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OS ORIENTES E OS OCIDENTES

THE EAST(S) AND THE WEST(S)

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OSÓRIO DE CASTRO: A POET OF INDIA

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Resumo

Osório de Castro (1868-1942) é um conhecido poeta português quase sempre estudado como exemplo das correntes finesseculares do século XIX (Simbolismo, Parnasianismo, Decadentismo), em que se encontram frequentes alusões ao Oriente, caracterizadas pelo exotismo ou anacronia dos elementos, fora do espaço e do tempo comuns, tigres ou ruínas. De facto, no período em que trabalhou na Índia, publicou até em Panjim, Nova Goa (1906) um livro de poemas, *A Cinza dos Mirtos*, em que são constantes as alusões a esse Oriente. Mas acentua-se então, a nosso ver, uma estranha inversão de perspectiva: passando os elementos exóticos ou anacrónicos a ser comuns, os elementos comuns, vistos de longe, ganham em exotismo e anacronia. De certa forma, a Índia acentua ambiguidades conotativas: a vitória é sentida como derrota e a objetividade da História parece produto da subjetividade do Mito. Considerando deste modo a singularidade da poesia de Osório de Castro, este ensaio visa refletir sobre a complexidade de um diálogo filosófico-literário entre Oriente e Ocidente.

Palavras-chave: Osório de Castro, Literatura, Índia, Portugal, Exotismo, Oriente, Ocidente

Abstract

Osório de Castro (1868-1942) was a Portuguese poet known as an example, in Portugal, of Symbolism, Parnassianism and Decadent Movements, literary currents marked by exotic and anachronistic themes, things out of place or out of time like tigers and ruins, with frequent allusions to Oriental places. In fact, he worked in India for a certain period where he published a book of poems (*A Cinza dos Mirtos*/ [*The Ash of the Myrtles*], Panjim/Nova Goa, 1906). where exotic themes are constantly exemplified. However, it seems to us that a strange inversion occurred: in a local context, exotic or anachronistic themes became common, and common themes became, in a certain way, exotic and anachronistic. To Castro, India emphasized ambiguity: victory is just the other side of defeat, and History has been a Tale. This essay aims to reflect upon the complexity of the literary and philosophical dialogue between Occident and Orient, considering the singularity of Castro's poetry.

Keywords: Osório de Castro, Literatur, India, Portugal, Exotism, Orient, Occident

“Because we are just a blood clot, slowly dissolving, leaving a bit of us everywhere we pass”.
[Porque a gente é bem um grumo de sangue, que por toda a parte se vai desfazendo e vai ficando] (From a Camilo Pessanha’s letter to Osório de Castro, epigraph of *Exiladas/[Exiled]*)

Alberto Osório de Castro (1868-1942) is not commonly found in the Indo-Portuguese anthologies. In fact, we cannot discover any substantial reference to his poetry in any bibliography regarding those subjects. A study from the 19th century, published after the arrival of Osório de Castro in India/Goa, the same year he published his first book (1895) ignores him completely, which is, perhaps, understandable. Osório de Castro was known in Portugal, more than he was in Goa, as he was not born in India. The first book he wrote about India (*A Cinza dos Mirtos/[The Ash of the Myrtles]*) will be published only ten years after, already in the 20th century, in 1906. Nevertheless, we cannot understand the absence of his name in the most recent studies on the subject: *Esboço da História da Literatura indo-portuguesa [A Short History of Indo-Portuguese Literature]* by Filinto Cristo Dias (Goa, 1963); *Literatura indo-portuguesa dos séculos XIX e XX: um estudo de temas principais no contexto socio-histórico [Indo-Portuguese Literature during the 19th and 20th centuries: a study on main literary themes in the social and historical context]*, an academic thesis by Eufemiano de Jesus Miranda (Goa, St. Xavier’s College, Mapusa, 1995); *A Literatura Indo-Portuguesa [The Indo-Portuguese Literature]*, in two volumes, by Vimala Devi and Manuel de Seabra (Lisbon, Junta de Investigação do Ultramar, 1971); *Literatura Indo-portuguesa: Figuras e Factos [Indo-Portuguese Literature: Figures and Facts]*, by Vicente de Bragança Cunha, (Bombay, 1926 *apud* Miranda 1995). This is certainly due to the strict sense of what we consider an “Indo-Portuguese writer”, a “Portuguese writer”, or an “Indian writer”: a writer who was born or died in one of both countries, writing in a local language.

The (in)definition of circles

Born in Coimbra, on the 1st of March 1868, Osório de Castro graduated in Law from the University of Coimbra, and he was, during most of his life, a judge from the Portuguese administration. Between 1894 and 1911, Osório de Castro lived most of his life in the Orient and in Africa, working for the Department of Justice: in Goa,

for 13 years (1894-1907), as a Procurator and a Judge; in Angola (Moçamedes) for a year (1907); in Timor, from 1907, perhaps, to 1911, when he returned to Angola (Luanda) for a short period of time. He accepted to be Minister of Justice during the Republican dictatorship of Sidónio Pais (1918-1920). In 1927, he became member of the Commission for the Defence of Colonies (Comissão de Defesa das Províncias Ultramarinas), Vice-President of the Union for the Defence of Overseas Colonies (União Portuguesa do Ultramar) in 1928, and President of the Superior Council of Law of the Colonies (Conselho Superior Judiciário das Colónias) in 1931. He died in Lisbon, on the 1st of January 1946

Literary circles are closed spaces. It's undeniable: Indian-Portuguese poets are not well known in the Metropolitan literary circles. *Mutatis mutandis*, Castro is well known in Metropolitan literary circles, but, today, in the Indian-Portuguese Literature, he is not recognized. Since his early youth, he took part in several literary disputes in Portuguese newspapers, and he published, in Portugal (over the same period, 1884-1911), many poems and critical texts in literary journals (including some under strange pseudonyms, like "Axel" or "Ullalume") and also in Indian newspapers. Significantly, the most notorious Portuguese journal is perhaps *Boémia Nova* [*New Bohemia*], a literary publication signed especially by university students, fascinated by the recent quarrels between Symbolists, Decadents, and Parnassians in Europe, namely in France.¹ He was a close friend, or a regular pen pal, of well-known Portuguese writers, like Camilo Pessanha, Venceslau de Moraes, Gomes Leal, António Nobre, and many others who frequently appear in the dedications of his poems (cf. Castro, 2004: 45), published during his life, in four different books: *Exiladas* [*Exiles*] (1895), *A Cinza dos Myrtos* [*The Ash of the Myrtles*] (1906), *Flores de Coral* [*Flowers of Coral*] (1908), *O Sinal da Sombra* [*The Sign of the Shadow*] (1923), and *Cristais da Neve* [*Snow Crystals*]. The importance of his poetry

¹ Most of those journals have vanguard titles like *Os Novos* [*The New Ones*], *A Revista* [*The Magazine*], *A comédia portuguesa* [*The Portuguese Comedy*] (founded in 1888), *Centaurus* [*Centaurus*] (1916), *Esfíngie* [*Sphinx*] (1917), or *Alma nova* [*New Soul*] (between 1915 and 1918). He also directed a few journals: like *O Novo Tempo* [*The New Time*], in the small town of Mangualde, from 1889 to 1890. It was also a good publisher. Along with his sister, Ana de Castro Osório, also a Portuguese writer, he was the responsible for the edition of the Camilo Pessanha's main book, *Clepsydra* (1906), and promoted the second posthumous edition of Cesario Verde's poetry, named by the first editor *O livro* [*The book*]. He was a jury in some literary contests, being, without a doubt, the most curious one, the S.P.N. (Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional [Secretariat for National Propaganda]) contest, where *Mensagem* [*Message*], the only poetry book Fernando Pessoa ever published during his life, was awarded with the second prize.

in Portuguese Literature has been well explained by Pedro da Silveira, in *Seara Nova*² and, especially, by José Seabra Pereira, in *Decadentismo e Simbolismo na Poesia Portuguesa [The Decadent Movement and Symbolism in Portuguese Poetry]*³, but often reduced to an historical point of view. Castro exemplifies the Portuguese Symbolism, with its exotic references, imitating Baudelaire, or Rimbaud, or Verlaine, demonstrating the influence of European literature in Portuguese literature...

The (in)definition of blood

In this historical context, Osório de Castro seems to us a much more interesting case study: he has a singular perspective of a forced “exiled”, a traveller, going out and going in, between the Occidental and Oriental cultures. Osório de Castro is, perhaps, much more interesting than Florencia de Moraes⁴ and other contemporary fellows who saw India, especially through a sentimental approach. In fact, the interest of Castro in the Indian culture has nothing in common with the poems, novels, and plays that were published in Portugal at the end of the 19th century, to celebrate the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India (1498-1898), even if some of Castro’s poems still evoke the old dream of Asia, with old toponymical names like *O Sonho de Sagres [The dream of Sagres]*, *A Cipango [To Cipango]*, *Preste João [Prester John]*, *A velha Goa [Old Goa]*. Decadent poets seem to give him a critical sense of present and past, and a real sense of decay, which is not only an exotic element, but the symbol of a transitory life confirmed by the progressive knowledge of the Indian philosophy.

All the poetry books published by Osório de Castro reflect the early readings of Oriental poetry, and, especially, Indian poetry – see mainly *A Cinza dos Myrtos [The Ash of the Myrtles]* (published in New Goa), and *Flores de Coral [Flowers of Coral]* published in Dili, Timor, both with useful glossaries describing languages, habits,

² Pedro da SILVEIRA (1968) «Alberto Osório de Castro». *Seara Nova* (n.º 1470), Abril, p. 122.

³ Cf. José C. Seabra PEREIRA (1975), *Decadentismo e Simbolismo* (Coimbra, Centro de Estudos Românicos). See also the introduction to Alberto Osório de CASTRO (2004) *Obra Poética*, 2 vols., Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, vol. I, pp. 7-45.

⁴ “[To write this book] I didn’t do any research, I didn’t study: I just felt. And through that feeling I came to love the Indian nature, full of mystery and light, and because of that I decided that the poems which had inspired me would be my first book”. Original text: “Não investiguei, não estudei: senti. E como n’esse sentir me afeiçoei à natureza indiana, tão cheia de mysterios e de claridades, destinei que os versos que ella me inspirara seriam o meu primeiro livro” (Florencia de MORAES, 1908, *Vozes da India*, Goa, Casa Luso-Franceza, p. XIII).

flora and fauna of the Orient. Also literary genres are influenced by the Oriental poetry, for instance, the formal structures of the “pantun” of Java, the “launimm” or the “ghazal” of India, the “haikai”, the “tanka”, or the “ha-uta” from Japan... Castro uses travels to live different lives. Particularly in India, Castro seems to live with another velocity, unknown in Portugal. Travels seem to be speeded up by the extension of the country, the development of the industrial movement (trains and gigantic factories), the increasing of the Asian population, and the multitude of so many different languages, rhythms, and melodies. Marinetti was surely more sensitive in India than in Lisbon:

“Oh, Beautiful Bombay!/ Many times, my vague and wandering soul will pass through your gardens and your terraces/under the moon or the blazing midday light. [...] Oh, Church Gate! Trains keep passing by [...]./ Like a dream passing by.../ Delhi! Lacknow! Golden Temple! Amritsar!/ Taj Mahal, made of moonlight and pearl!”⁵

Also, the criticisms the Republican thinkers made to the decadent Portuguese Monarchy seem to contribute to this distant view of the Empire, reduced to an ancient glory by Castro. He imagines the ancient times, humans traveling through ruins. In the poem “Na cerca de São Francisco de Goa”, the blood of the Portuguese is mixed with the one from their Hinduist companions. In “Sombras de Diu” [Shadows of Diu], he imagines soldiers talking about women and war, small talks, small things like gestures of love and desire, when a shot of a gun settles them to battle. All men seem to be divided, and yet together. In 1906, from a ship, Castro sees Diu and its “castle of blood and rage”. And then he wrote to his cousin, Dom Agostinho de Sousa Coutinho – who descends from a captain who died in Diu, fighting against Muslims in India –, a poem remembering the paradox:

“Sousa Coutinho, Cunha and Rumeção,/ The Sultan Bahdur, Dom Fernando, Silveira/, they all sleep in the peace of the final hour/ in the same brotherly dust./ The immense peace of death embraces everything./ Only the fort is still protecting the sea,/ useless frontier, forever silent]”⁶

⁵ Original text: “Muita vez a minha alma, vaga e errante,/ Beautiful Bombay! Há-de perpassar/ por teus jardins e esplanadas ao luar,/ na luz do teu meio-dia fulgurante. [...]/ Church Gate! Os comboios vão rodando/ continuamente... É um sonho a passar.../ Delhi! Lacknow! Templo de Oiro! Amritsar!/ Taj Mahal, luar e pérola alvejando! (CASTRO, 2004: I, 180).

⁶ Original text: “Sousa Coutinho, o Cunha e Rumeção,/ Sultão Bahdur, Dom Fernando, Silveira,/ Dormem na paz da hora derradeira,/ No mesmo pó irmão./ A grande paz da morte envolve tudo./ Só o muro ficou guardando o mar,/ contorno inútil, para sempre mudo” (CASTRO, 2004: I, 201).

In India is the title of a book published in Porto (1943), written by José Júlio Rodrigues, that describes the ruins of “Old Goa, the dead city”, once called the “Rome of Orient”. The author’s guide is Alberto Osório de Castro, who is Rodrigues’ host in Panjim. Castro tells Rodrigues some epic stories mixed with satirical ones. Meanwhile, a *naja* passes between the stones⁷: the Asian snake is still the symbol of the Christian knowledge, tempting humanity to be like God. Reading this description of a visit to Old Goa, written by José Júlio Rodrigues, we easily remember a poem of Osório de Castro telling us that salvation is in the failure of extreme desire: “We must find the old Eldorado/ Even if we sink again, even so,/in the infinite Pacific ocean of God”⁸. Losing the Paradise becomes the only way of salvation because it doesn’t require the loss of memory. On the contrary: salvation must require the extension of memory, the knowledge of an ancient time and an ancient identity, when invaders were invaded, and victims were heroes.

Perhaps, the persistent feeling of his “mixed blood” is a rational cause to his “extension” of identity. When Castro was asked by another poet (Carlos Queirós) about his genealogy, he enjoys finding in his roots a mixture of aristocracy and bourgeoisie, nobility and decadence, Portuguese, Spanish, or Netherlander writers, rural owners, businessmen, and travellers (Castro, 2004: II, 3338-9). This singular blood seems to push Osório de Castro out of an expected order: he describes himself as a “Calado navio a arder” – a silent ship, burning in the sea: no one answering, no sight of despair. In Timor, an island disputed by Portugal and the Netherlands, he imagined his ancestors fighting with each other, and yet their hearts are similar. In his poetry, the exotic subject is not only a feeling, but also the intellectual attraction for a different culture and a similar humanity.

Significantly, his family’s library seems to provide him with unusual readings of foreign authors, since his adolescence: for instance, he was one of the first critics to know, read, and propose the avatars of the Russian novels to renew the Realistic or Naturalist genres⁹; and during his youth, he quotes authors from the French,

⁷ Jose Julio RODRIGUES (1943). *Na India. Cenários, Lendas, Evocações* [In India. Scenes, Tales, Evocations], Pórtico de Osório de Castro e Armando Leça, Porto, Ed. Marânus, pp. 87-114.

⁸ Original text: “É preciso encontrar o Eldorado doutro lado,/ Embora uma outra vez naufraguemos, embora!/ no Pacífico Oceano infinito de Deus” (CASTRO 2004: I, 108).

⁹ Cf. Letter from Castro “De Paris”/ [From Paris] *apud* José Seabra PEREIRA, introduction to CASTRO, 2004, I, 8.

Italian, Spanish, German, and English cultures. Castro also seems to have a great curiosity (and consequent knowledge) for the Indian literature...

India: a symbol of Desire and Exile

His first book of poetry, *Exiladas* – announced in 1891, when Castro is still in Portugal¹⁰ – ends with an ambiguous letter sent by Antero de Quental to Osório de Castro, the 25th November 1891. Antero is commenting the poem “Na agonia da Pátria” [In the Nation’s Agony]. The poem by young Castro exhorts the Portuguese to fight for old ideals during the British Ultimatum crisis, when England disputed with Portugal the expansion of colonial countries in Africa: the Portuguese government, with no means to win the war, abandoned the project of the Empire, recognising its military weakness, when compared to other Colonial Empires of the 19th century. Osório de Castro sent his poem to Antero de Quental, hoping, perhaps, that Antero would be flattered by his combative spirit. Antero, by contrast, sees in Castro a “young and innocent boy” [“rapaz moço e cândido”], and, instead, he values his sense of inaction, his “morbidezza”¹¹. “Morbidezza”, is then a strange quality to value: it is synonymous of “softness”, “smoothness”. In a negative sense, “morbidezza” is a “weakness”, “close to death”. Seen as a quality by Antero de Quental (an author quite familiar with the Oriental philosophy published in Germany and in France)¹², Castro’s “morbidezza” is, perhaps, in 1891, the first sign of the interest from Castro in the Buddhist concept of Nirvana. In fact, the poem by Osório de Castro, “Na mão de Deus” [In the hand of God], dialogues with a sonnet by Antero de Quental – “Na mão de Deus, na sua mão direita” [in the hand of God, in his right hand] –, and elucidates, once again, Castro’s liking for the Indian culture, even before his arrival to India.

One of his last poems, dedicated, in 1939, “To two Indian friends of mine”, express their moral perfection, the image of the “soul of Tagore” (Castro, 2004: II, 306). But his interest for the Indian Literature emerged, without a doubt, during his adolescence and before his sojourn in India.

¹⁰ J. Seabra PEREIRA, introduction to CASTRO, 2004: I, 12.

¹¹ CASTRO, 2004: I, 133.

¹² Even if the Nirvana he describes in his poems seems too pessimist to be Hinduist or Buddhist. Cf. about the subject, Selma de Vieira VELHO (1988), *A Influência da Mitologia Hindú na Literatura Portuguesa dos Séculos XVI e XVII*, Macau, Instituto Cultural de Macau, II, pp. 639-652, max. 651.

The epigraph of his first book, *Exiladas*, is already a metaphor taken from the “illustrious Kālidāsa” to describe the recognition of Chakuntalá: “The body goes ahead, only the restless heart returns; it’s like a flag in the wind”¹³.

A sonnet that Castro wrote in Mangualde, Portugal, in 1889, after reading [?] the first act of *Mricchakatiká*, also attests the profound curiosity he feels already at the age of 21, for the Indian culture, even imagining India as an ensemble of myths: drummers, dancers, emeralds, palm trees, lotus flowers, and, strangely, the exact remembrance of the perfume of *ashôka*, the precise description of a scene read in a book:

“Vasantasenã has her mouth more insatiable!/In an ecstasy, at her feet, the Brahman Charudatta/Striking and grave contemplates clash of light.”¹⁴

And a poem he wrote at the age of 20 (“Nocturno” [Nocturnal], 1888, published also in *Exiladas*) describes the moment a butterfly enters his room, during a violent storm outside. Castro was reading an old volume of poetry, from Germany [“d’Alemanha”]. This wasn’t a random act, we think. During the second half of 19th century, German Orientalism (from Forster and Fischer, Schiller, Schlegel, Goethe, and Herder to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hartmann, Naumann, Deussen or Heine) influenced European culture, and Portugal seems to reflect this European Orientalism, turning again to the Indian Literature and the Indian studies¹⁵... What book was Castro reading? The poem doesn’t say it. But Castro closed it, observing the wings of the butterfly, black like velvet, remembering death and life after life. The butterfly rests just on his left, near his heart, and he felt something like a dagger piercing it, provoking on him a convulsive cry. Castro does not see the butterfly anymore, but he in his mind he is certain that the butterfly is the soul of someone in danger, someone he loves¹⁶. Why is this belief in rebirth (*purnarjaanam*) so strange to Catholic Church, and so common to Hinduism?

In 1890, Castro signed the poem “A Viagem/ [The journey]”, the description of a meadow at sunset that reminds us of a painting by Van Gogh. But the description

¹³ Original text: “Vai para diante o corpo, apenas volta para trás o coração inquieto; é como a seda da bandeira levada contra o vento” (CASTRO, 2004: I. 49).

¹⁴ Original text: “Vasantasenã tem mais insaciada a boca!/ Num êxtase, aos seus pés, o brâmane Charudatta,/ Belo e grave contempla o combate da luz “ (CASTRO, 2004: I. 123).

¹⁵ See, for instance, the Orientalism by Antero de Quental or Vasconcellos-Abreu or Rudolfo Dalgado’s comparative studies.

¹⁶ Original text: “Olho, não vejo a borboleta escura!.../ Alma talvez dalgum dos meus em perigo” [I look, and I don’t see the dark butterfly!.../The soul perhaps from some of my own in danger] (CASTRO, 2004: I, 110-111).

seems also to be of a hidden Samsara, where death and life cannot be distinguished:

“Everything flows, dissolves under the milky sky.../ The sky glows like a burning sea/ and on the quay I dream of a fantasy:/ to leave that glimmering night,/on a starry and fiery endless journey./ - Like a ship’s boy aboard the boat of moonlight”¹⁷

The Indian Culture and the undisguised Death

According to Seabra Pereira, Osório de Castro, in his final poems (1920-1940), imagines himself already dead: he writes then his “auto-necrology”¹⁸. But, in fact, the subject of his own death is progressively present since *A Cinza dos Mirtos*/[*The Ash of the Myrtles*], the book that Castro published already in Goa, in 1906. For instance, in the poems “Sad little widow/ [Triste viuvinha]” and “Sati”, the Poet identifies himself with the sacrificed woman. In “Ad lares”, his own life is described as a cycle of love, substance, fire, ash, and smoke. In Margao (June 1894), Castro finishes the poem “Ao vir da monção/ [Coming from the monsoon]” using the theme of the sacrificed widow: “Water-springs were drying in the fire of the mountains;/ But now the water is singing in the mouth of the fountains.../ And you, oh my sweet widow, you will bring me flowers”.¹⁹

In *Exiladas*, the poem “Spleen” clearly traces a dialogue between Baudelaire’s Symbolism in Castro’s youth and the Hinduism of his adulthood. The poem has two dates and the indication of two different places: Coimbra, in the Spring of 1890 and Panjim/ Nova Goa, in July of 1895. The Portuguese landscape (the fog and the lemon tree) is not dissociable from the Indian nature (the haze and the typhoon). What we interpret as an inflexion of the catholic religion in the final poems of Osório de Castro²⁰, can be understood, perhaps, as a continuity of cultures, if we understand the progressive dialogue between Hinduism and Christianity. In this

¹⁷ Original text: “Tudo flui, se dilui, sobre o céu lactescente.../ O céu cintila como um mar em ardência/ e sobre o cais minha alma sonha a *Feéria*/ de nessa noite lucilante ir embarcar,/ Numa viagem sem fim toda estrelada e ardente/ – Grumete a bordo da galera do luar” (CASTRO, 2004: I, 114).

¹⁸ José Seabra PEREIRA, Introduction to the poetical work of Alberto Osório de Castro (CASTRO 2004: I, 37-8). Cf. “Sonho-me morto/ [I dream of me dead] (CASTRO, 2004: II, 316) and other poems of his last book, *Cristais da Neve* [*Snow crystals*].

¹⁹ “Original text: “Secavam nascentes no fogo dos montes/ Agora já cantam as águas das fontes.../ Ir-me-ás pôr flores, ó minha viúva” (CASTRO, 2004: I, 127). This poem written in 1894, in India, was already included in *Exiladas* (1895).

²⁰ Cf. J. Seabra PEREIRA, introd. CASTRO 2004: I, 41-45.

poem from 1890-1895, the European Literature (from the monologue of Hamlet to the spleen of Baudelaire) is no longer dissociable from the Indian philosophy:

“Ah!, to rest at last, to be simply a soul,/ in the soft mist softly climbing,/ [...] To vaguely dream perhaps... ah! To not even dream!/ To disperse myself to the fury of the silent typhoon”²¹

The poetry of Osório de Castro implies a systematic study of Indian culture and Portuguese Literature about India. The correspondence of Castro with orientalists like Vasconcelos-Abreu or Gubernatis proves his uncommon knowledge about the Indian culture. *A Cinza dos Mirtos/The Ash of the Myrtles* is published with an erudite glossary about several terms of Konkani, Indian literature, Indian Gastronomy, Indian flora and fauna, or even general concepts of Hinduism: Aia, Alua, Apsaras, Arti, Bahi, Bebinca, Bhut, Bulbul, Carandá, Cucume, Datura, Deussar, Ful/ fullas, Hellu or Illu, Jambos, Kali, Kedoki, Larins, Laterite/ Cabuk, Launim, Mahatma, Mahadeu, Maya, Murdanga, Nagaina, Parisathi, Puna, Quitunde, Sancallio, Saranghi, Sari, Sati, Sita, Tulsi, Zaiós, among others²².

Comparative Philosophy/ Comparative Literature/ Comparative Mythology

The poetry of Osório de Castro often represents poetic or mythical phenomena of botanical transformation, where “avatars” are confused with “metamorphoses”. Osório de Castro revisited the books of the 16th century, the first moment of reception, the astonishment (from Camões to Garcia da Orta – one of his main references when it comes to know about trees, perfumes, and flowers (Indian “fullas”)). One of these poems, included in another book, *O Sinal das Sombras* [The Sign of the Shadows], is entitled “Árvore triste” [Sad tree] the name the Portuguese gave to a small tree that opens at dusk and withers at dawn: *Nyctanthes arbor-*

²¹ Original text: “Ah! Descansar enfim, ser alma simplesmente,/ Na vaga névoa ir a subir levemente,/ [...] Vagamente sonhar talvez... ah! Nem sonhar!/ Dispersar-me ao furor do tufão silencioso” (CASTRO, 2004: I, 63). The first book of poems, *Exiladas*, it's a strange choice of poems (like other books by Osório de Castro), where different times and different places are mixed, without an organized chronologic or a thematic plan. It is always difficult to establish in his poetry an evolution or a rupture: continuity is confused with change. Published only in 1906, we can find in *Exiladas* poems about lost passions of his youth, illusions of a mature age, cradles and coffins, travels to Spain, France, England, India, Ireland, North of Africa, the Netherlands, Europe, and the evocation of shadows, sunsets, autumns, dead leaves, flowers, and moonlights in Goa, ruins of castles from the middle ages by a barbarian poet, broken Venus of a classical Greece, fallen empires proclaimed by Nero or Caesar.

²² CASTRO, 2004: I, 273-288.

tristis”, commonly “Coral Jasmine” or “Night Jasmine”. Garcia da Orta described it in his *Dialogues*, saying what an Occidental poet would say:

“[...] they say that this tree was the daughter of a great man, called Parizataco, who was in love with the sun. And after being abandoned by her lover, she killed herself, as it is used in this country. From her ashes a tree was born, and its flowers despise the sun when it arrives: it looks like Ovid was from this part of the world, because also this poet composed fables in a similar way)”²³

Mixed themes have, most of the time, a harmonious correspondence between the Occidental and Oriental cultures. The Portuguese called “Árvore-Triste” [Sad Tree] to the tree “Parijat” because they felt exiled like Parizataco’s daughter, in the Indian tale; “talagoia” (Goa) or “cavalo do diabo” [the devil’s horse] (Daman) are the popular names of the “lacerta iguana”, the scientific name of the same saurian; “Terribil” was the name Camões called to Albuquerque. “Barbara” was the name of the poor Indian woman who enchanted Camões. To translate is to facilitate a mutual understanding. In the poem “À janela do Ocidente [At the Occident’s window]” (title of a poem dedicated to Raphael Altamira y Crevea, a Spanish in Goa, 1905), Osório de Castro evokes Roland, Vivian, the search for the Holy Grail, the Celtic myths that shaped both Spanish and Portuguese people, conscious of tensions between Occident and Orient:

“By contemplating again and again the strange destiny/ of the new and beloved sun, agonizing in blood,/ our soul became forever dimming/this endless desire of love, blood, and death”²⁴

²³ Original text: “[...] dizem que esta árvore foi filha de um homem, grande senhor, chamado Parizataco; e que se namorou do sol, o qual a deixou, depois de ter com ela conversação, por amores doutra; e ella se matou, e foi queimada (como nesta terra se costuma) e da cinza se gerou este árvore, as flores do qual avorrecem ao sol, que em sua presença não parecem; e parece ser que Ovídio seria destas partes, pois compunha as fábulas assim deste modo” (Garcia d’ORTA, 1987, *Colóquios dos Simples e Drogas da Índia*/I, Reprodução em fac-simile da edição de 1891 dirigida e anotada pelo Conde de Ficalho, 2 vols, Lisboa, IN-CM, Col. VI, p. 71, “Da árvore triste”). See comparison of three different legends about “Árvore-triste” in Selma VELHO (1988: II, pp. 525-604): Garcia d’Orta, Fernão Álvares do Oriente, and Rodrigues Lobo. Another reference to Portuguese travelers of the 16th century is the durian (Lin. *Durio zibethinus*), a fruit strange to Pessanha, friend of Osório de Castro, who was also curious to taste the fruit, as it was described by Garcia d’Orta, although he never tasted it: smelling like rotten onions at first, but after tasting it, it’s quite good (Garcia d’ORTA, 1987: Col. XX, pp. 297-8 and p. 301).

²⁴ Original text: “De tanto contemplar a enigmática sorte/ do sol amado e novo em sangue agonizando,/ Para sempre ficou a nossa alma turvando/ Este anseio sem fim de amor, de sangue e morte” (CASTRO, 2004: I, 193). Cf. J. Seabra PEREIRA about the identification of the Occidental Culture with the Celtic mythology, reflecting the thesis of Teófilo Braga the most known historian of literature in the 19th century (Introduction to CASTRO, 2004: I, 20).

The first poem of this book, written, for the most part, in India, begins with an aphorism from Dante (“Fa come Natura face in foco”), which evokes Latin gods, the myth of the Phoenix, and also the eternal return of life and love through fire and ashes. The circle of Brahma in one hand, and the flame in the other, he certainly talks, implicitly, with Dante’s words: the circle is the eternity of love, the fire is the invincible force of creation and destruction. Another poem sings the circle of water, “Canção da água” [Water Song]: rain, fountains, sea, and rain. The circle of nature: flowers everywhere. Portuguese flowers assorted with Indian flowers. Violets, carnations, lilies, wisteria, myrtles, jasmines (ind. “mogarins”), roses almost in every poem, implying Osório de Castro’s interest in Botany, but also witnessing the circle of life: seeds, flowers, fruits, and death.

Literature can no longer be read as the result of a local context: it became the reflection of a journey between Occident and Orient. Perhaps, the perception of the circles of projection-reception will change if we consider the importance of the “World Literature” as the concept applied by Helena Buescu: literature must be seen in a new approach – after the construction of “national literatures”, studied by History of Literature and Comparative Studies, since the 19th century –, as a new form of cosmopolitanism, considering, *cum grano salis*, as Goethe’s main project that aims to write dialogues between different national points of view. In this sense, the practice of a comparative culture would lead us to a “prismatic vision” of reality, instead of a contrastive and bipolar perspective: “a new cosmopolitanism that, while not denying its roots in the Enlightenment, is simultaneously capable of a comprehensive inclusion of the new reflexions and perspectives brought by the post-colonial theory to Comparatist Studies”.²⁵

Ao oriente do oriente transformações do orientalismo em poesia portuguesa do início do século XX [To the Orient’s Orient: Transformations of the Orientalism in the Portuguese Poetry of the early 20th Century] is an academic thesis presented to the University of Lisbon, in 2014²⁶. The author, Duarte Drummond Braga, intends to

²⁵ Original text: “[...] um novo cosmopolitismo que, não negando a sua matriz iluminista, ao mesmo tempo nela integra os decisivos contributos e alterações de perspectiva que a teoria pós-colonial trouxe ao comparatismo” (Helena Carvalhão BUESCU (2013) *Literatura-Mundo: observar em Português*, in “Grandes Lições”, Lisboa, Tinta-da-China/ Fund. Calouste Gulbenkian, 1, pp. 141-146.

²⁶ Duarte Drummond BRAGA (2014) *Ao oriente do oriente transformações do orientalismo em poesia portuguesa do início do século XX*. Camilo Pessanha, Alberto Osório de Castro e Álvaro de Campos, thesis presented to the University of Lisbon. Online access: <http://repositorio.ul.pt/handle/10451/11690> (the 9th mars 2018).

prove the originality of the “Orientalism” in Osório de Castro’s work, among others. Castro is always “between” the Occident and the Orient, East and West. Castro seeks to form a bridge, not only, perhaps, to live on, but to see the world in a “stranger and subtler, more ill and less reasonable way, like a melody, and like a peaceful and nebulous fog”, being exactitude synonymous to oscillation or respiration, in and out, you and us, us and me. Reading and living are like a dance danced in circles that are never alike: I live, I read, I digest, *lion made of sheep*, spider made of flies, I digest, I write, I read again, I live a little more, I make a pause, my silence is like a tree in autumn, keeping forces to produce a flower, I live, I read, I digest, *lion made of sheep*, spider made of flies, I digest, I write, I read again, I live a little more: from where am I?...

Osório de Castro is not only a Portuguese poet in India, but a poet in India, of India, in love with India, and, because of that, if not, at least, an Indian Poet, or at least an Indo-Portuguese Poet. He loved the Orient when he arrived from the Occident. He saw the “Orient” without leaving the “Occident”: how could he leave the “Occident” that was in him? Osório de Castro also saw the Occident from an Oriental point of view: with distance. Not only with a geographical distance (just the first step of the journey), but with an intellectual distance (the most difficult part of the journey, the cultural comprehension of other cultures). Surely, Castro can be studied as an example of the influence of French literature in Portugal, through the presence of different literary currents at the end of the 19th century. Or an example of the Indian culture in Portugal. But his literary work should also be studied as an example of the complexity of this simplified concept of “influence”, not only through the presence of “exotic or national topics”, but also to understand the complex functions of “Orient/Occident” as a rhetorical strategy of bipolar thinking and its tricks. Perhaps, by reading him, we can imagine the willow he brought from the Mondego’s humid lands. He planted it in his garden in Lisbon. Where does it belong? To the new or, still, to the old cradle?

“We are all like it. The soul born incidentally, / And life grubbing it from the soil/
forcing its roots wherever they can live. / And we always suffer from the rifts of
living, exile, / Pain and transplants / to always perish with desire.”²⁷

²⁷ Original text: “Somos todos assim. Os acasos da vida/ Arrancam-nos do chão onde à vida nascemos,/ Repartem pelo mundo a nossa alma, trazida./ De exílio, incompreensões, e da dor de

viver,/ E das transplantações sempre na alma sofremos,/E sempre de saudade havemos de morrer”
(CASTRO, 2004: II, 309).