

# THE LISBON EARTHQUAKE OF 1755 AND THE PORTUGUESE LITERARY IMAGINATION

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Portugal's best known and most translated, if not most important, late-nineteenth-century novelist, Eça de Queirós, fills his fictional worlds with characters highly disillusioned with their country's state-of-affairs. Toward the very end of his 1878 novel, *O Primo Basílio*, a noteworthy secondary figure, Reinaldo, arrives in Lisbon after a long, exhausting train trip, evidently the fruit of Portugal's backward and unreliable transportation system, and makes a very significant plea as he whines to the hotel clerk:

Há um ano que a minha oração é esta: “Meu Deus, manda-lhe outra vez o terramoto!” Pois todos os dias leio os telegramas a ver se o terramoto chegou... e nada! Algum ministro que cai, ou algum barão que surge. E de terramoto nada! O Omnipotente faz ouvidos de mercador às minhas preces... Protege o país! Tão bom é um como outro!—E sorria, vagamente reconhecido a uma nação cujos defeitos lhe forneciam tantas pilhérias (446).

Reinaldo's peculiar request does not shock readers of Eça, in whose narratives, characters commonly exaggerate the dread of their nation's state, and repeatedly call for a repetition of past catastrophes, like another Spanish invasion as in the late sixteenth century or another great earthquake. Instead, this passage is striking for the way it comments on Portugal's literary relationship to its greatest and most spectacular calamity. The majority of the national and primarily popular narrative production in the second half of the nineteenth century consists of historical novels. A few of these make the Lisbon earthquake the protagonist of their narrative, like Manuel Joaquim Pinheiro Chagas's *O Terremoto de Lisboa* published in 1874, but most of them incorporate the turning-point events of 1755 into their larger narration of eighteenth-century Portugal and its two major epochs: the Baroque period of D. João V's reign, and the

Marquês de Pombal's post-earthquake era of reconstruction and modernization.<sup>1</sup> In these historical novels the earthquake has a minor presence and no sense of present for its significance lies in creating a before and after. Unlike his contemporaries, then, Eça does not relate the earthquake or its contiguous historical circumstances, but rewrites and reinterprets its semantic possibilities by using a complex humorous approach. While begging for another earthquake, Reinaldo might wish to punish a stagnant country, or unconsciously, and more likely, desire its reform. The earthquake's disruptive character could even suggest Reinaldo's call for a political upheaval or revolution. He prays for the cataclysm, but hopes to receive the news by a telegram, invoking two key yet contradicting elements: God and modernity. This echoes the dominant eighteenth-century debates stirred by the earthquake, what Helena Buescu has termed the theological response and the scientific response.<sup>2</sup> While ironically raising these points of view, Eça anticipates their incompatibility. The author's lighthearted yet insightful tone appeals to history's relevance in conceptualizing the present, and suggests that Portugal's past glories-disasters are inseparable from a constructive critique of the status-quo. Like Reinaldo, who "sorria, vagamente reconhecido a uma nação cujos defeitos lhe forneciam tantas pilhérias" (446), Eça also seems grateful for Portugal's past natural disaster, which provides him with rich material to satirize his society and bring his narratives to a close.

Eça's reference, albeit brief, is particularly telling of the subtle yet powerful impact the earthquake has had on the cultural and literary imagination on a national level. The 2005 commemorations of the 250 years of the cataclysm and recent scholarship have attempted to return the event to its specific place, productively putting "Lisbon" back into what is known as the "Lisbon earthquake." Hitherto, the 1755 disaster, what Susan Neiman in *Evil in Modern Thought* calls a conceptually shattering event, which unsettles if not destroys the optimism of the early Enlightenment, had been perceived as an affair in European discourse. Portugal merely acted as the stage for a destruction that fuelled the

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arguments of the *philosophes*. While the epistemological distance turned the catastrophic events into cultural *topoi* of critical and political relevance, the universal aspirations of Enlightenment discourse eclipsed regional forms of coping and creating. In other words, the earthquake took place in Portugal, but little thought has been devoted to considering if and how it has also occurred for Portugal, and if and how it has affected the nation's discursive and cultural history. Focusing on how the earthquake has touched the ideas, the imagination, and the rhetoric of the Portuguese does not exclude drawing a sense of continuity between what Lisbon inaugurates and today's continuing disasters. By looking closer at the Portuguese literary and cultural imagination, we can slowly transform Lisbon from site to agent of a major event that has marked our modernity.

This productive force is evident in the fact that the earthquake continues to inspire contemporary theoretical arguments. The world-shaking event still serves recent discourse as a paradigm of disaster and of modernity's complex definitions. Susan Neiman's previously quoted study, which traces developments of ethical and philosophical attitudes toward evil, turns first to Lisbon for a model event shaping our remaining resources for thinking about twentieth-century evil, as exemplified in Auschwitz, as she locates in Lisbon and in Auschwitz the beginning and the end of the modern respectively. Lisbon marks a profound shift in consciousness, Neiman writes: "Since Lisbon, natural evils no longer have any seemly relation to moral evils; hence they no longer have meaning at all. Natural disaster is the object of attempts at prediction and control, not of interpretation" (250). The earthquake's conceptual shattering forces thinkers and societies to turn to the pragmatic, which was part of becoming modern, and which King José's ministry and Pombal's government endeavored to do.

The earthquake not only helps Neiman write an alternative philosophical history of the concept of evil, but it is also continually juxtaposed to other twentieth and twenty-first-century catastrophes which repeat certain ideological and psychological reactions, suggesting that Lisbon not only

inaugurates some of modernity's contradictions but it is also the beginning of a repetitive cycle. Michel Serres appeals to the Lisbon earthquake as a point of departure for his discussion of the 2004 Asian tsunami. The September 11 terrorist attacks have shown, as Lisbon, that regardless of how spectacular and in some sense unprecedented the disaster might be, the aftermath and consequences of these decisive moments ought to significantly outweigh the events themselves. *Out of ground zero*, a compilation of different case studies in urban reinvention, turns to the reconstruction of the Lisbon Baixa before evaluating downtown Manhattan. A recent colloquium at Berkeley juxtaposing the 1906 San Francisco earthquake with Lisbon and Joshua Hammer's *Yokohama Burning* on the 1923 Japanese earthquake both show that even later natural disasters evoke recurring themes—destructive fires, the intensification of political repression, the selection of minority groups as scapegoats.<sup>3</sup> This implies that modernity's pragmatism, which replaced optimism at Lisbon, has had to live side by side with continuing pre-modern forms of experience and reaction.

The Lisbon earthquake's enduring and evolving meanings have also affected the course of Portugal's cultural production and changing approaches to the disaster. Although much was written after and because of the Lisbon catastrophe, the national accounts are reluctant and few in comparison to the interest the earthquake inspired abroad. I have argued elsewhere that the Lisbon earthquake can be understood as a traumatic episode that forged attention away from the catastrophe, and that comparable to individual trauma, it is the belatedness of the effects of the collective catastrophe that also placed Portuguese national identity at the epicenter of these events. The traumatic experience does not imply that the literary world was paralyzed. On the contrary, the eminent nineteenth-century literary historian, Teófilo Braga, expressed his surprise at the speed with which literary academies were formed after the earthquake, noting how this energy contradicted people's depressed spirits.<sup>4</sup> While in his renowned *História da Literatura Portuguesa*, Óscar Lopes reminds us of how significantly these intellectual groups

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change the social makeup of Portuguese literary history.<sup>5</sup> The members of these academies, the Arcadians, coming mainly from the bourgeoisie, represent the culmination of the neoclassical tendencies in the country, while preparing the intellectual and aesthetic renovations that followed. These figures publicly call for increased attention to the literary arts, but clearly their subject matter evades the topic of the earthquake. They focus their criticisms instead on the decadent nobility and on defending the interests and values of a new social order. Hence, the most palpable and lasting effect of the earthquake on canonical literary production would appear to be the way it marks a turning point in the social structure of the poetic imagination.

These social changes are at the center of nineteenth-century narrations of the earthquake. Ultra-romantic historical novels, such as Pinheiro Chagas's previously cited *O Terremoto de Lisboa* (1874), and *O Prémio da Virtude ou Terremoto de Lisboa* published in 1850 by a non-identified author, turn their attention to how the earthquake allowed for the development of individual virtues independent of social class. They also reinforce the tendency to prefigure the earthquake with a previous tragedy, a structural characteristic prevalent throughout national depictions. These romantic plots also turn to love stories and to the happy coincidences that can result from such tragic events, reminding us of Heinrich von Kleist's well-known *Earthquake in Chile*, based on the Lisbon disaster, which also focuses on the ironies of tragedy. Kleist's narrative is particularly interesting because it narrates only the day of the earthquake and the one following. Only the present moment exists, and as the narrator explains, "No one seemed able to go farther back in his memory than to the earthquake" (258). The Portuguese narratives, on the other hand, are interested in all the other moments but in the earthquake itself, and while the disaster begins to come to the forefront, it is still primarily a strategic part of a larger plot. The approach of these narratives is clearly more indirect, and it is exactly this literary mechanism that marks the significance of the earthquake for Portuguese literature. Ironically literary research on the topic

has followed a similar path. One of the more thorough studies on the earthquake by a Portuguese scholar is Isabel de Campos's *O Grande Terramoto*, which without focusing on Portuguese texts, still draws important connections between the earthquake and Romanticism. Her work studies how the Lisbon earthquake provoked sentiments and subjective responses to the disaster mostly widespread in German romantic poets and writers. It is also with the late-romantic era in Portugal that more fluid rewritings of the earthquake appear and begin to take up the earthquake primarily for its novelistic possibilities.

The poetic texts written in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, on the other hand, suggest that there is no benefit in relating the tragic story. A number of lyrical accounts of the events, most of which have never been reprinted, tend to be, although perhaps unintentionally, self-destructive. For example, Nicolao Mendo Osório's *Oitavas ao Terremoto*, published in 1756, begins by announcing the frustration the poet feels in his obligation to fulfill a foreigner's request to put the earthquake into writing. Osório seems highly disappointed at having to narrate the tragic events, and greatly dissatisfied with the inability of his verses to ultimately capture the scene of destruction. To him, this artistic exercise renews the pain; writing is not a healing process, but a constant recycling or repetition of the trauma. The poet underlines, on the one hand, the importance of his eye-witnessing of the events and admits, on the other hand, that this hinders his ability to put it in words. These writings are important, above all, because they present the rhetorical mechanisms adapted to narrate or not narrate the event, and hence reconstruct a very different cultural memory of the earthquake.

Osório's *Oitavas* and contemporaneous poetic writings begin to identify, in both their successes and failures as literary artifacts, some of the conflicts involved in writing about the earthquake from a national perspective. These accounts transmit a sense of powerlessness, avoid detail, and turn away from the narration of pain. But they also attribute an unnarratable quality to the earthquake, which is what

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makes the local accounts highly significant and different from other representations. While someone who did not experience the event firsthand writes the most famous account of the tragic character of the disaster. Voltaire's "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne" (1755), as Rita Goldberg explains, makes suffering its main subject. Goldberg writes that Voltaire "devotes himself entirely to the victims of the earthquake in his poem" (1). Still, it is not in this poem that Voltaire best captures the wider significance of the earthquake in its relation to Portuguese history. Voltaire's ironic and humorous story in *Candide* of a devastating shipwreck that lands Pangloss and the protagonist on a drowning and earth-shaking Lisbon is far more relevant in conceptualizing Portugal's collective cultural memory of the earthquake. By immediately preceding the quake with a shipwreck, Voltaire's account brings to mind K. David Jackson's essay, in Buescu's edited collection, claiming that the accounts collected for the *Tragic History of the Sea* in 1735-36 by Gomes de Brito prefigure, to use Jackson's words, Lisbon's "naufrágio arquitectónico" (140). In other words, the earthquake continues the narration of the destruction of a maritime empire that these shipwreck stories begin. In *Manifest Perdition* Josiah Blackmore focuses exactly on just how these shipwreck narratives challenge the dominant discourse of Portuguese expansionism. He argues that although they are born of conquest historiography and forged by many into the canon of national heroism, they ultimately have an unsettling agenda. Similarly, we begin to see in different discursive registers that the earthquake also proves to have both a disruptive and constructive effect on the Portuguese cultural history. A variety of texts, and more importantly, specific rhetorical and poetic structures, narrate the destruction symbolized in the earthquake without narrating it directly, and this is far more important than poems devoted to the event and its victims. As we begin to see, it is not stories of the earthquake that ultimately narrate the significance of the event. The Portuguese literary imagination is characterized by an interesting circumlocution, narrating around the disaster. So if in José Saramago's

*Memorial do Convento* the building and construction of a majestic Baroque palace serves to tell a story of the decline of a dynasty and the end of a myth, it is not surprising to discover that the Lisbon earthquake, an event of actual destruction, is used to tell a story of national achievement.

Several lyrical representations interpret the earthquake as an event of construction and invent new myths about Lisbon and the Portuguese. There is a revival of the epic tradition in the post-earthquake period that ultimately strives to write a very different story; a heroic account. The primary intention of *Lisboa Reedificada* (1780) by Miguel Maurício Ramalho, *Lisboa Restaurada* (1784) by Vicente Carlos de Oliveira, and *Lisboa Destruída* (1803) by Teodoro de Almeida, is to celebrate the new city more than to commemorate the victims. These poems, in the form of the epic, and clearly modeled on Luís de Camões's classic Renaissance poem *Os Lusíadas* (1572), attempt to turn the earthquake into national myth and a collective narration. Their reading of Camões's epic is clearly one-sided, interpreting it as solely a glorification of the country's historical feats. They suggest that the earthquake, like the past overseas conquest, presents yet another grand episode in national history. In Camões's classic, Portugal's history and seafaring adventures and conquest act as a pretext for its more important aesthetic intentions. These poems, on the other hand, adopt the epic conventions as a ploy to render the event in a new light. Both the Portuguese individual and society as a whole are represented here as the epic and heroic figures.

While ideologically driven and dated, these poems are interesting for what they show us about how literature responds to such a rupture as the one caused in 1755. The earthquake serves as a pretext to glorify and monumentalize Lisbon, while the return to the classical genre attempts to function as a continuum in cultural history by returning and repeating the past imaginary. Portuguese society needs to culturally recuperate the same way the city must slowly rebuild. The poems act as a cathartic form of expression for the authors, attempt to be a scaffold for the society in which they lived, and create a continuity within Portuguese literary

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tradition. The structure of the poems functions to lessen the importance of the disaster and focus on the constructive outcomes. There is a brief description of the dramatic events, and most of the poems praise the city that existed before and more so the one that came after. Emphasizing the past before speaking of the present and creating a sense of constancy with the tragedy instead of marking its qualities of rupture, is a prevalent narrative technique found throughout varied accounts of the earthquake.

The cantos of *Lisboa Reedificada* sing of the worth of the Portuguese along with their suffering. Beyond glorifying the city's prosperity, the author, like Voltaire, also considers the pain and suffering of the people. Unlike the attention paid to innocent victims in Voltaire's poem, however, here pain emerges as a noble sacrifice which the Portuguese have been divinely chosen to endure:

Choras por ver hum povo castigado,  
Que a sua mesina culpa a tanto obriga,  
E não ponderas bem, que com cuidado  
A quem o Ceo mais ama, mais castiga (26).

The poet attaches to the enduring of pain a transcendental purpose. There are frequent references to classical history, which ultimately compare the foundation of Rome with the inauguration of a new post-earthquake Lisbon. If Rome acquired its glory from a burned Troy, Lisbon too will rise from its own destruction and become superior to what it was before. The earthquake is compared to a war, whose victory requires the necessary evil of torment and misery.

*Lisboa Destruída* by Teodoro de Almeida appeared as late as 1803 and its introductory remarks in the prologue are most striking. The author claims one significant purpose of his narrative is to correct the confusion created by the various previous, disordered, and even false accounts of the earthquake. Teodoro de Almeida cites Voltaire's poem as an example of one of these evidently fantastic descriptions that he strongly criticizes. The canonical genre then guarantees the text's authority over other writing and points of view, and as an eyewitness his testimony promises to reconstruct

the episode accurately. He further claims that, at the time, it was futile to give literary shape to the catastrophe, but now that the nation has begun to look at the disaster from a distant vantage point, the account becomes necessary. These works, while designing their own meanings for the earthquake as a glorious episode in Portuguese history and putting forth their ideological views, also reveal different cultural strategies for coming to terms, or failing to do so, with the disaster. By transcending individual suffering and giving it the form of a heroic battle, in which the nation is at stake, the epic replaces a traumatic loss with a narrative form. These poems turn the tragedy into a celebrated memory, which is unconsciously used to repress recollection of an associated distressing event. In this respect, the epic narrative of a new and modern Lisbon acts as what Freud has called a screen memory.<sup>6</sup> The upsetting details of the destruction of one of Europe's major cities are transformed into a narration of a victory and of one more foundational myth.

Recent studies paying attention to both the role, and lack of role, that the earthquake has played in Portugal have resulted in a critique of a specific dominant discourse; one Paulo de Medeiros has coined a discourse of reconstruction, which opposes what he calls a discourse of catastrophe, more characteristic of the writings that emerge outside Portugal (247). By analyzing trends in Portuguese historiography and other writings, Medeiros notes how ideology has created a blinded view of the significance of the events, and undermined its contribution to the construction of the country's cultural memory. These poems clearly relate to this discourse, although I also believe they do more than just remind us of a conservative ideology, namely they point to important forms and structures used to incorporate destruction, suffering, and the inexplicable into a literary tradition. It is also interesting to note that some discourse of reconstruction emerges abroad. Kenneth Maxwell's historical reading of the earthquake and subsequent political period, both in his contribution to *Out of Ground Zero* and in his *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment*, focuses on Pombal's pragmatic response and efforts to transform Lisbon into a

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bourgeois commercial city embodying the Enlightenment. Maxwell does not ignore, however, the paradoxical elements that become part of the fabric of Lisbon's reconstruction and social reorganization. Although his interpretation of a rising Lisbon can be read as a discourse of reconstruction, it is also accompanied by a critical perspective of the socio-political situation. Despite inescapable ideological characteristics, the discourse of reconstruction is also a form of writing history, and functions in a way as a defense mechanism. For example, the earthquake's impact on the development of the spatial arts and its imaginative possibilities is an especially striking example. Architecture, engineering, and sculpture, and related creative forms, rise to the occasion immediately after the earthquake, because they are able to react productively to the tragedy by turning the pieces into wholes and recreating anew. One could even argue that the most constructive national reflections on the earthquake are José-Augusto França's architectural histories of Pombal's period, such as *A Reconstrução de Lisboa e a Arquitectura Pombalina* or *Lisboa Pombalina e o Iluminismo*. While analyzing the city's planning and development, these texts also trace the extent to which the disaster ultimately shapes the new society and ideas governing Portugal. França and Maxwell respond to the tragedy with a rhetoric of reconstruction that is not merely ideologically driven, but seems to develop on a discursive level the significance of the earthquake for Portugal.<sup>7</sup>

Today more than ever, the Lisbon earthquake is a crucial point of reference which conveys a sense of urgency as we face increasingly complex calamities. In Portugal, it has also inspired a number of recent historical rewritings that take up the earthquake and its protagonists as their main subject matter. But the majority of the more recent fiction does not, in my view, add to the complexity of how the earthquake has been interpreted and represented from a national perspective. Some of these narratives, such as Luis Rosa's *O Terramoto de Lisboa e a Invenção do Mundo*, or Pedro Almeida Vieira's *O Profeta do Castigo Divino*, concerning primarily the Jesuit priest Gabriel Malagrida, are generally unimaginative

and anti-climactic. They nonetheless reveal the desire to return to the event. Júlia Nery's *O Segredo Perdido* and Hélia Correia's *Lillias Fraser* are far more striking because they focus on encounters of anonymous female protagonists and the historical events, and reveal the important tendency to individualize the earthquake. Female characters, while vulnerable due to their social role, experience the tragedy far more intensely, providing us the national account, hitherto missing, of the emotional and personal experience of the earthquake and turning it finally into an inner experience. Hélia Correia's protagonist, for example, an exiled Scottish adolescent who, upon surviving the bloody Battle of Culloden is sent to Lisbon, perceives the tragedy as a feeling and a living thing. The violent and catastrophic character of the battle clearly foreshadows the earthquake. Once again a national literary representation of the earthquake chooses to prefigure the tragedy, as if continuity could furnish some sense to the tragic events. A type of *Bildungsroman*, Correia's novel also has the earthquake experienced by a foreigner, who bears witness to the chaos of the disaster and its aftermath, and who internalizes the earthquake, which ultimately becomes a metaphor of her personal struggle.

Nery's text also points to the important individual experience of female characters in particular. The novel narrates multiple stories, taking place at different time periods, and it is only through a number of letters uncovered hidden in an antique safe that the story of the earthquake can be told, and only partially. This circuitous structure of the novel reveals the necessity for meditations, and suggests like the initial poems about the earthquake that a complete narration of the event is impossible.

Recent literature has attempted to approach the topic on a more subjective level, but the literary techniques used still demarcate a certain protective distance. Yet Portugal's leading critical writers, or rewriters, of Portuguese history, António Lobo Antunes and José Saramago, have focused their fiction on other historical moments, which nonetheless still speak of the importance of disasters for Portugal, whether natural, political, or figurative, but avoid the actual events,

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and focus on surrounding circumstances that also anticipate or contain disasters and catastrophes.

The Portuguese are very fond of the myth that Ulysses founded Lisbon, and I cannot help thinking how appropriate it is that the epic hero's cursor should be Poseidon, the God of earthquakes. It is in this mythical and imagined level that the earthquake has been highly significant for Portugal. The great earthquake can be understood not only as a global disaster that influences western thought and artistic production, but also as an event that shaped Portuguese literary and cultural history on a discursive level. Like the ruins of the Igreja do Carmo marking the Lisbon landscape and bringing the past to the forefront, the earthquake is inspiring contemporary cultural debates, and being remembered and recognized as part of the Portuguese cultural unconscious. Its destruction has invented forms of creating, and its significance lies in the way it has refashioned the national conception of collective memory, forcing us to rethink the relationship between national identity and a history, and fiction, of disaster and rebuilding.

Notes:

1. Some examples of nineteenth-century historical novels dealing with D. João's monarchy include Rebelo da Silva's *A Mocidade de D. João V* (1851), Manuel Joaquim Pinheiro Chagas's *A Corte de D. João V* (1867), while Almeida Garrett's drama, *A Sobrinha do Marquês* (1848) is one of the more well-known fictional renderings of Pombal's governance, as is Camilo Castelo Branco's semi-biographical essay, *Perfil do Marquês de Pombal* (1883), or António de Campos Júnior's four-volume historical novel, *O Marquês de Pombal* (1899). Although, a much later work, Agustina Bessa-Luís's *Sebastião José* (1981), is still highly influenced by the romantic tendencies of these historically minded nineteenth-century novels. Please see Maria de Fátima Marinho's *O Romance Histórico em Portugal* for further examples and readings.

2. In her edited collection of essays on the Lisbon earthquake, *O Grande Terramoto de Lisboa: Ficar Diferente*, Helena Buescu writes in her prefacing contribution: "As respostas que este mal natural, para lá da acção humana, vai originar serão pois fundamentalmente de duas ordens: por um lado a resposta científica ou científicante, que age por redução voluntária do discurso aos limites do saber humano ou das possibilidades de inquirição; a resposta teológica, por outro lado, que escolhe prescindir *a priori* de qualquer tentativa de racionalização do fenómeno, transportando-o integralmente para o terreno da explicação metafísica" (35).

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3. The juxtaposition of 1755 Lisbon and 1906 San Francisco also surfaces in Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo's *In the Eyes of God*. Escalante's study into the culture of suffering focuses on Voltaire's poem as an indication of changing attitudes toward human suffering.

4. In *Os Arcades*, volume 4 of his *História da Literatura Portuguesa*, Teófilo Braga opens his study of the neoclassicists by referring to the earthquake's significant impact on the literary field. Braga explains that the new and inspired group of enlightened and middle-class figures found an academy immediately after the catastrophe which would reform the poetic, rhetorical, and linguistic national production. The energy that writers like Correia Garção and Miguel de Figueiredo demonstrate must have contradicted the shock, which plagued most of society and artistic circles alike.

5. Óscar Lopes and António José Saraiva argue that these groups not only prepare "a evolução literária no sentido do realismo burguês setecentista" but that it is of particular interest that such an initiative comes "não da corte nem da nobreza de sangue, mas de filhos da burguesia em fase de se candidatarem ao alto funcionalismo judicial. Nos dois séculos seguintes pode dizer-se que as sucessivas gerações literárias se constelaram sempre em torno de personalidades que se destacavam, à saída da Universidade, por uma receptividade mais viva aos novos problemas e correntes doutrinárias" (596).

6. In 1899 Sigmund Freud called screen memories those which were not genuine memories of actual events but rather other memories that served to hide shocking recollections. These other visual memories, Freud argued, were not pictures of reality or of actual childhood experience, but fantasies, distortions, or screens that allowed one to avoid facing what really happened. This central idea, that conscious recollections are inevitably distorted by a person's desires and unconscious conflicts, became a fundamental conjecture of psychoanalysis.

7. Part of my effort to study the importance of the earthquake for Portugal is also to show that the Lisbon earthquake is not only a European event. It is not only part of a Euro-centric intellectual history, but connects to other important historical experiences. For example, França describes the rebuilding of the Baixa, and notes how one of the most innovative architectural features of the reconstruction project was the building of a "gaiola;" a wooden frame that structured the stone construction and would allow for flexibility were the foundation to be shaken, hence avoiding a similar destruction were Lisbon to experience another destructive earthquake. These frames were made mainly of massive amounts of imported Brazilian wood. As Lisbon transforms itself from a Baroque to a modern city, the primary material imported from the colony shifts from gold to wood, but the dependent and interdependent relationship between Brazil and Portugal remains unaltered. I am most struck by the contradiction that it is the colonial enterprise which permits the modernity of the Portuguese engineers' ideas to materialize.

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