

Spellbinding Portugal: Two British Women's Travel Voices (Mid-twentieth Century)*

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A part, a large part, of travelling is an engagement of the ego
v. the world.

(Sybille Bedford, "The Quality of Travel")

The systematic research on British travel writing on Portugal that CETAPS (the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies) has been conducting since the 1980s has so far been focused mainly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, many travel accounts on Portugal were published in the twentieth century, most of which have not yet been the subject of in-depth study. Referring to the 1930s and 1940s, Ana Vicente states in *As Mulheres Portuguesas Vistas por Viajantes Estrangeiros (Séculos XVIII, XIX e XX)* that some of those works belong to the "grupo de livros de alguma forma encomendados, subsidiados ou apoiados pelo Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional" [group of books in some way commissioned, subsidized or supported by the

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Directorate for National Propaganda] (Vicente 210, my translation). This organization, created in 1933 by the Salazar government and renamed in 1944 Secretaria Nacional de Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo [National Directorate for Information, Popular Culture and Tourism Board (my translation)], sponsored publications that made the "Portuguese Nation" known and saw in tourism a very important means of publicizing images of Portugal mediated by notions very dear to the regime, namely those of *Portuguese picturesqueness, uniqueness and hospitality*. Commenting on the change of designation from SNP to SNI, Cândida Cadavez stresses the close relationship between propaganda and tourism in this context: "Curiously enough one cannot avoid noticing that one of the words that would replace the *non grata* expression of propaganda was precisely *tourism*." (Cadavez 146)

After World War II, when major growth in tourism began, and throughout Portugal's authoritarian political system known as the *Estado Novo* that governed from 1933 until the Carnation Revolution of 1974, travel books on Portugal multiplied, some of them written by women, such as *The Selective Traveller in Portugal* (London, 1949) by Ann Bridge and Susan Lowndes, *The Young Traveller in Portugal* (London, 1955) by Honor Wyatt, and *This Delicious Land Portugal* (London, 1956) by Marie Noële Kelly. But apart from the accounts published in book form, there are short narratives on Portugal scattered among the British periodical press and British collections of essays which have not yet been inventoried and have not received the attention they deserve. It is the aim of this essay to analyse two such cases, namely "Notes on a Journey in Portugal" (1958) by Sybille Bedford (1911-2006, née von Schoenebeck), and "Lisbon: City as Art" by Brigid Brophy (1929-1995). Both authors, the first a novelist, biographer, essayist, critic and polemicist, the second also a novelist, biographer, essayist and journalist, were original voices who left us quite different impressions about mid-twentieth century Portugal, although similar in their fascination with this Iberian country.

The daughter of a German aristocrat and his part-Jewish wife, Sybille Schoenebeck was born in Germany in 1911 and grew up in a cosmopolitan and multilingual milieu. She started travelling very early

in life, having been educated privately in Italy, France and England. In the 1920s she moved to Sanary-sur-Mer with her mother and stepfather, where she would meet German refugees who had fled Germany following the rise of Nazism, among them the writers Thomas Mann, Stephan Zweig and Bertolt Brecht, as well as British intellectuals who also settled in that southern France village, namely Aldous Huxley (1894-1963).¹ The latter would become a major influence in her life and many years later, in 1973, Bedford published a two-volume biography of the author of *Brave New World* (1932), the dystopian novel Huxley wrote while living in Sanary. In 1935, in order to obtain British citizenship, she entered a marriage of convenience with a gay English Army officer named Walter Bedford and adopted the surname under which she would sign all her works. The war years were spent in exile in the United States, followed by a one-year period of travel in Mexico – in the company of her lover Esther Murphy Arthur (1897-1962, writer) –, which was the basis for *The Sudden View: a Mexican Journey* (1953), reissued in 1960 as *A Visit to Don Otavio: a Traveller's Tale from Mexico*. Written in English, the language in which she chose to express herself as a writer although she was also fluent in German and French, this was her first book, published when she was already forty-two. Back in Europe, she began working as a journalist and led a nomadic life, until she finally settled in London in 1979, “when her fragile eyes couldn't bear the Mediterranean sun any more.” (“Sybille Bedford”, <http://www.sybillebedford.com>, “Home”).² While living in Italy she befriended Martha Gellhorn (1908-1998), the famous war

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1. It was the white South African poet Roy Campbell (1901-1957), who for some time associated with the members of the Bloomsbury Group, who introduced Sybille Bedford to Huxley. On Campbell, who settled in Portugal in 1952 (and died in this country in a car accident) – after having converted to Catholicism in 1935 and supported Franco's Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War – and became a connoisseur of the Portuguese language and literature, producing a book titled *Portugal* (1957) and translations of Camões, Bocage, Eça de Queirós and Fernando Pessoa, see Miguel Alarcão, “Roy Campbell (1901-1957): o hispanista escocês da África Austral” (*Revista de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses* 16 (2007): 135-157); Miguel Alarcão and Maria do Rosário Lupi Bello, “Roy Campbell (1901-1957): The Life, Times and Opinions of a South African ‘Cowboer’”. (*Revista de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses* 22 (2013): 209-22; and Maria do Rosário Lupi Bello, “O Portugal de Roy Campbell”. *From Brazil to Macao: Travel Writing and Diasporic Spaces*. Editors: Alcinda Pinheiro de Sousa, Luísa Flora and Teresa Malafaia. (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Anglisticos da Universidade de Lisboa, 2013. 323-334).
 2. Sybille Bedford suffered from photophobia.

correspondent. From this period dates her twenty-year relationship with the also American female novelist Eda Lord (1907-1976).

Bedford's work, both fiction and non-fiction, reflects her great curiosity about the world and the human condition. Apart from her four novels – one of them, *Jigsaw: An Unsentimental Education*, 1989, was short-listed for the Booker Prize – and her writings derived from her work as a law reporter, in which capacity she covered for the periodical press some of the most sensational cases of the twentieth century (for instance the trial in Frankfurt, in 1963-64, of twenty-two former staff of Auschwitz concentration camp, to name just one example), Bedford left us numerous articles on three of her lifelong interests: food and wine, of which she was a connoisseur, and travel, often combining all of them in the same piece. *Pleasures and Landscapes: A Traveller's Tales from Europe* (2003), a collection of magazine articles that resulted from her travels in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s through France, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Portugal and Yugoslavia,³ exemplifies Bedford's enthusiasm for the pleasures of life in general and the observation of the foreign Other in particular, whom she describes vividly, wittily, and with a shrewd eye for detail that is characteristic of her style. Bruce Chatwin (1940-1989), one of the most acclaimed travel writers of the twentieth century, was a great admirer of Bedford's work: "when the history of modern prose in English comes to be written, Mrs. Bedford will have to appear in any list of its most dazzling practitioners", he wrote in his "Introduction" to *A Visit to Don Otavio*.

In "Notes on a Journey in Portugal", one of the texts selected for this collection, the author gathers her impressions of "a long stay" in Portugal in 1958, in the company of someone who is not identified ("we"). Only nine pages long, it consists of brief glimpses of landscapes, places, buildings and people she encountered during her stay, written in the kind of "apotheosised reportage" (Morris 12) that, according to Jan Morris (herself one of the best known women

3. In fact this volume was a reissue of an earlier book, *As It Was: Pleasures, Landscapes and Justice* (1990), but this time excluding the articles on legal matters.

travel writers of our time, although she does not like to be classified as such, “as her books are not about movement and journeys; they are about places and people”⁴), defines her style. The opening phrase is effective in captivating the immediate attention and curiosity of the reader, since it states something obvious: “Portugal begins at Portugal.” (Bedford, “Notes” 105) However, Bedford provides an explanation for such a truism without delay: as soon as you set foot in Portugal, whether you enter into it by land or you arrive by sea, the landscape changes dramatically and you at once experience “a sense of pleasure, light as feathers.” (Bedford, “Notes” 106) In the first case, according to the author, who crossed the Portuguese border coming from “the immense and empty landscapes of Castile and Leon”, (Bedford, “Notes” 105) that sensation is particularly intense – a kind of trance, in the words of Sacheverell Sitwell,⁵ quoted by Bedford –, so overwhelmingly beautiful is the scenery of Trás-os-Montes and Minho. In the traveller’s eyes it is only comparable to the mythical land of Arcadia, that earthly paradise of pastoral happiness: “we had entered one of the most innocently beautiful regions of this earth; we had entered into an Arcadian dream.” (Bedford, “Notes” 106) And again, “here, in the province of Minho, the Arcadian dream thickens.” (Bedford, “Notes” 109)

In few but praising words, Bedford registers the beauties of the variegated and polychromatic natural landscapes, the interesting and sometimes extravagant architectural works, both civil and religious, she found in the many towns she visited, showing her knowledge of artistic styles and her fascination with the northern part of Portugal:

4. BBC Two interview in 2016: *Artsnight*: “Michael Palin Meets Jan Morris”.

5. Sacheverell Sitwell (1897-1988) was a prolific English writer, best known as an art critic, music critic and writer on architecture, particularly the baroque. Brother of the writer Edith Sitwell, he visited Portugal five times and published *Spanish Baroque Art, with Buildings in Portugal, Mexico, and Other Colonies* (1931) and *Portugal and Madeira* (1954).

All Portuguese towns are pretty; some are very pretty; a few are exquisite. (...) There is so much to see, so many places – names – one is drawn to, and what one sees is so fresh, so different, so ravishing, that one wants to linger and enjoy. We did not want to leave the fertile North, the Elysian pastures, the land of light and fanciful, white-trimmed domestic baroque. For days we went in circles. (Bedford, "Notes" 108)

In contrast, what she calls "the lions of the traveller's Portugal", (Bedford, "Notes" 106, 110) that is, the more widely-known regions (the word *tourist* is never used), Lisbon included, are hurriedly enumerated in less than one paragraph. But it is not only sight that is pleased by what Portugal has to offer. The role played by the other senses in travel experience and perception, namely smell, taste and hearing, becomes evident through her references to the luxuriant vegetation, food, wines and the unique sound of the Portuguese language:

The general recipe for pronunciation is to forget everything one has ever heard or learnt of Spanish and Italian, to lop off final vowels and as many others as laziness suggests, drawl out the remaining ones, change any consonant into one easier to say, replace all *s'* with a double *shsh*, aim at a nasal twang (a blend of Cockney with Meridional French will do), sing the whole like Welsh, explode it to sound like Polish, and do not forget a hint of Dutch. Begin with the name of the capital: *Leeshshbowah*. (Bedford, "Notes" 107-108)

Aesthetic categories such as *picturesque* and *exotic*, so common in British travelogues on Portugal, are absent from Bedford's impressions: instead, she employs the adjectives "idyllic" and "lyrical" to characterize "the well-ordered, handmade, water-freshed countryside of Lusitania." (Bedford, "Notes" 106)

The native population, too, catches the traveller's attention and Bedford is struck by what seems to her a marked contrast between the "gaiety and lightness" (Bedford, "Notes" 107) of the natural and built landscapes and the taciturnity of people's faces, their dark clothes, their expressionless staring at foreigners, the subjection of women: "Male peasants wear inky tatters; the men in cafés wear inky business

suits; the women are beasts of burden in field and street, and otherwise not seen. (...) Portuguese stares are blank and black, immovable like flies on butcher's meat." (Bedford, "Notes" 107) However, the general impression is extremely positive: "Aside from the inveterate staring, they [the Portuguese] are kind to strangers and take endless trouble." (Bedford, "Notes" 112)

Aware of the derogatory image of Portugal and the Portuguese often conveyed by British travellers, Bedford's representation does not in any way subscribe to already fabricated notions, to the stereotyped dark view perpetuated throughout the ages:

(...) we found the Portuguese people, who work very hard and very long for abominably little, touchingly honest. The modern Portuguese are in fact a mystery. Travellers have complained about them bitterly for centuries – ruffians, robbers, brawlers, filthy, lazy. Now they are browsing, placid, kindly, patient, slow. Laundry is being washed morning, noon and night; a second-class hotel or a Lisbon boarding-house is ten times cleaner than its equivalent in France or England. There is no quarrelling in the streets, hardly any crimes of violence in towns or country. (Bedford, "Notes" 112)

And the practical information she provides concerning what she calls, in another text included in the same collection, (Bedford, "The Quality of Travel" 44) "the material framework of travel", that is, roads, hotels, meals, cost of living, none of it discouraging, complements Bedford's description of Portugal as a country worth visiting for the many *pleasures* it affords to the eye and the palate.

Although she was a journalist with an interest in legal and political matters and held anti-fascist views, she makes no comment on the Portuguese regime of the time. Her gaze is essentially directed at *exterior* things, and it often translates into very concise enumerations and characterizations of the places she passed through, indeed quick "Notes", just as the article's title states, suggesting the speed of a trip by car, as was the case. Curiously, one particular typical feature of Portugal is singled out in Bedford's account: slowness. She perceives it as soon as she enters the country, first in the customs officers, then in

the “slow-moving” (Bedford, “Notes” 106) countryside, with its oxen advancing “hoof before slow hoof” (Bedford, “Notes” 106) and the slow turning of the wheel by the well, and finally in people in general. In her conclusion, the author condenses her global opinion about the Portuguese in a few, “dragging” words: “Painstaking, patient, kind, placid, slow. Above all, very, very, very slow.” (Bedford, “Notes” 113)

This very same impression that Portugal lives remote from the fast rhythm of the contemporary world is, to a certain extent, also detectable in Brigid Brophy’s essay, focused exclusively on the capital city, Lisbon. Here, too, the traveller experiences the feeling of entering another time, not just another geographical space and another mental world. Also like Bedford, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Brigid Brophy, born in London in 1929 to a literary family, was a polemical and provocative English writer who has largely been forgotten. At eighteen she was accepted as a student at Oxford University, only to be sent down the following year for “unspecified sexual misdemeanours.” (Parker) In 1954 she married the art historian Michael Levey (1927-2008), who would later become the director of the National Gallery in London from 1973 to 1987. The couple lived an unconventional relationship and Brophy publicly acknowledged her bisexuality. With her husband and the author and literary critic Charles Osborne (assistant director of the *London Magazine*) she wrote the controversial *Fifty Works of English and American Literature We Could Do Without* (1967), in which they included *The Faerie Queene*, *Hamlet*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Moby Dick*, among others, clearly contesting the established literary canon. She passionately defended the causes in which she believed, having been a feminist, pacifist and activist on behalf of the rights of women, LGB people, prisoners, authors and animals, and her critique of traditional *mores* and societal hypocrisy made of her an *enfant terrible*. Giles Gordon, Brophy’s literary agent who, the day after her death, wrote an article paying tribute to her in *The Independent* (8 August 1995), confirms the fact that the author was by then largely forgotten and sketches an interesting portrait of her:

Atheist, vegetarian, socialist; novelist and short-story writer; humanist; biographer; playwright (...); Freudian promoter of animal rights; children's author (...); tennis fanatic (not least Navratilova) and, on television, football fancier; most loyal of friends; reverer of Jane Austen; lover of Italy; Mozart adorer (...); aficionado of the English National Opera (but not of the Royal Opera House); disliker of "Shakespeare in performance"; smoker of cigarettes in a chic holder and painter of her fingernails purple; mother, grandmother, wife; feminist; lover of men and women; Brigid Brophy was above all an intellectual, which British (although she was Irish) authors aren't supposed to be. We mistrust logical, rational thought in our writers, finding it easier to live with instinct, intuition. Brophy was ever the Aristotelian logician.

Brophy's work, strongly influenced by that of Sigmund Freud and George Bernard Shaw (whom she called "the two mainstays of the 20th century") covers both fiction and non-fiction. Prominent in the latter category are the collected essays in *Don't Never Forget: Collected Views and Reviews* (1966), *Baroque-'n'-Roll and Other Essays* (1987) and *Reads. A Collection of Essays* (1989).

Reads, which Giles Gordon (*ibidem*) recommends to every reader who is unfamiliar with Brophy's work, as it is a stimulating introduction to the author's oeuvre and style,⁶ includes an essay titled "Lisbon: City As Art" which had already been published in 1966 in *Don't Never Forget* – and prior to that, in *Venture*, the US journal (date unspecified). This is confirmed by Brophy in her appendix titled "Why, When and Where" which concludes *Reads*, in which she explains the origin of the essays in the book. In an introduction to an interview with Brophy on 17 August 1975 and which was published the following year in *Contemporary Literature*, Leslie Dock states: "What Brophy considers to be the best, or most representative, of her articles are collected in the nonfiction volume *Don't Never Forget* (1966)." (*Interview* 152)

6. Giles Gordon writes: "For anyone who has not read Brigid Brophy, the 1989 original paperback collection *Reads* is a typically invigorating miscellany."

This means that the essay devoted to Lisbon was of special importance for Brophy, to the extent that she recovered it when preparing *Reads*. In addition to this, it is of interest to bear in mind why Brophy titled her 1966 volume of essays *Don't Never Forget*: the phrase, in non-standard English, which appears at the end of the eponymous essay and which would be the title of the entire collection (Brophy also re-publishes this essay in *Reads* immediately after "Lisbon: City As Art"⁷) was taken from an inscription which Mozart wrote for an English-language friend of his, asking him never to forget him: "Don't never forget your true and faithful friend." (*Reads* 183) The choice of these words as the title for her first volume of collected essays shows Brophy's intention, as she herself states, (*Reads* 183) of first of all appealing for Mozart never to be forgotten, but, since the title also infuses the volume as a whole, we may rightly think that all the topics of the essays in the book are worth remembering – "rescuing" the two essays noted above in *Reads*, twenty-three years after the publication of *Don't Never Forget*, is precisely a way to keep them alive in the public consciousness.⁸ Then, in the case of "Lisbon: City As Art", what should always be remembered?

The gaze which Brophy casts over Lisbon on a visit to Portugal in the 1960s (the exact year is not mentioned) when she was at the height of her literary activity, illustrates the centrality of the theme of art in the author's oeuvre as a whole. The very first words of "Lisbon: City As Art", which might be viewed as the product of a whimsical sense of humour, are disarming, provocative, callous even: "If you must have an earthquake, 1755 is the year to have it". But immediately an explanation follows for such an unexpected statement: "when you rebuild, you will have a full-blown eighteenth-century city." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 83) This therefore to some extent announces the main focus of Brophy's gaze over Lisbon: the built heritage of the city. The author was fascinated by the eighteenth century judging by her much

7. "Don't Never Forget". (*Reads* 96-99)

8. "For *Reads* I have myself rescued a few of the essays that were included in *Don't Never Forget*. I have variously curtailed and expanded them. In such matters of practical information as postal addresses I have brought them up to date." (*Reads* 184)

quoted statement "to my mind, the two most fascinating subjects in the universe are sex and the eighteenth century",⁹ and her visit to Lisbon afforded an opportunity to view works of that time. Staying away completely from the kind of tourist who visited Lisbon for the climate, low cost of living and night life, instead she sought out what, in her opinion, few people, including the Portuguese themselves, are capable of acknowledging: Lisbon's artistic riches and especially its architecture. Brophy does not hesitate to regard Lisbon as "one of the most ravishing works of art in Europe." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 83)

As is common in British travel writing on the Portuguese capital, Brophy's description begins by placing the city geographically, but from the start the powerfully visual and imaginative quality of her language points to the perception that her gaze will be markedly personal, not aligning itself with the programmed readings of the guide books which habitually formed part of tourists' luggage and which Brophy also read (she consulted the 1913 Baedeker,¹⁰ disagreeing with what she perceived as being preconceptions as to the lack of interest of Lisbon's churches): "Lisbon shews its prime artistic inspiration in its choice of natural setting. A handful of hills drops steeply to the estuary. Down them tumbles the city, like a harvest of exotic fruits from a cornucopia." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 83)

"Exotic" is an adjective the author often uses throughout her essay, and truly the admiration she feels for Lisbon is closely related to the idea of *exoticism*, that "modality of Othering, of heightening the Other's strangeness", as Joep Leerssen has defined it. (Leerssen 325) Brophy finds it in the pineapples she sees in shops all around her, to the extent of finding that "the pineapple is a sort of patron fruit to the city", (Brophy, "Lisbon" 83) in the brilliant light which gives Lisbon the charm of the countries of the South, in the city's Moorish heritage, in the "inimitable" sonority of the Portuguese language, with its *-ash* and *-ish* endings which she compares to "the curly tails of arabesques", (Brophy, "Lisbon" 85) in the tiles covering the façades

9. "Review of *Fanny Hill*". *New Statesman* (15 November 1963): 710.

10. Karl Baedeker. *Spain and Portugal*. Leipzig, London and New York: Karl Baedeker, 1913.

of buildings, and in the vivid colours of these, in the extravagance of all this decoration:

Almost every surface in the city is patterned. Most house fronts are tiled, so that they look trellised by some intricate green-and-blue or green-and-yellow flowering plant. Those not tiled are washed in colour – often deep, porous-looking terracotta or midnight blue. Many houses wear curving iron balconies like a flutter of black lace at the bosom. Lisbon pavements are mosaics (...) and often the pavement is patterned with arabesques of black or dark-green on white. (Brophy, "Lisbon" 84)

Knowledgeable about art, possessing a penetrating and heightened visual sensibility and with an eye for detail, Brophy gives us in quick brush strokes, also strong in the suggestive richness of their verbal images, portraits of Lisbon as if they were indeed paintings, eschewing the traditional linear narrative: "Look up a narrow street, and across the top, in full sun, is the façade of a house or – which in Lisbon is usually plainer – a church, lying flat against a vivid matt-blue sky: it is pure backdrop, and the faint sea breeze which is always animating Lisbon seems to send a ripple through the canvas." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 86) She is excited by the exuberance of the fauna and flora and the constant presence of water in the city – "All Lisbon seems to play with water" (Brophy, "Lisbon" 85) –, with the "sea" in the distance (Brophy never refers to the Tagus). People are virtually absent from her narrative, which lacks the ethnographic dimension of much travel writing; she merely touches upon the "black-shawled, black-stockinged women balancing a tray on her [sic] head" (Brophy, "Lisbon" 86) who punctuate the view in black, in a mix of exotic customs and inner sadness and refers to the "men in coats or half-coats with sheepskin collars" (Brophy, "Lisbon" 87-88) in the middle of Spring.

On the other hand, the animals, which she preferred to people, are present throughout: the cat which is "heavy as a baby" (Brophy, "Lisbon" 84) and which sets itself on her lap when she goes to a shoe shop, the black and the white swans she sees in the green spaces of

Avenida da Liberdade, the storks and peacocks of Jardim da Estrela, the latter seeming to her to echo in their cries the madness of Queen Maria I, the founder of Basílica da Estrela.¹¹

Nor does she provide concrete details for her own presence in Lisbon: she does not say when exactly she visited the city, where she stayed, whether she travelled on her own or with a companion, what were the reasons for her visit to Portugal, etc., as so often occurs in travel writing; she confessed her temperament was anti-autobiographical.¹² Only a note in brackets, (Brophy, "Lisbon" 87) written when revising the text for publication in *Reads*, tells us that after "the beautiful flowering of political democracy in Portugal" (1974) she again visited Lisbon. Absorbed in the artistic beauties before her, only very briefly does she touch upon political affairs, notably when referring to the posters on the walls of the arcades in Praça do Comércio. To her reference to the authoritarian regime of the "New State" she adds a hint of decadence: "In the beautiful arcades of the green palace, the paint peels. Above that, the small, economical political posters – which in Portugal mean government exhortations – peel too." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 87)

As already noted, the architecture of the seventeen hundreds is of particular interest to Brophy, and she dwells on it, *reading* it and *writing* it in an original way. First and foremost, it is the geometry of Pombaline central Lisbon that attracts her, leading her to pay homage to the Marquis of Pombal:

11. "When you leave her church [Basílica da Estrela], cross the road and go to the Estrela Garden opposite, you seem to catch an echo of her gauche poignancy in the squawking of the splendid peacocks under the palm trees." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 93-94)

Maria I of Portugal reigned from 1777 and 1816; however, her son Prince João (future D. João VI) became regent in 1799 after his mother was declared insane. The Queen, whose screams were heard throughout the Palace of Queluz, was treated by Francis Willis (1718-1807), the same physician specializing in mental illnesses who attended King George III of Great Britain, but without success.

12. "For reasons which I could trace for a psychoanalyst but which anyone else would find tedious, my temperament is anti-autobiographical. (...) I do not dislike or despise autobiographical novelists: who could dislike or despise Marcel Proust? I cannot, however, be one of them, any more than I can be one of the symphonists. And to a very small extent I do despise the common academic assumption that *all* novelists are autobiographical." (Brophy, "Antonia" 75)

The eighteenth-century genius was for the architecture not just of buildings but of cities as wholes. The Marquês de Pombal, who was Joseph I's Minister at the time of the earthquake, took the opportunity to let in air and light — a deep draught of (in the most literal sense) the Enlightenment, of graced reasoned mathematics. (Brophy, "Lisbon" 86)

She finds pleasure in the perennity of the straight lines of the city's layout, the logic of the symmetrical grid of the shopping area of the city centre, the amplitude of Terreiro do Paço which contrasts with the higgledy-piggledy buildings on Lisbon's slopes: "On both sides of Pombal's design for Lisbon rise cliffs of townscape on which even the eighteenth century could not impose symmetry." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 88) Another place of interest is Basílica da Estrela, which she defines as "Lisbon's unacknowledged masterpiece." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 88) In her description she gives us an eloquent example of the imaginative way in which she translates buildings into words:

The bright white façade of the Estrela, a dizzying fantasy of pierced towers which half-masks the marvellously mannered and elongated dome in the centre of the building, is the apotheosis of sugar-icing architecture: but it is markedly *hard* icing – wedding cake, yet with an undertaste of the funeral feast. Most of Lisbon's churches are sad. (Brophy, "Lisbon" 91-92)

This is the only monument for which the author provides a historical context, lingering with some affection on the "sub-Goya" figure of its founder, Queen Maria I. In Brophy's gaze we find special attention to the female, which also permeates her remarks on the great differences she detected, from the artistic point of view (and not simply here), between Portugal and Spain – which distinguishes her from the many travellers who, through prejudice, tended to regard the Peninsular reality as a single one:

The two countries are as different in *feel* as in language and landscape. Lisbonese churches are almost without paintings of tortures, deaths and atrocities, without crown and thorns. Indeed, you could tour them without discovering that the Christian deity is male. Lisbon is ruled over by a baroque madonna. (Brophy, "Lisbon" 91)

The image of the Baroque Madonna swells up towards the very end of the essay, crossing as it does the two forms of construction, the architectural and literary: "The shapes of Lisbonese architecture are themselves the shapes of a baroque madonna: it is an architecture of heavy bosoms." (Brophy, "Lisbon" 92)

Lisbon, at one and the same time international and provincial, sighing in Cais das Colunas over a lost empire, sad and yearning Lisbon, Lisbon at once strange and familiar on account of the signs of Anglicisation of its city life (the double-decker buses, the use of umbrellas, the telephone booths and post office pillar boxes after the English fashion) offers to Brophy's eyes an *exotic* architectural spectacle which the author, with her sensibility, seeks to capture "for ever". As she said in the interview referenced earlier: "my fear about civilization is that, if we can no longer make beautiful furniture – and, more to the point, beautiful buildings – which we hardly can, nowadays, the few beautiful ones that we haven't knocked down are not going to last us very much longer." (*Interview* 167)

Brigid Brophy speaks of a Lisbon which to a very large degree no longer exists: on Lisbon streets, one no longer sees black-clad women balancing trays on their heads, the buildings that line Praça do Comércio are no longer painted a "melancholy green", (Brophy, "Lisbon" 87) being ochre instead, there are no swans left in Avenida da Liberdade, and the Banco Espírito Santo e Comercial de Lisboa [Bank of the Holy Ghost], whose name elicits a witty remark from the author – "[it] seems to epitomize, charmingly, humanity's attempt to have the best of both worlds" (Brophy, "Lisbon" 87) — also no longer is. It is as if "Lisbon: City As Art" were a way of preserving a beautiful artistic heritage which a natural catastrophe such as the 1755 earthquake, time or human action can destroy. *Don't ever forget!*

A multifaceted genre particularly prone to generate images of the Other and of the Self and to thematize cultural difference, travel writing has, in recent decades, attracted great attention within the area of the Social Sciences and Humanities and gained the respect of both academics and critics. Travel writers are mediator figures who, through their literary constructs, resulting from their experience of mobility and confrontation with alterity, may shape and circulate positive ideas about foreign cultural realities, thus facilitating openness to difference, empathy, acceptance, understanding, admiration. Sybille Bedford's and Brigid Brophy's gazes, strongly mediated by aesthetic values, subjectified Portuguese reality in very different ways and their representations of the foreign culture visited are quite dissimilar in tone, interests and emotion. The first is more informative, objective, the second more imaginative and powerful in visual terms, although the one as well as the other clearly illustrate how travel writing mingles fact and fiction, truth and invention, memory and imagination – "all geographies are imagined geographies – fabrications in the literal sense of 'something made'", James Duncan and Derek Gregory (Duncan and Gregory 5) remind us¹³ – and how that combination can generate very personal responses and images that resist conventional representations. But both "translations" of that other culture – in the sense that the traveller attempts to articulate his or her encounter with the Other, with strangeness, and, just like the translator, engages in a dialogue with other languages and cultures, "producing what might be described as a form of translation, rendering the unknown and unfamiliar in terms that can be assimilated and understood by readers back home" (Bassnett 22) –, converge in promoting an image of Portugal as a unique, exotic, charming, spell-binding country, thus contributing to shape a favourable perspective of it among Anglophone readers.

13. "Truth is at the heart of all these [the diverse range of textual forms] generic distinctions: the assumed authenticity and greater honesty of a personal diary or correspondence which records personal experiences, when in fact these forms can easily be manipulated with omissions and elisions to meet the agenda of the writer; the veil of untruth that covers the 'fictional' literature of travel, which often reports actual facts and events, disguised as fiction to suit the author's purpose." (Saunders 1)

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