

MARIA GABRIELA LLANSOL MEETS GEORGE STEINER: *THE IDEA OF EUROPE AS A LLANSOLIAN EDENIC SPACE*

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Europe is a map of cafés. This affirmation may be heretic yet the philosopher George Steiner states it, with reason, in his *The Idea of Europe*. If there were no cafés, if the bourgeoisie had not invaded the café and created the public space in the nineteenth century, today Europeans could not openly, passionately, freely discuss politics, aesthetics, poetry, philosophy or other people's lives. The café, writes Steiner, "is a place for assignation and conspiracy, for intellectual debate and gossip, for the flâneur and the poet or metaphysician at his notebook. It is open to all, yet it is also a club, a freemasonry of political or artistic-literary recognition and programmatic presence" (Steiner 2004, 17). Nowadays, however, cafés have become busy, noisy places for tourists to have cappuccinos, to take photographs, to put arms around Fernando Pessoa's statue at the *Brasileira*, in Lisbon, or to sit at the table at *Deux Magots*, in Paris, where Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre used to write. What does this say about Europe?

The Idea of Europe is an essay that Steiner wrote in 2003 for the Tenth Nexus Conference held in the Netherlands. In it, the philosopher suggests that Europe may be described through five key concepts:

1. Europe is a map of cafés and in that sense, "so long as there are coffee houses, the 'idea of Europe' will have content" (Steiner 2004, 18).
2. Europe is a territory that can be crossed by foot.
3. Europe is a cartography of History and Memory: "the European schoolchild, urban men and women, inhabit literal echo-chambers of historical, intellectual, artistic and scientific achievements" (Steiner 2004, 21), as if Europeans lived inside a massive, open-air museum of memories.

4. “The ambiguous weight of the past tense in the idea and substance of Europe derives from a primordial duality,” writes Steiner (2004, 24). Europeans are a people who need to reconcile the legacy of Athens and Jerusalem; Europe’s history is therefore a “tale of two cities” (27).

5. Finally, Europe is a continent with an eschatological awareness of the death of its own civilisation, “it is as if Europe, unlike other civilisations, had intuited that it would one day collapse under the paradoxical weight of its achievements and the unparalleled wealth and complication of its history” (28).

From Steiner’s point of view, the fact that we can walk through Europe contributes towards the shaping of our identity. Philosophers in the polis, merchants, pilgrims, thieves, soldiers, all crossed Europe by foot, from the roads of the Roman Empire to the Christian crusades, from the Napoleonic invasions to the World Wars.

In the short text “Quem é Europeu na Literatura Europeia?,” the Slovakian writer Milan Richter expands the European limits to the borders (physical and political) that define the European as a pilgrim. Richter, a poet and translator whose work is included in the collection *Cartas da Europa*,¹ portrays the European map as follows:

Das planícies sempre cobertas com neve dos Svalbard ou vales vulcânicos da Islândia, com os seus géisers que joram com força, às quentes ruelas de Istambul, no Bósforo. Da saudade do cabo da Roca, contemplando os Açores, da rocha gigantesca de Gibraltar que vê o seu reflexo no estreito com o olhar posto no Tânger marroquino, essa vanguarda da África, aos palácios imperiais de São Petersburgo—tudo isto é terra e água, montanhas e vales férteis, em que caminhou e caminha o europeu (Richter 2005, 35).

This is where Steiner meets the Portuguese writer Maria Gabriela Llansol. The place is not exactly a café, but somewhere in the middle of the European map. They are both building that “roof,”² a cartography of voices, after Babel and beyond Llansolian communities. First published in 1975, *After Babel* is the book in which George Steiner presents an investigation into the theory and processes of

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translation. For some, he says, it is “something of a scandal or monstrosity which the guilds of linguistic scholarship and linguistic and analytic philosophy prefer to neglect.” For others, this is the book in which Steiner postulates that “translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication” due to the fact that “to understand is to decipher” and “to hear significance is to translate” (Steiner 1992, xii).

After *Babel* follows previous papers the philosopher wrote at the beginning of the 1970s, published in *Extra-Territorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution*, in which he already focused on translation, languages and territories. The *Babel* issue is firstly discussed in “The Language Animal” and Steiner poses a question he will later answer: “Why this fantastic diversity of human tongues, making it difficult for communities, often geographically proximate and racially or culturally similar, to communicate?” (Steiner 1972, 69).

Paradoxically, in a world where thousands of languages co-exist, there is less possibility of being heard if you do not speak (or perform your speech) in a major language. In light of Steiner’s ideas, it could be affirmed that several instances of power are determining which languages can and will indeed survive. “When a language dies, a possible world dies with it,” Steiner writes. The Darwinian logic is not applicable to these cases of imminently vanishing languages; there is “no survival of the fittest” (Steiner 1992, xiv). Therefore, Steiner explains, “inherent to *After Babel* is the accelerating disappearance of languages across our earth, the deterrent sovereignty of so-called major languages whose dynamic efficacy springs from the planetary spread of mass-marketing, technocracy, and the media” (Steiner 1992, xiv). Major languages are thus jeopardising the last strongholds of community left and speeding the process of their extinction, as if languages could also be considered biological species.

Europe is facing a similar process—not the disappearance of its languages, but the dissolution of its cultural identities. Europe is today both a synonym for economic exchange and also a cultural, free and trans-linguistic market. Despite

differences between the countries, artists speak an almost unique language, quoting the same references, or, following Steiner's ideas, going to the same cafés, living in streets with the same names, carrying the burden of knowledge on their children's backs. One of the biggest limitations for European artists is cacophony. This noise confirms how artistic creation is starting to be conditioned by European auctoritas, several political and economic institutions that determine which language to speak, which television programmes to watch, which books or films to support, which products are to be adjusted to the standardised free market. Artistic creation is led to an impoverishment process that places the artist in an enormous melting pot of quotations, most of them spoken in the same dominant languages.

“Muitos querem afirmar que as línguas europeias estão no mesmo plano de igualdade. Isto não é verdade. Especialmente no âmbito da literatura trata-se de uma rua em princípio de sentido único, partindo das grandes línguas rumo às pequenas línguas,” posits the Finnish writer Jörn Donner, in “A Europa Vista da Periferia” (Donner 2005, 71). Although Donner is Finnish, he writes in Swedish because he belongs to the Swedish-speaking community in Finland. He thus explains how European artists are lost on a map with too many coordinates: “Apesar de escrever em sueco (...) a experiência histórica reflectida nos meus livros é finlandesa, não sueca. Esta experiência é específica e difícil de transferir. Por isso, neste contexto, ao falar da Europa, sou obrigado a utilizar uma terminologia política para descrever uma comunidade imaginária” (Donner 2005, 79).

On this map, the recently deceased Maria Gabriela Llansol (1931-2008) is also on the fringes of Europe. Here, fringe means, as it does to Donner, seeing Europe as an “imaginary community.” Donner chooses interesting words to describe Europe, especially when they are placed in parallel with the Llansolian text, which can be considered an assemblage of imaginary and European communities in exile, a group of “rebels” in the Tower of Babel.

Llansol was 24 years old when she wrote the collection of short stories *Os Pregos na Erva*, in 1962. Ten years later she

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published *Depois de os Pregos na Erva*, in which her short stories became longer, more obscure, and less coherent (according to the conventions of narrative). During the years leading up to the Portuguese Revolution, Llansol abandoned Portugal and a degree in Law and moved to Lovain, in the heart of Europe, leaving behind a bourgeois family, described as “decadente, bibliófila, com traços de aristocracia,”³ and escaping the oppressive Realism that literature imposed on writers and against which Llansol wrote for over thirty years.⁴

Augusto Joaquim, Maria Gabriela Llansol’s husband and one of her most important readers, has left his mark on Llansolian studies. He wrote in the afterword to the second edition of *Os Pregos na Erva*, 25 years after its first publication: “eu e a cultura em que pensava não estávamos preparados para estes textos. [...] Porque esta é uma obra que ‘obriga’ a pensar e, por vezes, a mudar de pensamento” (Joaquim 1987, 79). What Joaquim is stating is that Llansol’s work is hardly permeable, and probably she left more than just a degree and a family when she sought exile in Belgium. She left the opportunity to become integrated into the Portuguese literary community and proceeded to create a new one, where people are compelled to re-think the way literature and the text are perceived.⁵

In the short story “A Via de Pilatos,” the first in *Os Pregos na Erva*, the author gives the immediate impression that characters are walking figures in search of something. Here Steiner’s “footprint” is obvious. Europe can be crossed by foot. Simão is a wanderer and walks barefoot down the road escaping the sun, tormented by his itching feet. Llansol explains that his feet have troubled him since he was a child, “como se neles estivesse traçada uma rede de estradas para transeuntes incansáveis” (Llansol 1987, 18). Simão has a map drawn on the soles of his feet, a cartography that will lead him inevitably to a pointless death (he is accidentally killed by hunters). He was a pilgrim loved at first sight by a dog who mourns his body in silence next to the “saco com a manta, o pano e o resto do pão [que se] amarravava sobre o

seu interior meio vazio” (Llansol 1987, 21). This is the contents of the bag of a man who belongs nowhere.

The story that lends its title to the book, “Os Pregos na Erva,” starts with Leonardo going out to work in the morning. Like Simão, he also goes down the road. On his way back home, he finds Raquel waiting for him, holding a dead chicken and saying: “Mataram a galinha à pedrada por pertencer a uma judia. Sabes o que são estigmas? [...] Nós temos estigmas. [...] Qualquer dia as pedras acertam nos próprios judeus. Não comprehendo por que matam. Os mortos são horríveis para ver” (Llansol 1987, 28-29). The question “sabes o que são estigmas?” contains an idea that George Steiner develops: the legacy of Jerusalem. However, this issue is the first trace of rebellion that Llansol expresses against what she defines as “o Poder do Príncipe.” According to Llansol, the Prince is the established order that imposes social, racial, sexual, religious or linguistic stigmas, marks of shame on someone’s body.

In the short story “Maggie Only,” Maggie is a black woman waiting for a man at a hostel. The manager refuses to allow her in. “Não há quartos livres?,” asks Maggie. “Não, não há. [...] Bem sabes a razão,” he says. As if it is not transparent enough that he does not give her a room because of her (stigmatized) skin colour, when Petrus arrives and tries to seduce Maggie bringing her to his room, the hostel manager still says he cannot, because “os outros hóspedes não gostam” (Llansol 1987, 115-116).

Like Maggie, Raquel is stigmatized because she is a Jew (or maybe because she is a woman?). Only by enduring such stigmas can she escape the social order that pressured her, walk a different road and join the rest of the stigmatized. This fact leads us on to another premise in Steiner’s *Idea of Europe*. Steiner says that every square, every monument is loaded with history as if Europeans lived inside a big museum. Thus, Europe is a cartography of History and Memory. As a consequence, though the European is a walker, as itinerant man he might as well be an invader, a marching general, a dictator—Alexander, the Great; Napoleon or Hitler. “European history has been one of long

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marches” (Steiner 2004, 21). So that is probably why he, Steiner himself, is “a literate European caught in the spiderweb of an in memoriam at once luminous and suffocating” (Steiner 2004, 23).

There is a memory attached to the house where Cristina and Inês live, an empty house close to a prison camp. In the short story “A Pedra Que Não Caiu,” from *Depois de Os Pregos na Erva*, there is a claustrophobic space, where Inês waits, “à espera que nele criassem qualquer coisa” (Llansol 1987, 51). The maids arrive early in the morning to restore order. Yet, memory will never be revealed although we know that it is connected to the outside. “Quando os nossos pais estavam vivos e o Campo de Prisioneiros ainda não existia, já perguntávamos muitas vezes por que não íamos lá fora. O mundo exterior à quinta era lá fora, lembras-te?,” asks Inês. Cristina answers: “Lembro-me que o sentíamos. Mas tu foste lá fora. Estudaste. E agora, que já cerraste as cortinas, dorme” (Llansol 1987, 52). Inês closes the curtains and at the same time she closes her eyes to what there is outside, as if life inside her memory were enough for the family’s survival. Only when a prisoner escapes from the camp do the girls realise that the boundary fence protects them from some dangers. Inês wants to help him, but her sister does not let him in. Inês recognises that “ela e Cristina tinham nascido para a sombra das coisas, e não para as coisas” (Llansol 1987, 56). They are still inside Plato’s Cave and there is no hole through which to peek.

Europe, like this big house, is a place of memory and comfort. Europe has a past of ethnic cleansings, genocides, tortures, wars, starvation, and epidemics. From the Hundred Years’ War to the Second World War, or, as Steiner describes it, from “Sarajevo to Sarajevo” (Steiner 2004, 30). However, we still feel sheltered in our warm houses, under a common roof. There is a shadow hanging over this comfort zone where prisoners do not bother our peaceful life. Steiner is the first to state it:

There is a dark side to this sovereignty of remembrance, to Europe’s self-definition as a *lieu de la mémoire*. The shields affixed to so many European houses tell not only of artistic,

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literary, philosophic or statesman-like eminence. They commemorate centuries of massacre and of suffering, of hatred and of human sacrifice. [...] Europe is the place where Goethe's garden almost borders on Buchenwald, where the house of Corneille abuts on the market-place in which Joan of Arc was hideously done to death (Steiner 2004, 22).

Europeans have to face up to their memories every day. On account of this, Steiner affirms that Europe has to learn how to negotiate the legacy of Athens and Jerusalem and that to be a European “is to attempt to negotiate, morally, intellectually and existentially the rival ideals, claims, praxis of the city of Sócrates and of that of Isaiah” (Steiner 2004, 24).

From the pre-Socratics to Spinoza, our ontological legacy is, according to Heidegger, questioning. The legacy of Athens is present in our everyday life, Steiner says. Either we talk about the stars (astronomy) or animals (biology); our city (the polis) or its architecture, or even when we live in a democracy. The secular values of Jerusalem are there as well: “There is scarcely a vital node in the texture of western existence, of the consciousness and self-consciousness of western (and, thereafter, American) men and women which has not been touched by the heritage of the Hebraic” (Steiner 2004, 26).

Llansol will also reveal this in one of her most complex stories, “Um Texto Decadente,” in *Depois de Os Pregos na Erva*. In this text, the fragmented speech of the characters, who Llansol prefers to call figures—Dâmaso, Silvestre, Paulo, Manuel, Maria e Ávila—recalls the characters from *The Waves*, by Virginia Woolf (in which Bernard, Neville, Louis, Rhoda, Jinny and Susan interweave their lines in a mosaic of voices). These characters are “caras expatriadas,” surviving the Holocaust, though Llansol never names their trauma. She writes of the existence of the Camp; of characters surrounded by fences; of several executions; of images of carbonised corpses. Llansol describes the atmosphere by explaining how “os bombardeamentos deixavam tudo cheio de bruma, a poeira afundava os limites das coisas estragadas” (Llansol 1973, 101). Llansol may have a reason for not naming the Holocaust, since she may be no longer talking about it. The question is really not what,

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but who is she talking about? “Eu sou uma alienada?” asks Maria, one of the characters, who does not know if the Camp is in fact reality or a nightmare vision (Llansol 1987, 115).

O Livro das Comunidades is the first volume of the trilogy *Geography of the Rebels* and Llansol’s third published book. From this work on, the author will defend a utopian model for society—the Edenic Space—away from the influence History and the past have. Here, Llansol will speak for the first time about the excluded, who she defines as poor or rebels. In the conclusion to *A Restante Vida*, the second volume of the trilogy, Llansol explains why, in her conjecture of the Edenic Space, the main character is “o Pobre.” “O Pobre” is also a survivor of several wars and injustices that the Prince (the established order) made him suffer, but “dele não se poderá sequer dizer que seja um pobre homem,” she writes. “Homem não há, o pobre é imagem da parte perdida da batalha” (Llansol 1984, 79).

The “poor man” is therefore one of the alienated (like Maria), the excluded, the left-over, the life that is left behind, the remnants.⁶ As the text says, “não havendo memória de ser humano mais vale guardar em memória o resto, todos os restos, a restante vida” (Llansol 1984, 100). As a result, the Prince is the perpetuation of power upon the rebels, the ones who were silenced in order to maintain a status quo, because they have been victims since the beginning of History, as Llansol states: “Nas grandes revoltas camponesas, e nas tentativas de autonomia urbana, não foi a burguesia que obteve êxito mas os Príncipes que se confirmaram” (Llansol 1984, 99).

The purpose of both the Edenic Space and the Llansolian text that performs it is to un-say what “other texts” (History) have stated. And History to Llansol is “esse escândalo milenário,” through which power relationships were established “como troca de serviços mutuamente vantajosos, para o senhor e para o escravo, para o príncipe e para o camponês, para o chefe e para a soldadesca, para o clérigo e para o fiel” (Llansol 1984, 100). Not only is the purpose of the Llansolian text to avenge the poor men curtailed by society,

but also to illuminate the (Llansolian) “truth” about the bodies History suppressed.

Augusto Joaquim goes further in his explanation of Llansol’s theory about the “poor man” and re-names it as the “masses.” Historically, says Joaquim, the masses/poor men are “”residues,” they are unregulated bodies and therefore left-overs. The poor man is “indiferenciado, móvel e sem voz própria” (Joaquim 1987, 205-206). Llansol’s text does not, however, contain a Marxist anti-bourgeoisie plot. “O pobre não é o proletário,” she explains (Llansol 1984, 101). So why choose him as her symbol of freedom, the first inhabitant allowed in the Edenic Space? Llansol answers:

Porque ele é o único que nos permite passar além do Príncipe. Já tudo o abandonou. Ele é pois o primeiro em que (e não em quem) a faculdade de criação do dentro se poderá exercer plenamente, já que no fora, no espaço social considerado como única realidade, ele é ninguém, uma coisa de nada. Desmunir-se é a regra do abrir (Llansol 1984, 101).

Ideological disarmament is the only path to rebellion, even if the weapons are only silenced minds. That is why the characters in “Um Texto Decadente” aim for an uprising. “É verdadeiramente digno e justo, razoável e salutar, revoltarmo-nos, fugirmos, destruirmos este Campo com esperança,” says Ávila, the woman that has just one breast (Llansol 1973, 117). They read the Bible and make a commitment to the principles of the “city of Jerusalem,” through the Book of Jeremiah and the texts of Isaiah, because reading is the ultimate passport to freedom. Silvestre writes a Marxist-style manifesto: “Pobres escreveu ele revoltai-vos.”

[Silvestre] insiste na solidariedade de uma comum situação de injustiça, enquanto lhe ocorre uma espécie de silogismo eu tenho frio tu tens frio nós temos frio com o frio que os outros têm então façamos a revolta. (...) somos nós que em última análise lhes consentimos essas máscaras e pergunto-me se não será a farsa pintada na cara deles uma consequência da nossa inércia (Llansol 1973, 143-144).

Llansol is not naming Jews and the Holocaust. Instead, she is already announcing a new order where people can refuse the

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power of the Prince, and this new order is the Edenic Space. She is referring to the people, the remains of historical and social processes that excluded them from power. One could read Marx in Llansol's "utopia"; nonetheless, the Edenic Space is far from human bodies restricted by the inevitable processes that generate capital. It is a space that receives the poor, the rebel, the people, the mad, the remains (human, vegetable or animal). Llansol is not concerned with the Marxist concept of structure. Silvestre shouts at the others that the "direcção pode ser democrática pacífica económica e espiritual é o sangue que põe em movimento a zona vibrante da História os neutros nunca dominaram os acontecimentos" (Llansol 1973, 145).

Llansol only cares about the vibration of the blood, the "fulgor" of the anguish from which questioning comes. This ontological distress leads us to Steiner's last criterion: that Europe has an eschatological conscience of the death of its own civilisation. This fear of the end is directly linked with the influence of the Hebrew on European History, Steiner says, marked by two essential facts: the definition of History as a finite time, as defined by the Holy books, and subsequently by Hegel's historicism; and the two World Wars that, according to Steiner, could be considered two European civil wars (Steiner 2004, 28).

Maybe it is precisely due to this fear that Llansol created the notion of Europe as "Edenic." The Edenic Space is not an elite territory for the excluded. It is, on the contrary, a space of the future, where only metaphysical issues dominate our daily lives. Despite the fact that Llansol tries to avoid the influence of "tradition," meaning the mechanisms of power carried out by political, economic instances or by literature and its genres, this Edenic Space ultimately merges with the idea of Europe as expressed by Steiner: "Europe forgets itself when it forgets that it was born from the idea of reason and the spirit of philosophy. The danger, concludes Husserl, is 'a great weariness'" (Steiner 2004, 30).

The tiredness is not only the origin of a possible cloudiness of human reasoning, but also contributes to a progressive abolishment of people's notions of how power is performed

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upon their bodies and language. To forget Europe is to forget our own identity, Steiner argues; yet to forget is also (and in the most extreme case) to be excluded from a panoply of rules and orders that curb our behaviour, relationships, History or everyday lives. In *After Babel*, major languages are taking control of a network of worldwide services (whether economic, political or cultural) and contributing to the disappearances of voices, languages, communities. Steiner presents this theory again in *The Idea of Europe*, by explaining how Europe needs to understand this process of annihilation of identities in order to maintain its own identity. Indeed, due to the fact that the “computer, the culture of populism and the mass-market, speak Anglo-American from the night-clubs of Portugal to the fast-food emporia of Vladivostok,” Europe will not survive, says Steiner, “if it does not fight for its languages, local traditions and social autonomies” (Steiner 2004, 32).

Os Pregos na Erva and *Depois de Os Pregos na Erva* are two of Llansol’s lesser studied books. These editions are rare and old, and Llansol never wanted to republish them. It is said, in the “Llansolian circles,” that the writer rejected these books because they are too conventional, in the narrative sense, and reaffirmed *O Livro das Comunidades*, her third opus, as the first one of her project for the future-to-come (which Augusto Joaquim names “conjecture”). According to Joaquim, these short stories leave “resíduos de leitura.” He writes: “À medida que os lugares se distribuem pela periferia da polis, as relações de contiguidade aumentam, enquanto que as relações institucionais progressivamente se diluem” (Joaquim 1987, 196). This means Llansol was already escaping History and its chronological order of events and enunciating a new, timeless, space.

In fact, from *Os Pregos na Erva* onward, Llansol mapped in her writing a transnational and ahistoric process where textual borders are flexible and sustained by a complex corpus of concepts she enunciated throughout her oeuvre. Llansolian writing is a process of memory, because she convokes, evokes and invokes figures from a European map, removing them from their “homes,” placing them at a

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crossroads where authors have to learn how to re-write their own texts.

Llansol enumerates several concepts that could be defined as mechanisms to “read” the text (here reading could be seen as the questioning to which Steiner refers or a type of understanding). Although these two books follow the traditional structure of narrative, they show the first traces of the Llansolian eroticism, love triangles and voluptuous bodies inhabiting geometric spaces. Not all of them follow the “once upon the time” path which Llansol rejected firmly in “E Que Não Escrevia.” The experimentation, the suspended sentences, the narrative cuts, the fragments and the figurative beings (dogs and animated nature) that are a presence in later works are already here. There is, then, no reason for critics not to look at these two texts as embryonic for the Llansolian Edenic Space.

What Eduardo Lourenço writes about Europe in the preface to *Cartas da Europa* endows the Llansolian text with a possibility to be affirmed as conjectural. Lourenço states that “desde a sua origem a cultura europeia instalou no seu coração o inimigo que deve vencê-la, a sua própria literatura como luta sem fim pelo sentido do mundo e o enigma do seu destino” (Lourenço 2005, 18). Literature can be a weapon for the excluded of society in their creation of a new conjecture out of a disillusioned Europe. Defining her literature as the only instrument able to give some meaning to the world and in some sense to its destiny, Llansol is already taking up that combat. She is coincidentally following several key points that Steiner enunciates as the *Idea of Europe*. By enunciating the Edenic Space, with its “figures” who live in “community,” questioned by a “lectant” (the committed reader) trying to escape “imposture” language imposed on men, Llansol is ultimately pushing Europe to the contiguous territory of freedom, to a cartography of invisible cities. George Steiner says that Europe has to re-learn how to dream:

With the collapse of Marxism into barbaric tyranny and economic nullity, a great dream, that, as Trotsky proclaimed, of common man following in the wake of Aristotle and Goethe,

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went lost. Free of a bankrupt ideology, it can, it must be dreamt again (Steiner 2004, 35).

The Llansolian Edenic Space follows that “dream” as a possibility for Europeans to have access to a space for their creativity, for their freedom of thought, a space not limited by ideologies, political parties, economic constraints, banks, currencies, languages, media, or even History. In this sense, Europe would not be a map of cafés, but a map of Europeans trying to imagine and build their own Edenic Space.

Notes:

1. *Cartas da Europa* is a collection of short stories and reflections about Europe that seeks to answer the question contained in its subtitle: “O que é o Europeu na Literatura Europeia?” The book assembles eighteen European writers (seventeen from the European Union) who question what it means to be a European and a writer and if there is such thing as European literature. *Cartas da Europa* was commissioned by several embassies in Portugal.

2. The Spanish writer Ramiro Fonte says in *Cartas da Europa* that European literature is “esse telhado comum que nos abriga a todos” (Fonte 2005, 53).

3. Preface, anonymous, in *Depois de os Pregos na Erva*.

4. Maria Gabriela Llansol explains in her book *O Senhor de Herbais* why she rejected literature as we know it: “É em memória das cores perdidas que resolvi, neste texto, olhar de modo diferente o livro, a estética de fogo de Rimbaud, a genial mediocridade de Austen, tentando compreender por que me afastei há trinta anos do universo emocional, sem perda de sensibilidade. Por que fora procurar mais longe” (Llansol 2002, 49).

5. Joaquim writes in the afterword to *Um Falcão no Punho*: “O meu partido de leitura foi, desde sempre, o de encontrar pontes entre esse real e aquele em que vivemos, caracterizado pelo predomínio de grupos estratégicos sobre massas ressentidas e rígidas” (Joaquim 1998, 156). In a way, Llansol was then escaping those “massas ressentidas.”

6. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben designates this as the “remnant,” of Israel, “that is, of the righteous who are still alive at the moment of the Messiah’s coming” (Agamben 2004, 2). One can posit that the same word would be applicable to the “restante vida” about which Llansol writes.

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