poets or on his reading of Renaissance (and later) verse, his debt to Roman erotic poetics is enormous.

There are, then, cases where we cannot be sure if the source is Renaissance or Classical. There are others where we can be certain that he is drawing on both. Here is a paradigmatic example (text from Askins 1979: 36, slightly modified):

Quando o Sol encuberto vay mostrando
ao mundo a luz quieta, e duvidosa,
ao longo de hũa praya soydosa
vou na minha inimiga imaginando.

Aqui a vi os cabellos concertando,
alli com a mão na face tam ferrosa,
aqui fallando alegre, alli cuidosa,
agora estando queda, e agora andãdo.

aqui movida hũ pouco, e alli segura,
aqui se entristeçeo, e alli se rio
aquí estuvo sentada, e alli me vio,

erguendo aqueles olhos tão esentos,
E emfim <n>estes cansados pensamentos
passo esta vida vãa que tanto dura.

When the fading sun begins to show
The world the calm of twilight
I go walking along a lonely beach
Imagining the one who hurts me most.

Here I saw her, gathering her hair,
There she put her hand to her lovely face,
Here she talked happily, and there grew serious,
Now standing still, and now walking along.

Here she was stirred a bit, and there more proud,
Here she got sad, and there she laughed aloud...
Here she sat down, and there she looked at me,

Lifting up those eyes of hers, so pure.
 And so in these exhausted thoughts of love
 I spend my empty life, which will not end.

This sonnet has a long history. According to Faria e Sousa, its immediate source is Petrarch, *Rime* 112. And reading Petrarch's sonnet we might be tempted to think that it is *the* source.

Sennuccio, i' vo' che sapi in qual manera
 trattato sono, et qual vita è la mia:
 ardomi et struggo anchor com'io solia;
 l'aura mi volve, et son pur quel ch'i'm'era.

Qui tutta humile, et qui la vidi altera,
 or aspra, or piana, or dispietata, or pia;
 or vestirsi honestate, or leggiadria,
 or mansüeta, or disdegnosa et fera.

Qui cantò dolcemente, et qui s'assise;
 qui si rivolse, et qui rattenne il passo;
 qui co' begli occhi mi trafisse il core;

qui disse una parola, et qui sorrise;
 qui cangiò 'l viso. In questi pensier', lasso,
 nocte et dí tiemmi il signor nostro Amore.

Senuccio, I want you to know how
 I am treated, what kind of life I live:
 I burn and suffer now just as I used to;
 The breeze turns me round, and yet I'm what I was.

Here I saw her humble, and here I saw her proud,
 Now rough, now smooth, now ruthless, now kind;
 Now clothed in virtue, now in levity,
 Now tame, now disdainful and wild.

Here she sang sweetly, and here she sat;
 Here she turned round, and here slowed down;
 Here she pierced my heart with her lovely eyes;

Here she spoke a word, here she laughed;
 Here her look changed. In these thoughts, alas,
 Our lord Love binds me night and day.

But this poem of Petrarch derives in turn from some passages of Ovid, one of which Faria e Sousa quotes. He omits, however, to mention these crucial verses from *The Remedies of Love* (Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* 725-728):

et loca saepe nocent; fugito loca conscia vestri
 concubitus; causas illa doloris habent.
 “hic fuit, hic cubuit, thalamo dormivimus illo;
 hic mihi lasciva gaudia nocte dedit!”

And places are often harmful: avoid the places that
 witnessed your passion: those places can cause pain.
 “Here she stood, here she lay down; we slept in that bedroom there,
 here she thrilled me through the lusty night.”

We have already seen Johan de Guilhade gazing at the houses where he saw “someone.” But we could not be sure, in that case, if Ovid’s influence was direct. Here we can be fairly certain since Petrarch does not use the *here/there* opposition that we find in both the Ovidian passage and Camões’ sonnet, where the opposition (*aqui/alli*) is used five times. So Ovid provides the essential situation (the lover returns to the places where he had been with his beloved) and also furnishes some basic rhetorical mechanisms (“here she did this, there she did that”); Petrarch expands these mechanisms, filling much of the poem with “here ..., here...” (ten times in all, with “now..., now...” several times, but without a single “there”); and Camões adds both the beach and the twilight—which Faria e Sousa thinks excellent touches, twilight on the beach being a fine time and place to muse on such memories. And that is what the beloved can become: a sequence of memories. This is the girl who was not there, and who will be as dear to later European poets as she was to Ovid, Petrarch or Camões.

One of the most important influences in Renaissance love poetry was philosophy. Yet in descriptions of this influence we often hear only of Platonism, or neo-Platonism (which tends to refer to the Renaissance Italian variety, and not directly to the Greek neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus 205-269/70 C.E., though there was a direct connection between the two). In the following sonnet, one of the poet’s most famous, there are ideas drawn from various sources. But what exactly is he saying?

Transforma-se o amador na cousa amada¹⁷
 por virtude de muito imaginar.
 não tenho, logo, mais que desejar,
 pois em mim tenho a parte desejada.

Se nela está na minha alma transformada,
 que mais deseja o corpo a alcançar?
 Em si somente pode descansar,
 pois consigo tal alma está liada,

Mas esta linda e pura semideia,
 que como um acidente em seu sujeito,
 assi coa alma minha se conforma,

está no pensamento como ideia,
 e o vivo e puro amor de que sou feito,
 como materia simples, busca a forma.

¹⁷ The text differs from that of Berardinelli 1980 on a few points.

The lover is transformed into what he loves
 By virtue of much imagining;
 I have, then, nothing more to desire
 Since in me I have the desired part.

If my soul is transformed into it,
 What more does the body desire to reach?
 In itself alone it can find repose
 Since such a soul is linked with it.

But this lovely and pure semi-goddess
 Who, like an accident in its subject,
 Thus makes herself the form of my soul,

Is, in the thought, like an idea,
 And the living and pure love of which I'm made,
 Like simple matter, seeks the form.

Faria e Sousa, at the beginning of his extensive annotation (six columns), claims that “the philosophy of this sonnet is marvellous and certain.” According to him, “the argument seems to be that the poet, in the course of his pure love, was assaulted by some lusty desire, and freed himself from this desire by realizing philosophically that he would then be desiring less than what he was really achieving by virtue of true love, which by means of transformation allowed him to attain beloved Beauty at its most sublime.” Here and throughout his commentary he acknowledges that there is a reference to physical desire. Neo-Platonism would transform (or sublimate) such desire, so that the lover desires only Absolute Beauty (a pure “idea” or “form”, taken from Plato), which a beautiful human being can merely reflect (or refract).

In the text, physical desire is introduced only after the speaker has apparently accepted the premise that the lover actually turns into the beloved by mental processes here called “imagining”.¹⁸ The lover therefore has “nothing more to desire” since he already has within himself what he desires. Then he asks: if his very soul has become the beloved, what can the body possibly want? Though Faria e Sousa takes this literally, the poet may ironically be suggesting that the argument is unconvincing, that there is still plenty for the body to desire. The commentator, while claiming that “the poet’s Love described in these poems was Platonic, or chaste, and pure,” acknowledges that “so far everyone has believed that my Poet was lusty.” Conceding that Camões the man may in fact have been lascivious, he asserts that his poems were not—a distinction drawn already in antiquity (in Catullus 16, for instance, where the poet defends himself).

But is the love described in this poem really chaste and pure? Is it Platonic? In the last six verses Camões develops an elaborate argument which undermines both notions. He says the beloved has assumed the form of his soul, like an *accident* in its *subject*. This language comes from Aristotle (not Plato). “An accident of a subject is an attribute which that subject happens to have; it belongs to the subject, but is not part

¹⁸ The source of the first verse is nearly always given as Petrarch “L’ amante ne l’ amato si trasforma,” cited by Faria e Sousa; but he also cites a verse of Cecco d’Ascoli, “Transforma l’ alma nella cosa amata,” which may be the real source. There the context is philosophical, which is not the case with the verse of Petrarch.

of its being or essence.”¹⁹ So far, so good. The beloved, like an accident in its subject, has become the form of his soul. But what happens when the sentence continues in the last three verses of the poem? The beloved is there in the thought like an idea, presumably the Platonic idea of The Beautiful, which does not exist in any single example, is beyond time and space, and can only be contemplated after an arduous climb up the ladder of knowledge (so Diotima explains in Plato’s *Symposium*). But now comes the punch line: the love I am made of, like matter, seeks form. The speaker is made of Desire, he is mere matter—not “passive” matter, as Faria e Sousa says, but rather active enough to do the seeking. So what is the relation between matter and form? Back to Aristotle: “Matter needs form, since when the matter of an object loses its form, the object is destroyed. Matter gaining form is generation, matter losing form is destruction.”²⁰ So in our sonnet an Aristotelian matter seeks a Platonic form? Isn’t that a complicated way of saying that his body wants her beauty? Imagine I were to go up to a woman and say, “My matter wants your form!” In his commentary Faria e Sousa tries to explain neo-Platonic philosophy, which sublimates sexuality; he never suspects that Camões may be using philosophical language to express real sexual desire and not its sublimation or repression.

Here is another poem in which Camões uses the language of philosophy.²¹

Pede o desejo dama que vos veja
 Não entende o que pede esta enganado
 He este amor tam alto e tam delgado
 Que quem o tem nao sabe o que deseja

Não ha hi cosa que natural seja
 Que não quera perpetuo seu estado
 Não quer logo o desejo o desejado
 Porque não falte nũca onde sobeja

Mas este puro effecto em mĩ se dana
 Que como a grave pedra tem por arte
 O centro desejar da natureza

Assi o pensamento polla parte
 Que vay tomar de mĩ terrestre e humana
 Vay pedir tam heretica bagesa

Desire, my Lady, asks that I see you.
 It doesn’t know what it’s asking; it’s deceived.
 This love is so high and so delicate
 That whoever feels it doesn’t know what he wants.

There is no thing in the natural world
 That doesn’t want its state to last forever;
 Thus desire doesn’t want what it desires,
 So that it will never cease spilling over.

¹⁹ S. Marc Cohen, personal communication, 2007.

²⁰ S. Marc Cohen, personal communication, 2007.

²¹ Text from Askins 1979: 124.

But this pure affect is damaged in my case,
 Since, just as it's the way of a heavy rock
 To desire the center of nature,

Just so, my thought, thanks to the part
 Of it that's earthly and all too human,
 Asks you for something so heretically low.

Here again, right or wrong, Faria e Sousa is a good guide to a tough poem. He tells us first of all that the verb *veer* (“to see”) can and often does have sexual connotations (he could not have known that this had been true in Portuguese since the thirteenth century). So Desire asks the lover that he “see” the beloved, that is, that he possess her physically. But it doesn't even know what it wants (v. 2); in fact, in a love such as this a lover cannot know what he desires (v. 4). This might be an echo, direct or indirect, of Plato's *Symposium* (192c-d) where Aristophanes says lovers, if asked, couldn't even say what they really want. Or it may derive from a passage in Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates says, “So he is in love, but knows not with whom; he does not understand his own condition and cannot explain it (255d; tr. Fowler 1995: 501). At any rate, Faria e Sousa takes it to mean something quite different. For him, this not knowing refers to the ignorance of someone who feels lust. Such a person doesn't understand that one must rise above desire for physical beauty and contemplate Absolute Beauty itself in neo-Platonic bliss, as mandated by Diotima.

The second quatrain certainly refers to Plato's philosophy of love. In the *Symposium* (206a10) Diotima says “love has as its object that the good be one's own forever.” The text of Camões alludes to this in asserting that every natural thing wants its state to go on forever (vv. 5-6). This is the first premise. The second, merely implied (vv. 7-8), is that desire will end if it gets what it wants. Once satisfied, it will stop being desire (at least temporarily). The conclusion is that desire doesn't really want what it desires—a manifest contradiction. But Faria e Sousa takes it seriously, as have critics since. Then, paradoxically, despite his neo-Platonic bent, our commentator sees a decidedly sexual sense: “Possession is the death of desire” (*La possession es la muerte de los deseos*). If we give Camões more credit, he is playing with a standard form of syllogism in order to reach the conclusion that desire does not in fact desire. Yet it does, as he tells us in the final tercet. Here he invokes knowledge of gravity, which had not however yet reached the stage of Newton. “Aristotle does not have so much a theory of gravity as ‘natural motions’, with some bodies like earth naturally moving down, and others, like fire, naturally moving up.”²² In fact, stoic philosophers disputed with Aristotle about whether all objects fall at the same speed.²³ Be that as it may,

Each element (earth, air, fire, water) ‘seeks’—i.e., tends to go toward—its
 natural place in the sublunary sphere. This is why heavy things fall, since they

²² Walter Englert, personal communication, 2007, who refers us to *Physics* IV.8.

²³ Gravity, writes S. Marc Cohen, “was unknown in antiquity. On Aristotle's view, everything in the sublunary sphere has a natural rectilinear motion. (Outside that sphere are things whose natural motion is circular).” He also notes that “heavy things are those that tend to move toward the center of the sphere; light things toward the periphery. For more on this, see Aristotle's *De Caelo*, esp. III.2 and IV.1.” (personal communication, 2007). Cicero speaks of gravity in *De fato* xi. See also Lucretius, *De rerum natura* II.184ff.

are made mostly of earth, and so their natural movement is down, toward the natural place (of most) of what they're made of. So when the poet says "it's the way of a heavy rock to desire the centre of nature" he seems to be personifying the rock's state beyond what Aristotle would be happy with. The rock does not have what Aristotle would call a desire (*boulesis*); it merely has a tendency to move toward its natural place.²⁴

In our sonnet the lover's thought, being earthly, sought a "lowness" (*baixeza*), which in one excellent manuscript (which I follow) is "heretical." Here again Faria e Sousa generously helps us read what he elsewhere warns us not to see: a clear sexual reference.

Bien está, si se mira a la inclinacion de la piedra a que se compâra, pues ella busca lo baxo: però mirandose a lo que buscô el deseo lacivo, comparado a ella, y a que habla de lo que buscava en una Dama, no dexa de estar con algun descuido; y pudiera yo dezir malicia, si quando el P. lo dixô se usava la voz baxos de mugeres, que oy se usa; porque para esto no tuviera poca propiedad el dezir que la pidiò baxezas.

This is fine if you consider the inclination of the stone to which it is compared, since it seeks what is low. But considering what it was that lusty desire was seeking, compared to it (the stone), and that he is talking about what he was seeking from a Lady, it's a bit careless; and I might say malicious, if, when the Poet said it, the expression "low parts of women" was current, as it is today. Since for this reason it was indecorous to say that he sought "lownesses" from her.

Immediately afterwards Faria e Sousa concludes, on the basis of his extensive analysis of the sonnet (and of the entire corpus of lyric poetry), that the poet's love was Platonic. But he has just provided a key piece of lexical information: *baixeza* ("lowness") could at that time refer in Portuguese to a woman's genitals ("nether parts"). So the lover here, as in the sonnet above, feels physical desire despite the neo-Platonic poetic regime, and paradoxically uses philosophical language to express his lust. We could reverse what the commentator says about the poet's love in life and in poetry, and observe that whereas we know nothing about his sex life, there is indeed sexuality in his poems.

The next sonnet confirms this.

No tempo que de amor viver soía
Nem sempre andava ao remo ferrolhado;
Antes, agora livre, agora atado,
Em várias flamas variamente ardia.

Que'ardesse num só fogo, não queria
O ceo, porque tivesse experimentado
Que nem mudar as causas ao cuidado
Mudança na ventura me faria.

²⁴ S. Marc Cohen, personal communication, 2007.

E, se algum pouco **tempo andava** isento,
 Fui como quem co peso **descansou**
 Por tornar a **cansar** com mais alento.

Louvado seja **Amor** em meu tormento,
 Pois para passat**empo** seu tomou
 Este meu tão **cansado** sofrimento.

In the time when I lived for Love
 I wasn't always chained to the oar,
 But sometimes free, sometimes tied up,
 In various flames variously burning.

Love didn't want me to burn
 In a single fire, so I could find out
 That not even changing the causes of suffering
 Would cause any change in my misfortune.

And if for a while I was unattached
 It was just like a little bit of rest,
 So I could return refreshed to the task.

Praised be Love, then, in my torment,
 Since as his own plaything he chose
 This exhausted suffering of mine.

Petrarch never talks about having other lovers; for him there is only Laura, even if he occasionally hints that he could be tempted by something else (like Dante near the end of *La Vita Nuova*). But ancient poets like Propertius and Ovid on occasion boast about their many loves (and the many times they've possessed them in a single night). So there is nothing new here, but still a surprise, since your typical poet in this period does not speak in the first person about multiple attachments.

There was a time when the lover lived on love, but he was not necessarily "chained to the oar" (v. 1: though invoking the image of a galley slave, this could be a phallic reference). He sometimes was involved with someone, sometimes on the loose, diving at flames like a butterfly—a fine observation of Faria e Sousa (Camões, following Petrarch, has a sonnet about the butterfly that keeps coming back to the flame). The commentator explains that the poet is alluding to his many flings, remarking that he was being irresponsible, deceiving women to satisfy his own pleasure.

Enter the will of Heaven to explain this flightiness. The powers that be did not want him to burn in a single fire, since by burning in many he could see that love's sufferings do not vary much from woman to woman (cause to cause, in the language of the text). For our commentator there was a plan to prepare Camões for a single neo-Platonic (and therefore real, because unreal) love.

Of course there were, by design, time-outs for rest and recuperation, but then he was back to work. At the climactic moment (in the last tercet) the lover praises love—but why? For having used him as a plaything (an image found elsewhere, as Faria e Sousa shows). He was, in a word, Love's tool. Love used his suffering as a toy to

while away the hours. Unravelling the logic, we could say that his suffering, which exhausted him, was Love's way of spending the hours pleasantly. This doesn't sound too bad.

Repetition, with or without variation, is a regular part of poetic rhetoric since ancient times, was much practiced in Galician-Portuguese, and is common also in the poetry of Camões and his contemporaries. In this poem seven words or elements of words are repeated, and there is hardly a verse of the sonnet that does not contain one of them: *tempo* "time" (vv. 1, 9, 12); *amor* "love" (vv. 1, 12); *andava* "was going" (vv. 2, 9); *agora* "now" (v. 3 twice); *varias / variamente* "various/variously" (v. 4); *ardia / ardesse* "burned/would burn" (vv. 4, 5); *mudar / mudança* "to change/change" (vv. 7-8); *descansou / cansar / cansado* "rested/rest/rested [participle]" (vv. 19, 11, 14). These repetitions (color-coded in the text above) are used with such skill that we might read the poem and barely notice them; but the rhetorical texture is structured around them, and so is the main line of argument: burning in various flames, now this, now that, changing and yet not changing, resting from exhaustion just to exhaust oneself again.

We might ask where, in all this, is the beloved? Where is the "real" woman, or women, of whom the poet sings? In the last poem there are any number of them, too many for any one to be there. On the beach at dusk there was one, but she had vanished and become a sequence of memories. In general the beloved sung by Camões isn't around much, but then she isn't around in Petrarch either, and for a long time her function had been precisely *not to be there*. This doesn't begin with the Provençal troubadours; we find it already in the Roman elegists, whose girlfriends are rarely present (Cynthia speaks sometimes in Propertius). And if the Roman poets already sang a largely literary love, this is doubly true of Petrarch, and triply true of Camões, who must use the tradition to describe erotic phenomena. Whether he draws from the Bible or from Roman poetry or Greek philosophy, these are the materials with which he must build, just like any other poet of the period. His matrix is learned, not oral; his concepts are drawn from Plato or Aristotle, not from medieval custom (as in the *cantigas d'amigo*). But this is merely like saying that we must use words to speak, and that our vocabulary and syntax are different from that of an Old English speaker a thousand years ago. When we love, we cannot invent a new language to express ourselves. And the forms, the language, the concepts through which Camões had to express love and sexuality were as much a given as language. That doesn't mean we can't form the language to our will or that Camões could not transform the matrix into whatever he wanted.

Chapter 3
Bocage:
The Sweet Theater of Tenderness

Manuel Maria Barbosa de Bocage (1765-1805) lived towards the end of the neo-classical age—or it should have been the end, but it lasted well into the nineteenth century in the work of many poets across Europe. Romanticism (though hardly easy to define) is said to be underway precociously in England and Germany in the late eighteenth century, but is thought to begin in Portugal only in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth. For this reason Bocage is regularly called a “pre-romantic,” but in fact some of his later poetry, especially the Letters (*Cartas*) between two young women and a few other pieces, belong intellectually to the Romantic age. Even in his “regular” (not obscene) love sonnets we can see signs of a break with the tradition, sometimes because he is more classical than neo-classical, reading ancient poetry for himself and trying to emulate it rather than imitating its imitators.

In antiquity one fairly common kind of poem was the speech of a lover who tries to return to his beloved after a quarrel or separation. We find many examples of this in many Greek and Roman poetry, fewer in Medieval and Renaissance verse. Here is how Bocage handles the matter (Pires no. 37).²⁵

A teus mimosos pés, meu bem, rendido,
Confirmo os votos que a traição manchara,
Fumam de novo incensos sobre a ara,
Que a vil ingratidão tinha abatido.

De novo sobre as asas de um gemido
Te ofereço o coração, que te agravara;
Saudoso torno a ti, qual torna à cara,
Perdida Pátria o mísero banido;

Renovemos o no, por mim desfeito,
Que eu já maldigo o tempo degraçado,
Em que a teus olhos não vivi sujeito;

Concede-me outra vez o antigo agrado,
Que mais queres? Eu choro, e no meu peito
O punhal do remorso está cravado.

I surrender at your tender feet, my love,
And confirm the vows my treason had stained.
Incense is smoking again at the altar
That vile ingratitude had knocked down.

Again on the wings of a moan
I offer you the heart that had offended you;
Yearning I come back, as the wretched exile

²⁵ Texts and numbering of the sonnets of Bocage are taken from Pires 2004, vols I and VII.

Returns to the beloved country he had lost.

Yield me again the pleasure of old.
What more do you want? I'm weeping, and the dagger
Of remorse is sticking in my heart.

He betrayed her, and now he has returned and wants to reignite their love. He offers an unconditional surrender—he is at her feet (as in Cynthia's fantasy in Propertius 3.3.32: "he'll be at my feet—a late but full revenge" *poena erit ante meos sera sed ampla pedes*). He is ready to worship her again, even though it was he who smashed the altar where he now must kneel (vv. 3-4). "So let's go," he tells her. He offers his heart. It was hell to be without her. What is she waiting for? He's crying; he's *really* sorry.

The intensity of the rhetoric, which began at fever pitch with treason, surrender and smoking altars, rises even higher in the last verse, when he tells her that his remorse is like a dagger stuck in his chest. How can she hold out any longer?! The urgent language of his appeal implies reluctance on her part, understandable given what he has done.

Let's see how the rhetoric is articulated within the form of the sonnet (a non-repeating strophe, remember). In the text below I use the following indicators: **blue**: main verbs; () = subordinate clauses, inevitably expressions of remorse; [] = subordinate clause within a subordinate clause; **red**: renewal; **green**: remorse; **purple**: praise of beloved.

A teus mimosos pés, meu bem, **rendido**,
Confirmo os votos (**que a traição manchara**),
Fumam **de novo** incensos sobre a ara,
(**Que a vil ingratidão tinha abatido**).

De novo sobre as asas de um gemido
Te **ofereço** o coração, (**que te agravara**);
Saudoso **torno** a ti, (**qual torna à cara**,
Perdida Pátria o mísero banido);

Renovemos o no, **por mim desfeito**,
(**Que eu já maldigo o tempo degraçado**,
[**Em que a teus olhos não vivi sujeito**]);

Concede-me outra vez o antigo agrado,
Que mais **queres?** Eu **choro**, e **no meu peito**
O punhal do remorso está cravado.

Until the last two verses all independent verb refer to the speaker's desire to make peace: "I confirm (our vows)", "(the altars) are smoking" (= I worship you again), "I offer (you my heart)", "I have come back (to you)", "let's renew (our relationship)", "Give (me pleasure)." Yet more than half the poem consists of expressions of remorse, contained mainly in relative clauses (indicated above by parentheses). These, together with some praise of the beloved (vv. 1 and 12) are meant to support the request for reconciliation, which is most directly articulated in the first line of each tercet. And in each of the four parts of the sonnet there is a clear verbal reference to love's (hoped for)

renewal, mainly with adverbs: “once again” (*de novo* I, II), “let’s renew” *renovemos* (III), and “again” *outra vez* (IV).

This rhetoric is meant to highlight the poignancy of the situation, one not found in Petrarch or his immediate followers, although it has considerable dramatic density (since it presupposes a somewhat complicated story). Most love poetry in antiquity was in a sense like theater (it represented something like a speech in a drama) and in his love poetry Bocage shows a fitting flare for the dramatic. Here, the portrayal of the moment when an unfaithful lover pleads for reconciliation leaves the outcome in suspense. If the woman says yes, all will be well: they will become lovers again. (In the *Kama Sutra* certain sexual acts which are not normally permissible are allowed when lovers have just been reconciled). But if she says no...? For the lover, what hangs in the balance is his satisfaction; so for him the dramatic suspense is largely sexual, something that can barely be hinted at by Petrarch or Camões.

Bocage’s use of everyday situations, which were the stuff of ancient poetry, sets him somewhat apart from those great predecessors. The rhetoric of his neo-classical matrix is often put to the service of more “realistic” amorous situations (things that really happen). In this next sonnet the lover tells a girl that they can work it out despite her mother’s opposition (Pires no. 106).

Não dê, encanto meu, não dê, Armia,
Ternas lamentações ao surdo vento;
Se amorosa impaciência é um tormento,
Com ledas esperanças se alivia.

A rigorosa mãe que te vigia
Em vão nos prende o lúcido momento
Em que solto, adejando o pensamento
Sobe ao cume da glória e da alegria.

As fadigas de Amor não valem tanto
Como a doce, a furtiva recompensa
Que outorga, inda que tarde, aos ais e ao pranto.

Amantes estorvar que astúcia pensa?
Tem asas o desejo, a noite um manto:
Obstáculos não há que Amor não vença.

Do not, my charming Armia, do not cast
Your tender lamentations to the deaf wind;
If amorous impatience is a torment,
The expectation of joys can relieve it.

That strict mother of yours who watches over you
Tries in vain to forbid us that bright moment
When our feelings of love, free and aloft,
Rise to the peak of glorious happiness.

Love’s cares don’t really matter as much
As the sweet and secret recompense

That it grants, though late, to sighs and moans.

What cleverness thinks it can foil lovers' plans?
 Desire has wings, and the night has a mantle:
 There is no obstacle that Love can't hurdle.

In this poem the rhetoric of consolation and persuasion are intertwined: "Things look grim, but they'll get better. Sure your mother is doing her best to stop us, but she can't. And all this suffering will be worth it—just wait and see! We can infer that the mother has done something to block their plans. The girl is very upset and the man gives her a pep talk. He consoles her and at the same time tries to persuade her to persist, and in effect to work out a way to make love with him. They want each other and can meet under cover of night. There are no philosophical concepts here, just some cultural conventions (e.g. mothers watch over their daughters, young men try to seduce young women). The situation, whether drawn from everyday life or from literature, is again a far cry from what we find in the poems of Petrarch, who never tells Laura they can make love secretly at night!

Even more at variance with the mainstream tradition of his time is this sonnet (Pires no. 136), where the night has come.

Noite, amiga de Amor, calada, escura,
 Eia engrossa os teus véus, os teus horrores;
 Enquanto vou gozar de mil favores
 Sobre o doce teatro da ternura.

Marília, mais gentil, e ate mais pura
 Que as ledas Graças, que as mimosas flores,
 Velando às mudas horas dos Amores
 Receia o casto pejo, que murmura.

Em deleitoso e tácito retiro,
 Suspensa entre o temor, entre o desejo,
 Flutua a bela, a cuja posse aspiro.

Ah! Já nos braços meus a aperto e beijo!
 Já, desprendendo um lânguido suspiro,
 No seio do prazer se absorve o pejo.

Night, friendly to Love, quiet, dark,
 Now thicken your veils, and your horrors;
 While I go to enjoy a thousand pleasures
 Upon the sweet theater of tenderness.

Marilia, more noble and more pure
 Than the happy Graces, than the tender flowers,
 Awake at the silent hours of the Loves,
 Is afraid of her modesty, that whispers "no".

In delightful and quiet repose,

Suspended between fear and desire,
The gorgeous girl I desire is vacillating.

Now I'm holding her in my arms, kissing her!
Now I'm moving her to a languid sigh,
And modesty drains out of her ecstatic breast.

In the *cantigas d' amigo* the girl sometimes tells her mother how happy she is that she is going to see her boyfriend and talk with him. These are essentially pre-rendezvous reports. For instance, a girl might say, "How happy I'll be when I see my boy!" Although there could not possibly be any influence (medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric had not yet been rediscovered), there is a similarity between that kind of situation and this one. But here the lover seems already to be on his way to "the sweet theater of tenderness" when he asks for the aid of Night at the beginning of the poem. Then he apparently arrives. The action shifts (in the final three verses) to the tryst itself and the lover tells us that he is now holding her and feeling her yield herself to him. Here the poet comes right to the moment of love-making. And since he presumably is not writing, busy as he is, we must imagine him speaking to us in the present moment. But then are we not made into voyeurs? In other obscene sonnets (Pires nos. 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 47) Bocage does not stop at the first sigh, as here, but vividly narrates or represents (with direct speech or dialogue in nos. 38, 40, 43, 47) sexual encounters, one of which (no. 43) is interrupted in the middle of round two by the arrival of the girl's father. If the sonnet above is erotic (so much so that it was not published until after the poet's death), those are obscene.²⁶

In the next three sonnets Bocage uses outright obscenity, but not always for what we would call erotic purposes. The first of them follows the procedures of praise in neo-classical (or classical) rhetoric, but deploys obscenity in the tercets. The purpose, however, of these crude words is not to insult, as nearly always in classical and medieval poetry; instead, they seem to mark the climax of the praise. This is not an entirely new function of the obscene, but it goes against an ancient and widespread tradition that confined four-letter words to the poetry of "blame" (mockery, scorn, insult). The speaker is confiding in a friend, as sometimes in ancient Roman poetry, explaining that he is in love and telling why his choice of a girlfriend is irreproachable (Pires no. 35).

Se tu visses, Josino, a minha amada,
Havias de louvar o meu bom gosto;
Pois seu nevado, rubicundo rosto
Às mais formosas não inveja nada:

Na sua boca Vénus faz morada;
Nos olhos tem Cupido as setas posto;
Nas mamas faz Lascívia o seu encosto,
Nela, enfim, tudo encanta, tudo agrada;

Se a Ásia visse coisa tão bonita
Talvez lhe levantasse algum pagode
A gente, que na foda se exercita!

²⁶ We cannot be certain of the attribution of many of the obscene sonnets. They circulated privately in his lifetime and were published long after his death (see the introduction in Pires 2004b).

Beleza mais completa haver não pode;
 Pois mesmo o cono seu, quando palpita,
 Parece estar dizendo: “Fode, fode!”

Oh Joe, if you ever saw my girl
 You’d be bound to praise my sense of taste,
 Since her snowy and blushing face
 Yields nothing to the most beautiful girls.

Why, very Venus dwells on her lips,
 Cupid wields his arrows from her eyes,
 Lustiness is at home in her breasts:
 Everything about her casts a spell.

If Asia ever saw such a lovely beauty
 Maybe those who are worshippers of fucking
 Would erect a temple in her honor.

No beauty could be more completely perfect—
 Why, even her cunt, as it lies there throbbing,
 Appears to be saying clearly, ‘Fuck me! Fuck me!’

The overall rhetorical structure can be summarized as: “if you saw her, you’d praise a, b, c... everything! She is divine! She possesses complete beauty.” This is a generalization of her individual attributes; and it is conclusively proved (in the speaker’s view) by one particular: even her *cono* (“cunt”) seems to invite him. Beginning with v. 9 we find three obscene words: “fucking” (*foda*); “cunt” (*cono*); and the imperative “fuck” (*fode*); so that here again obscenity is used at the climax of both form and rhetoric. The poem ends with a direct quotation, something common enough in sonnets since the thirteenth century, but there is a twist: it is not the girl who speaks, but her pudenda. So the praise of the girl is crowned by the praise of her *cono*, which is throbbing, eloquent, and evidently persuasive.

But is the woman really being praised? Or is the poet making fun of her, even mocking her? If that were so, false praise would be the instrument of mockery, as in the *cantiga* of Guilhade addressed to Dona Maria, in which the poet speaks of her “good cunt” (*bon cono*). There I argued that it was inconceivable that such language could be used for anything except an insult. But the cultural context of the poems is very different. In the social and poetic matrix of Guilhade, no poet could praise a woman by referring openly to the attractiveness of her pudenda. The *cantigas de mal dizer*, however “free” their speech, are not part of a cultural revolution; their obscenity belongs to a poetic genre whose function is to mock and insult. Bocage, however, was part of a cultural movement towards greater freedom of speech (and was imprisoned by the Inquisition). This movement, whose roots lay in earlier political philosophy and which had culminated in the guarantee of freedom of speech in the Constitution of the United States, was gaining momentum in late eighteenth century Portugal, and would briefly triumph—at least in theory—a few decades after the death of Bocage. So his use of obscenity belongs to a very different political, social and poetic context.

Nothing in the poem suggests that the speaker is in any way denigrating the woman he describes. Praising one's beloved to a friend in glowing terms is common enough in ancient poetry (though Propertius and Ovid warn against it, given the potential risks). Here the description goes much farther than was usual, with a few stark obscenities that leap free of the strictures of the traditional poetics of praise.²⁷ But this transgression of normal lexical limits brings the praise to a climax, however obscene the words may be. If something is being mocked, it is not the model Lady in question, but certain modes of poetic expression and their limitations.

Although in the sonnet above obscenity forms part of praise, it was usually used to insult, and this had been its regular function in ancient poetry. But the role of obscene words in a poem can be difficult to interpret when they are not used just to praise or to insult, but as part of a more complex rhetoric. It is not easy to determine the function of obscenity in the following sonnet (Pires no. 23):

Não lamentes, ó Nise, o teu estado;
 Puta tem sido muita gente boa,
 Putíssimas fidalgas tem Lisboa,
 Milhões de vezes putas têm reinado;

Dido foi puta, e puta de um soldado;
 Cleópatra por puta alcança a c'roa;
 Tu, Lucrecia, com toda tua proa,
 O teu cono não passa por honrado;

Essa da Rússia, imperatriz famosa,
 Que inda há pouco morreu (diz a Gazeta)
 Entre mil porras expirou vaidosa.

Todas no mundo dão a sua greta:
 Não fiques, pois, ó Nise, duvidosa
 Que isto de virgo e honra é tudo peta.

O Nise, please don't bemoan your state;
 Lots of good girls have been whores;
 Lisbon is full of fully whorish ladies;
 Millions of times whores have been queens.

Dido was a whore, the whore of a soldier;
 It was by whoring that Cleopatra got her crown;
 And you, Lucrece, for all your prowess,
 Your cunt is not exactly well respected.

And that famous Empress of Russia
 That died not long ago (says the Gazette)
 Died proudly among a thousand cocks.

All the world's women offer up their slot:

²⁷ These had been violated before in erotic poetry, spectacularly by the Italian poet Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) in his *Sonetti Lussoriosi* ("Lusty Sonnets").

So then, O Nise, please have no doubt
That this stuff about virgin honor is all bunk.

The overarching rhetorical structure of this poem has a general form which could be applied to any attribute of the addressee which she herself finds displeasing or troubling. Suppose she possesses the attribute X and has bemoaned this fact to the speaker (as is presupposed here by his opening words). He tells her:

- 1) don't complaint about being X
- 2) many women were X (examples: noble women, queens, an empress)
- 3) all women are X
- 4) don't complain (lament/mourn)

Imagine that she were short. He would tell her, "It's no shame to be short, many beautiful women were." And so on. So this is another *consolatio*. But in this case the problem that the woman has been complaining about is that she is a whore, and though he consoles her it is difficult not to see this consolation as, at least, ironic.

Let's look at the distribution of obscenities within the form of the sonnet.

1 st quatrain	2 nd quatrain	1 st tercet	2 nd tercet
	puta puta	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
Puta	puta		greta
Puta			
Putas	cono	Porras	

The repetition of *puta* "whore" six times in the first six verses is a deliberate rhetorical device, meant to overwhelm the audience (milking for laughs, presumably), and this series culminates in the occurrence of "cunt" (*cono*) in v. 8, at the end of the first part of the poem. Then in the tercets the level of obscenity drops: we find one per three lines, in the last verse of the first tercet and the first verse of the second, and these are new words in this text: "cocks" (*porras*) and "slit" (*greta*). The generalization "whore" is thus followed by specific references to the sexual organs, with the last one (*greta*) probably being the most shocking.

We may ask what "really slutty noblewomen" are (*putissimas fidalgas* v. 3). Was Dido really a whore? Cleopatra? Lucrece?! Catherine the Great (died 1796)? So when he says, "all the women in the world give their crack"(v. 11) would we take that to mean that equal blame (or praise) applies to all? Is to give "their slit" the same as to be a whore? If Bocage is implying that it is, what does he means by "whore?" Perhaps v. 11 means, "In one way or another, all women do it." In any event, the generalization of v. 12 immediately precedes the recapitulation of vv. 13-14: "Have no doubt" (referring back to v. 1). And he concludes: "This virgin/honor stuff is a bunch of crap!"

Now, what interest could the speaker have in saying, "Don't worry about it; it doesn't matter: it's nonsense." Could it be that by dropping her sense of shame (in seeming to herself a whore) the woman may again be disposed to "give her slit." If so, this (like the first sonnet of Bocage above) would be both an act of consolation and an attempt to persuade, and so, in essence, an act of wooing (if we can call it that): a request for sexual favors.

We can suppose that Nise has been saying something like this: "I was a virgin; now I feel like a whore." And this lamentation has a context, which could be precisely

her relationship with the speaker. He, at any rate, is present, knows what she has said, and is now responding. Our suspicion that his attempt to console her is not disinterested is supported by the injunctions at the beginning and end of the sonnet (vv. 1 and 13-14), and the fact that “they all do it” implies a request such as, “So why don’t you also do it?” Perhaps to know if this request could be anything other than insulting we would have to know the nuances of meaning in the word *greta* (“slit,” “slot,” “crack”). Was it, in Bocage’s day, a word that a man could use with his lover?

We could also ask if Bocage, in condemning the stigma attached to the loss of virginity, fornication, and even prostitution, means to convince the woman, by a social and philosophical argument, to make love with him. Or is he mocking such arguments? He does use them seriously in some brilliant longer poems.

The next poem is more theological than philosophical (Pires no. 29):

Dizen que o rei cruel do Averno imundo
 Tem entre as pernas caralhas lanceta,
 Para meter do cu na aberta greta
 A quem não foder bem cá neste mundo;

Tremei, humanos, deste mal profundo,
 Deixai essas lições, sabida peta;
 Foda-se a salvo, coma-se a punheta;
 Este prazer da vida mais jucundo:

Se pois devemos guardar castidade,
 Para que nos deu Deus porras leiteiras,
 Senão para foder com liberdade?

Fodam-se, pois, casadas e solteiras,
 E seja isto já; que é curta a idade,
 E as horas de prazer voam ligeiras.

They say that the cruel King of filthy Avernus
 Has between his legs a cock as big as a lance
 To stick in the open crack of the ass
 Of whoever doesn’t fuck well here in this world.

Tremble, humans, at this profound evil,
 Forget those lessons of yours, well-known fraud,
 Fuck in safety, eat lots of prick,
 This is the most thrilling pleasure in life.

If we’re supposed to live in chastity,
 Why did God give us these sticks full of milk—
 If it wasn’t precisely to fuck freely?

Fuck, therefore, oh women both married and single!
 And do it right away; youth is brief,
 And the hours of pleasure swiftly fly.

The argument parodies a standard religious one: if you don't live a certain kind of life here in this world, you will be punished in the next. But in this case what one ought to do in this world is gorge one's appetite for sexual satisfaction; and, if one does not, the punishment in the next will be to be sodomized by the King of Avernus (the Underworld) equipped with a mammoth phallus, better to inflict the fitting penalty. So this is a kind of *carpe diem* ("seize the opportunity"—i.e. to make love) which mocks the rhetoric both of the Church and of Horace and all the ancient poets (and their myriad imitators) who said things like, "Make love now while you can." The mock lyrical tone of this "thought" is in marked contrast to the rest of the poem, which really culminates in the injunction "therefore fuck" (v. 12). In rhetorical terms, the kind of speech is an attempt to persuade someone to make love. But in this case it is not someone but all the faithful (women) who are being urged to act. And quickly!

Bocage is thought to be the best poet in Portuguese between Camões and the late nineteenth century (Antero de Quental, Cesário Verde, Camilo Pessanha). Many writers learned the forms and rhetoric of neo-classicism, but Bocage's mastery was absolute, and even his earlier poetry managed to subvert the matrix just enough to stand out from the crowd. In his later works, with a quantitative leap, he utterly undermined the traditions of neo-classical love poetry in his pragmatics (choice of personae, situations and actions) by representing desire as a real. We might say that he rescues human lust and emotion from the taboos that had repressed them during centuries. The expression of desire and its satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) are as literary as they had been in ancient times, but what is expressed is not bound by the rules of decorum that had governed the Petrarchan and neo-Platonic schools (which often intermingled). In the "Epistle to Marília" (*Epístola a Marília*) he bases his plea for love on philosophical and political (and anti-theological) principles. In the "Letters of Olinda and Alzira" (*Cartas de Olinda e Alzira*) he provides the most detailed, vivid and intense descriptions of female emotion, desire, and sexual satisfaction that had ever appeared in the Portuguese language—or were to appear until the twentieth century. What we have seen in the sonnets gives an idea of the formal and rhetorical techniques he wields on a much larger scale in those works. But, curiously, neither of those longer poems (the "Letters" run to over a thousand verses) uses any obscenity whatsoever. Yet in many ways they come off as more erotic than anything in the obscene sonnets. The function of obscene words is not necessarily to increase erotic intensity. When they are not used to insult, they tend to diminish the value of the erotic by making it comical. So we may say that one of Bocage's achievements in the sonnets was to use obscenity to intensify and not diminish the degree of eroticism in poetry.

Chapter 4
Fernando Pessoa:
The Lips of Imagining

If Camões used philosophic language to express love and desire, Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) dissolves desire by analyzing questions of knowing and being. Eros becomes epistemology and ontology. But this had not always been his attitude toward love and love poetry. As a young man, using the pseudonym Alexander Search, he wrote verses about love, such as these (6):²⁸

Farewell, farewell for ever
Since love left not behind
Nor friendship nor endeavour
Nor sorrow wild or kind.

Time and again in these juvenile verses he openly expresses his sense of disillusionment (37): “He would be loved and he was not.” Or he analyses the relationship between love and physical desire:

41w
Love is the name
By which lust in ourselves
Travels incognito

A renunciation of all things erotic begins soon to emerge (68): “We would have no sex, we would feel no love,” and yet he seems to know of sexual delights, as when he speaks of (104 xxxiii) “Passions hushed in climax” or (129) “The soul perturbing memory of a kiss.” But the current that seems to run most deeply into his mature poetry is that of (134k) “The inevitable curse of sex / With its unholy and perturbing fire.” In his fragmentary *Fausto* he will write:

O vil e baixa
Porca animalidade do animal
Que se diz metaphysica por medo
A saber-se só baixa

O vile and lowly
Disgusting animal nature of the animal,
Which calls itself metaphysical out of fear
Of knowing that it is so low

Yet already as Alexander Search he seems to be making an effort to transfer erotic phenomena (whether out of disgust or philosophic principles) to the realm of thought, as in this fragment (172): “The thought of her is as + caress / Given on the pale lips of imagining.”²⁹ And just as he wished to provide what he considered his own poetic Renaissance with a metaphysics (“Dar a essa Renascença uma metaphysica,” in Duarte 1994: 53), so he felt he had to base his rejection of love and sex on philosophy,

²⁸ The numbering of the texts of Alexander search is taken from Dionísio 1997.

²⁹ The sign + here indicates a space left blank by the poet.

and here his classical education came in handy. He had Plato's *Symposium*, in which love of the soul is to be preferred to love of the body, love of knowledge to love of the soul, and love of Absolute Beauty, safely out of reach of time and being, is to be preferred to everything. He also had Lucretius, who followed his master Epicurus in rejecting romantic love because it risked perturbation and suffering merely to satisfy an unnecessary (although natural) desire. And, having studied, at least in translation, philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Kant and beyond, he could make general use of the uncertainty of knowledge, the unsure status of being, to question if love exists, if the beloved other exists, if we can really know the other, or for that matter ourselves.

We will look at one poem from each of the main poetic heteronyms that he created: Alberto Caeiro, the modernist bucolic poet writing unrhymed non-strophic poetry, an Epicurean, probably more ironic than most critics allow; Ricardo Reis, composing unrhymed strophic poetry, called a Greek Horace by Pessoa, and who (improbably) draws from a few Horatian odes a timeless sense of letting life go by and not needing to love; Fernando Pessoa (as much a creation of Pessoa as Guilhade is of Guilhade), usually writing rhymed strophic poetry, and in that formal sense more of a classicist than the others (except Reis), always concerned with philosophical problems; and Álvaro de Campos, a Portuguese Walt Whitman early on, then promoted to the preferred spokesman for everything that Pessoa really wanted to write but didn't dare to.

We begin with Alberto Caeiro, in whose sequence of forty-nine poems called "The Keeper of Sheep" (*O Guardador de Rebanhos*) there is no love poem. But among his odds and ends Caeiro has six poems that are sometimes referred to as the cycle of "The Shepherd in Love" (*O Pastor Amoroso*). This is one of those love poems of the Epicurean who had renounced all desire and rejected all thought, since (being a good Epicurean) what he most wanted was to live with equanimity, and not to suffer bodily pain or mental perturbation:

Alberto Caeiro

Passei toda noite, sem dormir, vendo, sem espaço, a figura dela,
 E vendo-a sempre de maneiras diferentes do que a encontro a ela.
 Faço pensamentos com a recordação do que ela é quando me fala,
 E em cada pensamento ela varia de acordo com a sua semelhança.
 Amar é pensar.
 E eu quase que me esqueço de sentir só de pensar nela.
 Não sei bem o que quero, mesmo dela, e eu não penso senão nela.
 Tenho uma grande distração animada.
 Quando desejo encontrá-la
 Quase que prefiro não a encontrar,
 Para não ter que a deixar depois.
 Não sei bem o que quero, nem quero saber o que quero. Quero só
 Pensar nela.
 Não peço nada a ninguém, nem a ela, senão pensar.

I spent all night, sleeping, seeing, beyond space, her figure,
 And seeing her in ways that are not the way I see her.
 I create thoughts with the memory of what she is when she talks with me
 And in every thought she varies according to her likeness.
 Loving is thinking.
 And I nearly forget to feel, from thinking of her.

I don't know what I want even from her, and all I can do is think of her.
 I'm suffering from an enormous animated distraction.
 When I want to meet her
 I almost prefer not to meet her
 So I won't have to leave her afterwards.
 I don't really know what I want, or want to know what I want. I just want
 To think of her.
 I ask nothing of anyone, even of her, except to think.

What kind of love is this? The first verse reads like a traditional love poem: the lover has spent the night awake thinking about his beloved. But wait, it's not quite her, it was her *figure*. And when he says *figura* he doesn't mean her curves; he means an image or *simulacrum*, such as the Roman philosopher-poet Lucretius describes in the passage on love and sex at the end of the fourth book of *On the Nature of Things* (*De rerum natura*). These *simulacra* descend in turn from the *eidola* of earlier Greek philosophers. They are not the genuine article but merely images of the beloved, dangerous because unreal and unable to provide any sexual satisfaction. And the lover in our poem saw this figure *beyond space*. Not, then, a figure of a woman on (or at least near) the surface of the earth, doing some everyday (or even unusual) thing. More: he saw her not as he usually sees her (in what way, then?). What she is when she talks with him feeds into his memory, which then provides the material for his thought. And this, as of the fourth verse, is the status of the beloved: the stuff of thought. Then we learn that she, or her figure, varies in each thought according to her likeness. But at this point what is she like? In case we were wondering, we are now told that loving is thinking, a three word verse made up of five syllables in which the poet (Caeiro or Pessoa) sums up his view of love and sexuality: they are ultimately, for him, simply thoughts, or rather, the objects of thought. The poet forgets to feel, since all he does is think about his beloved (thought displaces feeling). He doesn't know what he wants, even from her, yet he's always thinking of her (thinking displaces desire). Conclusion: he is suffering, in the medical sense, from a gigantic state of highly energetic distraction (v. 8 *uma grande distração animada*). In other words, by falling in love (after his fashion) he has lost that equanimity which, along with freedom from physical pain, is the goal of Epicurus and his school. But, again, into what kind of love has he fallen? He isn't sure he wants to meet the beloved, even though he wants to meet her, because if he meets her he'll have to go away afterwards. A love, then, that does not feel or desire, and wants only to think.

We could say that Pessoa uses love as an example of a general philosophical problem. The problem, discussed by Plato in the *Theatetus*, regards perception and knowledge. When Caeiro perceives the beloved in dreams in ways that have to do with him more than her, Pessoa is taking sides in this argument, implying that the beloved only exists for us insofar as we can perceive her and think about her, and that our perceptions and thoughts of her don't have much to do with her existence as a separate being. The beloved can never be known—except insofar as she represents a universal (for Plato that would mean a quality, such as beauty, that “participates” in Absolute Beauty). It is the theory of knowledge, not the nature of love, which is really in question.

Ricardo Reis, by his own confession, is a disciple of Caeiro. But he writes many love poems, or at least poems with a vaguely erotic atmosphere, though love is most often rejected as an unnecessary and potentially perturbing pleasure. Here is a paradigmatic invitation not to love (Duarte no. 40):

Ricardo Reis

Vem sentar-te commigo, Lydia, à beira do rio.
Socegradamente fitemos o seu curso e aprendamos
Que a vida passa, e não estamos de mãos enlaçadas.
(Enlacemos as mãos).

Depois pensemos, creanças adultas, que a vida
Passa e não fica, nada deixa, e nunca regressa,
Vae para um mar muito longe, para ao pé do Fado,
Mais longe que os deuses.

Desenlacemos as mãos, porque não vale a pena cançarmo-nos,
Quer gosemos, quer não gosemos, passamos como o rio.
Mais vale saber passar silenciosamente
E sem desassocegos grandes.

Sem amores, nem ódios, nem paixões que levantam a voz,
Nem invejas que dão movimento de mais aos olhos,
Nem cuidados, por se os tivesse o rio sempre correria,
E sempre iria ter ao mar.

Amémo-nos tranquillamente, pensando que podíamos,
Se quizessemos, trocar beijos e abraços e carícias,
Mas que mais vale estarmos sentados ao pé um do outro
Ouvindo correr o rio e vendo-o.

Colhamos flores, pega tu n'ellas e deixa-as
No collo, e que o seu perfume suavise o momento—
Este momento em que socegradamente não cremos em nada,
Pagãos innocentes da decadencia.

Ao menos, se fôr sombra antes, lembrar-te-has de mim depois
Sem que a minha lembrança te arda ou te fira ou te mova,
Porque nunca enlaçamos as mãos, nem nos beijamos
Nem fomos mais do que creanças.

E se antes do que eu lewares o óbolo ao barqueiro sombrio,
Eu nada terei que soffrer ao lembar-me-de ti.
Ser-me-has suave à memoria lembrando-te assim—à beira-rio,
Pagã triste e com flores no regaço.

(12-6-1914)

Come sit with me, Lydia, on the bank of the river.
Let's gaze quietly at its course, and learn
That life passes, and we're not holding hands
(Let's hold hands.)

Then let's think, grown up children, that life
 Passes, doesn't stay, leaves nothing, won't come back,
 Runs to a very distant sea, to where Fate is,
 Farther than the gods.

Let's not hold hands, it's not worth tiring ourselves,
 Whether we feel thrill or not, we pass like the river.
 We might as well pass silently
 And without great perturbation.

Without loves, or hates, or passions that raises their voices,
 Or envies that over-exert the eyes
 Or cares, because if I had them the river would still run
 And still go to the sea.

Let's love with tranquillity, thinking that we could,
 If we wanted to, exchange kisses, embraces and caresses,
 But that it's better to sit here next to one another
 Hearing the river run, and watching.

Let's gather flowers, and you take them and put them
 On your neck, so their fragrance can sweeten the moment,
 This moment when we peacefully believe in nothing,
 Innocent pagans of Decadence.

At least, if I go first to the shades, you'll remember me
 Without the memory of me burning or hurting or moving you,
 Since we never held hands, never kissed
 Or were more than children.

And if before me you pay the fare to the boatsman of the Shades,
 I won't have to suffer at all when I remember you.
 You'll be sweet to my memory when I remember you like this, on the riverside,
 Sad pagan girl, flowers at your breast.

Reis writes almost exclusively odes (strophic poems again), often imitating (after a fashion) forms used by Horace, and always trying to recreate a world which is artificial already in Horace, who will set a poem in a *symposium* (drinking party), which was a Greek not a Roman custom, and address *hetairai* (professional courtesans), a Greek not a Roman institution, calling them by Greek and not Roman names. Love is already fully literary in Horace's erotic Odes, and Pessoa gathers his poetic blossoms there and fashions a garland—a style and a philosophy. Reis, like Horace, was a follower of Epicurus. And like Caeiro, Reis does not want to be bothered with love. He says this clearly in the third strophe: “it's not worth tiring ourselves” /.../ We might as well pass silently /And without great perturbation.” The key word here is of course *perturbation*. According to Epicurus, “The greatest pleasure [...] is freedom from pain in body (*aponía*) and in mind (*ataraxía*).”³⁰ The Latin word *perturbatio*, “perturbation,” was used by Cicero as equivalent to the Greek *pathos*, “passion /

³⁰ Brown 1987: 104.

emotion”, and is the subject of the fourth book of his stoicizing treatise, *The Tusculan Disputations*. Pain and perturbation are just what the adherent of Epicurean doctrine most keenly wants to avoid. This is why (in the fourth strophe) he says, “Let’s love with tranquillity,” without kisses and embraces. In the last two strophes the motif of “If I die first..., if you die first,” is drawn from Roman erotic elegy, but this has also been tinged by Epicurean philosophy: If they don’t make love, then whoever survives the other won’t have to suffer passionate or painful memories. And being like children, they are free of the drive to have sexual relations and so of the responsibility of facing emotional and other consequences.

Pessoa weaves various strands of Greek philosophy (the river surely comes from Heraclitus) and Roman poetry (Horace, but also Elegy) to produce the odes of Reis. Chief among these sources are the teachings of Epicurus, which Pessoa, along with everybody else, would have gotten mainly from Lucretius (perhaps also from Cicero), and which regard sexual desire as natural but its fulfilment unnecessary, and see love as a threat to equanimity too dangerous to risk.

The heteronym to whom Fernando Pessoa gave his own name wrote poems in English which either treat love and sexuality openly (like “Antinous,” in the tone of Shelley’s “Adonais,” and replete with necrophilia) or else veil desire with philosophy (35 *Sonnets*); in Portuguese his erotic compositions are few and all of the philosophical variety. The following is typical of how he handles these matters.

Fernando Pessoa

Dorme enquanto velo...
Deixa-me sonhar...
Nada em mim é risonho.
Quero-te para sonho,
Não para te amar.

A tua carne calma
É frio em meu querer.
Os meus desejos são cansaços.
Nem quero ter nos braços
Meu sonho do teu ser.

Dorme, dorme, dorme,
Vaga em teu sorrir...
Sonho-te tão atento
Que o sonho é encantamento
E eu sonho sem sentir.

Sleep while I stay awake...
Let me dream...
Nothing in me is laughing.
I want you for dreaming,
Not to love.

Your calm flesh
Is cold in my wanting.
My desires are weariness,

I don't even want to hold
My dream of your being.

Sleep, sleep, sleep,
Vague in your smiling...
I dream you so intently
That the dream becomes a spell
And I dream without feeling.

What is the logic of this discourse? She should sleep, but he, although awake, will be the one dreaming. That's what he wants her for, to dream, not actually to love. Her flesh is calm because it is not perturbed by desire or stimulation; and to his desire, such as it is (or rather is not), her flesh is cold (however hot it might be in "reality"). Not only does he not want to hold her, he doesn't even want to hold the dream he will dream of her being. And although he dreams so intently of her being that he is held spellbound, he feels nothing. A strange way to seduce a woman!

The paradoxes of which this poem is made complicate the status of love and desire, question if they exist at all, and we are left unsure, if they exist, what they are. Love and the beloved are reduced to non-being, partly by a series of rhetorical tricks, partly by grammar ("that metaphysics of the people," as Nietzsche calls it) or by expressions which we could call ungrammatical. For instance: normally, one does not speak of "holding a dream;" and this expression is complicated at both ends: "I do *not* want to hold the dream *of your being*." First he negates the phrase "hold the dream" ("To grasp negation is to understand a gesture of rejection," says Wittgenstein), and then he makes her being—in the philosophical sense—the object of the dream. Philosophy is how he dreams.

The overall logic of the poem is not far from a *Quadra* (four line poem in popular style) attributed to the heteronym Fernando Pessoa (Prista no. 392).

O meu sentimento é cinza
Da minha imaginação,
E eu deixo cair a cinza
No cinzeiro da Razão.

My feeling is the ashes
Of my imagination,
And I let the ashes fall
In the ashtray of Reason.

Feeling is like ash, a dead residue of the imagination, and the poet lets this ash fall into what he calls the ashtray of reason. The rational faculty thus receives the ash of feeling that once was alive in the imagination. In the end what emerges is thought, with emotion left behind at several removes of death or destruction. This is not far from the conceptual basis of "Sleep while I wake" and also bears similarities to the poem of Caetano analyzed above. But even though all three poems use philosophical concepts to question the status of love and desire, none refers openly to any philosopher (Reis does mention Epicurus in one of his poems).

We end with a poem of Álvaro de Campos which does mention a few sources. One striking aspect of this text (in relation to the ones we have seen) is the tone, much more informal than that of Reis or Pessoa, and more talky even than the voice of Caetano,

who boasts that his writing is natural. We overhear part of a conversation in everyday style (Berardinelli no. 45),

Álvaro de Campos

Meu pobre amigo, não tenho compaixão que te dar.
A compaixão custa, sobretudo sincera, e em dias de chuva.
Quero dizer: custa sentir em dias de chuva.
Sintamos a chuva e deixemos a psychologia para outra espécie de céu.

Com que então problema sexual?
Mas isso depois dos quinze annos é uma indecência.
Preoccupação com o sexo opposto (supponhamos) e a sua psychologia,
Mas isso é estúpido, filho.
O sexo opposto existe para ser procurado e não para ser discutido.
O problema existe para estar resolvido, e não para preoccupar.
Querer preoccupar-se é ser impotente.
E você devia revelar-se menos.
“La Colère de Samson”, conhece?
“La femme, enfant malade et...”
Mas não é nada d’isso.
Não me mace, nem me obrigue a ter pena!
Olhe: tudo é literatura.
Vem-nos tudo de fora, com a chuva
A maneira de nós sermos paginas applicadas de romances—
Traduções, meu filho.

Você sabe porque está tão triste? É por causa de Platão,
Que você nunca leu.
O seu soneto de Petrarcha, que você desconhece, sahiu-lhe errado,
E assim é a vida.

Arregace as mangas da camiza †zida
E cave terras exactas!
Mais vale isso que ter a alma dos outros.

Não somos senão fantasmas de fantasmas,
E a paysagem hoje ajuda muito pouco.
Tudo é geographicamente exterior.
A chuva cahe por uma lei natural
E a humanidade ama porque ouviu fallar no amor...

9/7/1930

My poor friend, I have no sympathy to give you.
Sympathy, especially if sincere, is expensive on rainy days.
I mean: it’s hard to feel on a rainy day.
Let’s feel the rain and leave the psychology for another kind of sky.

So what’s this about a sexual problem?
But after the age of fifteen, that’s indecent!

To worry about the opposite sex (let's suppose) and its psychology—
 But that's stupid, my boy!
 The opposite sex exists to be sought after, not to be discussed.
 The problem is there to be resolved, not worried about.
 To want to worry about it is to be impotent.
 And you ought not to be so open about yourself.
 "La Colère de Samson"—do you know it?
 "La femme, infant malade et [...]".
 But that's not it at all.
 Don't tire me, don't make me feel pity!
 Look: this is all literature.
 It all comes from outside us, like the rain.
 So we're like applied pages of novels,
 Translations, my boy.

You know why you're sad? It's because of Plato,
 Whom you've never read.
 And some sonnet of Petrarch, that you don't know, came out badly,
 And that's life.

Roll up the sleeves of that civilized shirt
 And dig into the real earth itself!
 Better that than having someone else's soul.

We're nothing more than the phantoms of phantoms,
 And today the landscape doesn't help much.
 Everything is geographically external.
 The rain falls by a natural law,
 And Humanity loves because it heard people talk of love.

The speaker has been consulted by an apparently younger man regarding an erotic problem, and responds without sympathy. Sincere sympathy is especially difficult on a rainy day. Why not just feel the rain and forget the psychology? This last remark sounds almost as if it could have been written by Caeiro. But what follows is nothing like Caeiro, Reis, or Pessoa: "The opposite sex exists to be sought after, not to be discussed." Only very rarely does any of the other heteronyms seek the opposite sex; their so-called love poems are, as we have seen, mostly attempts to make erotic phenomena into insoluble philosophical problems of being and knowing. "The problem is there to be resolved, not worried about," if I read it aright, is not unlike what Lucretius says in a blunt bit of advice: "to spurt the collected liquid [sperm] into any bodies" ("et iacere umorem conlectum in corpora quaeque"; *De rerum natura* 4.1065). Love (as opposed to sexual satisfaction) is literature, says the speaker; we are like "applied pages of novels." Or else we get our notions of love from Plato and Petrarch—indeed, two of the most important sources for love poetry during many centuries.³¹ In the last section of the poem, when he says we are no more than "phantoms of phantoms," he seems to mean that, as lovers, we are constructions made in turn of literary constructions, hence unreal things modelled on other unreal things. Love is

³¹ "La Colère de Samson" is a poem by Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863). The next verse, taken from that poem, means: "Woman—a sick child..."; the line continues "douze fois impure!" ("twelve times impure!").

something we learn from our culture. Or: it is our culture that gives us our concepts of love.

Fernando Pessoa has been called asexual (by Jorge de Sena), but there is a great deal of sexuality in his work. Some of it is up front, as in certain poems of Álvaro de Campos, but most of it is transformed almost beyond recognition by tricks of grammar, poetics and philosophy. Much more than Camoens, Pessoa was obsessed by philosophy, and particularly by the interrelated problems of being and knowing. If we do not know if lover, love or beloved exist, or know what love is, what can we say about it? Feelings are thought, in two senses: they are the stuff of thought, and they only become real when they are thought about. To satisfy physical desire is intellectually beneath him, he says (one of his heteronyms says), and it also somehow inelegant, socially demeaning. Of course this is to try to extract the poet's sexuality from expressions of sexuality in his work, something he expressly forbade posterity from doing, but something his poetry invites us to do. He protests so much against any imputation of sexual impulses or activities that he reveals himself rather obsessed by them. The memory of real loves, *summer's distillation*, as Shakespeare says, is left in his poetry, "a liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass." It seems that, for the most part, Pessoa preferred to think desire. From the complex matrix out of which his poetry sprang he selected his models carefully to produce the form, rhetoric, pragmatics and philosophy of the heteronyms. We can distinguish them for the most part by specific criteria: do they write strophic poetry or not? Caeiro does not; Campos only rarely. Reis and Pessoa almost always. Do they rhyme? Caeiro and Reis never do, Campos sometimes, Pessoa almost always. And what part do love and sexuality play in their work? Almost none in Caeiro; a significant but philosophically sublimated part in Reis; in Campos there is a fair bit, sometimes homosexual, sometimes sado-masochistic, sometimes heterosexual, sometimes bisexual; and Fernando Pessoa "himself" writes erotic verse, both in English and in Portuguese, with varying degrees of (in)directness and most often a fair dose of metaphysics (something Campos *says* he abhors). The vision of love and/or sexuality varies according to the heteronym, much as in Medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric it depended on the genre. In essence, Pessoa has chosen or created a genre or genres for each heteronym (with characteristic formal, rhetorical and pragmatic attributes), and endowed each with a philosophy which determines, among other things, his treatment of erotic matters. The "real" Fernando Pessoa can no more be identified than the real Johan de Guilhade. What we can identify are the characteristics of medieval genres and of the ones Pessoa has adopted from the traditional matrix or created in modernist fashion out of the latest materials (from Whitman to Mallarmé). Far from being uninterested in things erotic, Pessoa handles them with great care, constructing a dialectic of attitudes that seem intended to make love and sexuality as problematic for the reader as they evidently were for the poet.

Cadenza

Throughout this essay I have tried to show that desire, love, and concepts of the erotic and the sexual are cultural constructs. That holds for courtly love and its parody, for female-voiced love lyric, and for sexuality in the poetry of insult. And in each case the concept depends not just on the conventions of a given culture and society at a given time, but on rules governing the composition of poetic genres. This also obtains for neo-Platonic and Petrarchan concepts of love, for the neo-classical and pre-Romantic eroticism of Bocage, and for the heteronyms of Pessoa. If there was an oral matrix for Johan de Guilhade, there was a written matrix for the others, and this included many centuries of poetry and philosophy. Any poem is rooted in a matrix, and so is any concept. In this sense, love is not ours; it is something we get from elsewhere (just as Álvaro de Campos says). Its conceptual configuration is the product of a long cultural process, always ongoing. Everything erotic, from desire to satisfaction, from our vision of the beloved to our way of saying farewell, grows out of a social and linguistic (and that includes poetic) matrix of forms, actions, rhetoric, and thought. What great love poets do is to take from the matrix all it has to offer and then give to it something that had not been there before. Those creations might be called transformations of desire.

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