

The *Luso-Brazilian Correspondence*: a narrative of an intercultural transit

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RESUMO

O artigo explora a experiência intercultural entre Portugal e o Brasil, entre 1807 e 1823, de duas famílias oriundas da pequena nobreza rural do Norte de Portugal, com especial atenção ao percurso intercultural feminino. A *Correspondência* é uma representação polifônica de um movimento de transculturação pessoal, familiar, social e grupal, ao longo de quase duas décadas, e funciona como uma tradução por vezes consecutiva, outras vezes simultânea, dos eventos históricos testemunhados. O conceito de tradução intercultural aqui utilizado baseia-se no pensamento de Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006; 2008). Esta análise da *Correspondência* articula os contextos concretos e situados do seu objecto de estudo, com o propósito de construir o conhecimento de diferentes momentos históricos, racionalidades e mundividências.

Palavras-chave: Brasil; Portugal; tradução intercultural.

ABSTRACT

The article explores the intercultural experience between Portugal and Brazil in the years 1807-1823, focusing on two families from the landed gentry of northern Portugal, especially the intercultural journey of the women involved. The correspondence is a polyphonic representation of a movement of personal, family, social, and group transculturation over nearly two decades, and acts as a consecutive and sometimes simultaneous translation of the historical events witnessed. The concept of intercultural translation used here is based on the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006; 2008). This analysis of the *Correspondence* links concrete and situated contexts of what is being studied in order to understand different historical moments, rationalities and worldviews.

Keywords: Brazil; Portugal; intercultural translation.

This article follows the life histories in Portugal and Brazil of the Pinto da França and Garcez families, paying special attention to the intercultural trajec-

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tory of Maria Bárbara Garcez Pinto de Madureira, born in Penafiel in 1779 and married to an officer of Bahian origin, Luís Paulino Pinto da França. During the French invasions she left for Brazil, living with the court in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, from where she would never return. Widowed in 1824, the responsibility for running Aramaré sugar mill fell on her, which she administered until her death in 1851.

This intercultural transit is documented in letters exchanged between various members of the families in question, especially the numerous letters written by Maria Bárbara, whose style is surprising due to its culture and the originality of expression of a woman coming from the rural Portuguese gentry of the second half of the eighteenth century. Maria Bárbara composes a participant vision, lucid and aware of the dramatic events which surrounded the independence of Brazil, often opposed to the versions propagated by the conflicting factions, not hesitating to clarify and admonish her husband and his peers in the *Cortes* in Portugal about the realities of the territory. Attentive of political, military and administrative matters, the family became little by little just a residual note, referred to only when affected by historical circumstances. Maria Bárbara began her journey between cultures as a simple spectator-reader, progressively becoming a commentator-actor-protagonist-author in society, in politics and in history.

This case study illustrates a particular trajectory of intercultural identity transition of a provincial Portuguese lady into an owner of a sugar mill in the *Recôncavo Baiano*, translated in an epistolary narrative that is almost always simultaneous, or immediately consecutive, to this journey. The process of intercultural translation as narrated, both in the first and in the third person, allows the negotiation of a new identity to be accompanied, as hybrid as assertive. The concept of intercultural translation used here is based on the ideas of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who argues that the existence of differences – epistemological and in the common sense and the practices, values and experiences of daily life (in other words cultural differences) – means that comparison has to be made using procedures to look for proportion and correspondence which, taken as a whole, constitute the work of translation. These procedures allow always precarious approximations of the known to the unknown, of the strange through the familiar, of the alien through the familiar. The reiterated exercise of translation reveals that the procedures developed to get discover other forms of knowledge end up being the same as those with which each type of knowledge understand the experience of the world in general.¹ Admitting the diversity of narratives and expressions of knowledge situated, obvious in

the *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira*, the intended analysis of this paper is not immobilized in strict positivist objectivity, but rather is connected with the concrete and situated contexts of its object of study, with the purpose of constructing the knowledge of different rationalities and worldviews. Because “the work of translation is the procedure left to us to give sense to the world after it has lost the automatic direction and sense that western modernity intended to give it by planning history, society, and nature.”²

CORRESPONDÊNCIA LUSO-BRASILEIRA: HISTORY AND PROTAGONISTS

The 127 letters which form the compilation *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira*³ cover a chronological period from 1807 to 1823 and are written by various members of the Pinto da França and Garcez families, belonging to the small rural nobility from the North of Portugal, most of whom had emigrated to Brazil a long time previously, or were linked to this territory by the emigration of close family members.

The first volume, entitled “From The French Invasion to the Court in Rio de Janeiro,” contains the 68 letters written between 1807 and 1821, mostly between Luís Paulino de Oliveira Pinto da França and his father-in-law and brothers-in-law from the Garcez family. Luís Paulino, an army officer, was born in Cachoeira, near Salvador da Bahia, in Brazil, on 30 June 1771, dying in the same country on 8 January 1824 with the rank of general. Returning to Portugal at a few months of age he was raised in Porto, studied law in the University of Coimbra and played a very active part in the patriotic movement that expelled the French invaders from Porto. In 1812 he sailed to Rio de Janeiro, where he took command of a cavalry regiment as coronel. Promoted to general, Bahia elected him as a general to the Constituent *Cortes* of 1821 in Lisbon. In 1823 he was sent by D. João VI to Bahia to make an armistice with the Brazilian revolutionaries. The Portuguese forces, however, had already abandoned Bahia and he had to return to Rio de Janeiro, where he was supposed to meet the other negotiators. D. Pedro refused to negotiate with the Portuguese commission, who decided to return to Lisbon. Pinto da França had to stay behind in Rio de Janeiro, as he had fallen ill. He tried to return in December 1823 on the brig *Glória*, but tragically died at sea before reaching Portugal. He cultivated poetry, and published some compositions in *Jornal de Coimbra*, *Parnaso Brasileiro* and *Miscelânea Poética* from Rio de Janeiro. He

was a *fidalgo-cavaleiro* (noble and knight) from the royal household, field marshal, knight of the orders of Christ, *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception) and *Torre e Espada* (Tower and Sword), and was awarded the gold medal of the Peninsular War. His biography divided between two countries can be summarized in the phrase “Yes, I have two Patrias: Bahia and Porto. The one that saw me born and the one that looked after my early years and enchanted them with its delicacies,” with which he opens a letter sent to Bahia in August 1820 (vol. I, p.196).

We can follow the biographical and geographical journey of Luís Paulino through those to whom he sent letters, as well as those he received them from. In this first volume covering 1807-1813, the letters are still sent from Chaves to Bragança and Penafiel, fruit of the participation of the male members of both families in the fight against the French invaders. From 1813 to 1819, with the return of the by-then Coronel Luís Paulino ao Brasil, letters began to be sent from the court in Rio de Janeiro to parents-in-law in Penafiel and Porto, as well as to brothers-in-law who had emigrated to Bahia. During the next three years letters were exchanged between Bahia, to where Luís Paulino had moved in 1819, after a torturous sea voyage, and the same recipients in Rio de Janeiro, Porto and in Bahia itself.

The recurrent themes in this first set of missives are resistance to the French invasions when they were in Portuguese territory and, after the move to Brazil in 1813, life in the court in Rio de Janeiro, with its sumptuous palace festivities, political intrigues and games of influence, as well as the first signs of change and the winds of independence with the 1817 Pernambuco Revolt, in the suppression of which Luís Paulino played a leading role, winning himself great honors and promotion in his military career. The letters from Bahia, where Luís Paulino was living during the 1820 liberal revolution in Porto, are dominated by the political transformations in which the whole family found themselves involved. In general, Luís Paulino’s letters are peppered with reverential allusions to the Portuguese sovereign and loquacious testimonies of his own fidelity as a loyal servant of the crown, possible strategies of self-protection in the very probable event of the letter going astray. In effect all the correspondence alludes to the insecurity of the postal system, ships and bearers, for which reason many names are encrypted and various narratives are truncated or full of allusions and implied meanings, which only a recipient who was very close to the sender could decode.

The second volume, entitled “Bahian Letters: Liberalism and the Independence of Brazil”, includes 59 letters sent during the crucial period of

1821-1823. Most were sent to Luís Paulino, now residing in Lisbon as a deputy of the first liberal *cortes*, by his wife, Maria Bárbara Garcez Pinto de Madureira, his children and in-laws, who remained in Brazil. However, all the letters sent in reply by Luís Paulino from Lisbon have been lost. The geographic origin of the letters is Salvador in Bahia and the sugar mills of Aramaré and Caboto, which are between Santo Amaro and Cachoeira, in the so-called *Recôncavo Baiano*, near the Paraguaçu River. All were sent to Lisbon. In 1823 reflecting the tragic return of Luís Paulino to Brazil and the unsuccessful negotiations with the *independentistas*, dramatic letters were sent to and from between Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, where the recipient got sick and from where he would embark on his final journey.

This second set of letters is dominated by the narration of the conflict which preceded Bahia's joining the cause of independence, with a deep participant knowledge of the ongoing historic events, as well as questions inherent to running the family sugar mill. Once Brazilian independence had been achieved, there emerges in the letters the family dilemma of the option between two motherlands: Portugal or Brazil? On 13 April 1822, Maria Bárbara wrote in a very significant form: "I love Portugal, I like Brazil and wish it well" (vol. II, p.88). It is also in the second volume of letters that the exceptional female figure of Maria Bárbara Garcez Pinto de Madureira starts to play a leading role. She was the owner of a sugar mill and had a particular trajectory of intercultural translation and transit.

Maria Bárbara Garcez was born in Penafiel in 1779, and at 14 married Luís Paulino, the friend and classmate of her older brother, José Garcez. They would have two sons (Bento and Luís Paulino Filho) and two daughters (Sabina and Maria Francisca). During the French invasions her husband sent her to safety in Salvador in Bahia, Brazil, his native land. In 1813 she would join her husband in Rio de Janeiro. There she would be part of court life until 1819, at which time she moved back to Bahia, from where she would never return to Portugal, despite her protestations of homesickness which she so lamented in her letters. Widowed in 1824, on her fell the responsibility for running the Aramaré sugar mill, which she administered with great energy until her death in 1851. The style of her numerous letters is surprising due to its culture, lucidity and the originality of expression for a woman born in a northern province of Portugal in the second half of the eighteenth century to a family from the rural nobility, a social group in which ignorance was very common, especially among the women. However, it was from this class of provincial nobility, between the robe and the sword, that the 'progressives'

were recruited, permeated with pre-revolutionary ideas, and which formed the contingents of the liberal leadership. In her letters Maria Bárbara cites Camões, reproduces Latin maxims and constantly mentions the new romantic concepts of *patria*, nation, independence and constitutional power. She did not shy away from expressing an intense affection for her husband and the most violent feelings against his enemies.

Maria Bárbara's correspondence allows us, above all, to follow 'live' the trajectory of intercultural transition of a provincial Portuguese lady who was transformed into a *senhora* (literally lady, but meaning owner) of a sugar mill in the *Recôncavo Baiano* in the middle of the war of independence, narrating in the first person the process of negotiating a new identity. The socio-cultural origin of Maria Bárbara was situated in the so-called 'provincial nobility,' a vast heterogeneous and scarcely documented universe. In general, this petite nobility lived in situation of constant economic precariousness, limited to local preponderance. Their sons were invariably sent to military service, to be magistrates, or for ecclesiastical careers, in order to maintain the family house and the mirage of social ascension. All they could do for the daughters was to 'find them husbands' with possessions ("At least when they have money, everything is covered, as they are, as those from here [Bahia] say, white people", Letter from 1807, vol. I, p.50) or send them coercively and without any vocation to a convent, such as the "convents of Vila do Conde and Arouca, which were good and cost little" (vol. I, p.50). In effect, and citing the preface of António d'Oliveira Pinto da França to the first volume,

solutions of resorting to the robe, the army and the Church, were exhaustively chosen through sinecures meant to indiscriminately 'store' human beings who did not produce, lived on the state and progressively aggravated the national ruin. The letters reflect well the phenomenon of dependency on an impoverished state, authorities and an elite who lived promiscuously, the former in granting largesse and the former in intriguing to obtain this. (p.16)

For the Garcez and Pinto da França families, whose houses survived with great difficulties, through the appointment of administrative judges who could postpone foreclosures, Brazil represented a great opportunity for economic recovery, to which was added the presence of Luís Paulino in the court and privileged access to the monarch, which allowed successive graces to be obtained. Thus, thanks to the sponsorship of an uncle who was an appeals court judge long since settled in Brazil, and the influence of Luís Paulino, all the

Garcez brothers (Antônio, Antão, Feliciano, Manuel and Henrique), with the exception of José, came to be based in Brazil in the years preceding the 1820 Revolution. For these reasons progression in careers and the obtaining of positions and largesse took up a considerable part of this Transatlantic correspondence, together with requests of all sorts which poured out of Porto and Penafiel, presented by relatives, friends and neighbors, wanting a word with royal ministers which could satisfy their pretentions.

To the contrary of his in-laws living in Brazil, and the cause of the severest criticisms, Luís Paulino did not spare himself the expenses inherent to anyone who intend to 'represent' in a court where life was extremely expensive and the luxury extraordinary. The public exhibition of status – Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic capital⁴ – was responsible for most of the expenses, which the return to Bahia in 1819, where Luís Paulino would be "the most important figure after the governor" (vol. I, p.154), as inspector-general of the cavalry led to its ague. While Luís Paulino narrates with pride the largesse which his wife received from the 'Grandeos of the Kingdom' through his intermediation (vol. I, p.177), Maria Bárbara's brothers saw him as a megalomaniac, vain and a wastrel, about to ruin himself and drag down with him the family, as the shipwreck the couple and their two daughters suffered on the voyage between Rio de Janeiro and Bahia seemed to show, such was the haste to take up the position granted by D. João VI or, in the words of Antão Garcez, "running in search of honor and money" (vol. I, p.172):

And look at the good news I also received this month! [Luís Paulino] left here on 19 August for Bahia, with all his family, on the occasion of the good winds, with which he could reach there in a journey of 5 or 6 days. However, luck wanted something else. He took an English brig, in order to avoid any insult from corsairs. He freighted it at his own cost, such is his genius, and left with *Mana* (our sister) very sick. His misfortune was such that at the end of 17 days, on the false bar of Bahia, they ran aground at five in the morning with little light. I cannot tell you what our sister told me, since I would not dare. However, think of two poor ladies, with death in sight, in the state they were in, even when they were left in the middle of the sand on an island with people almost like, or worse than, corsairs. Thus, you cannot imagine such affliction until the moment they were taken away. Her letter caused consternation. Her thirst was so great, what they were able to save was destroyed, almost entirely. Look at our poor sister and her family and what they suffered and what for, my brother? This is just what we see. Each day I find myself less inclined to our brother-in-law. Everything is

abundant, everything are honors, and thus, it does not matter to me, but he is married with our sister, whom I love. He is increasingly unbearable. God gave him a moment in which he could have died and left his wife and children of his own genius ... I know him and I know me. Now it is done and I know he is a child of Bahia... (vol. I, p.172-173)

To the eyes of common sense expressed by his brother-in-law, Luís Paulino was, culturally and individually, a 'son of Bahia', despite being in public life a fierce defender of union and an agent of the Portuguese crown. This cultural affiliation, this intercultural miscegenation, justified his ambitious and impetuous genius, as well as his reckless attraction for the endless wealth and opportunities of Brazil. In turn, Luís Paulino was aware of the danger to which he had exposed his family, but preferred to highlight his own heroism and capacity for leadership in the his narration of the shipwreck, presenting it as one of the many reversals of fortune he had successfully overcome.⁵ In his demand for wealth Luís Paulino expressed numerous times his deep fascination for the pomp of Brazil. In 1814, shortly after his arrival in Rio de Janeiro, he wrote to his father-in-law: "This country is beautiful, large and rich, but for this reason someone here who has 200,000 *cruzados* cannot be any figure and can even say he is poor, to live among us" (vol. I, p.92). He also states:

It is a very rich land with an extraordinary luxury due to its natural grandeur and wealth. I have already told you something about the expenses and luxury of this country, which may seem extraordinary, but persuade yourself that, I have only described for you but a shadow of what it is. At this moment there is no court in the world as expensive as this one. It seems that money is of no importance. No rich rattlebox appears, but is sold quickly; things of the strangest taste come here because, on the other hand, no one else would pay for them. A few days ago some rare porcelain and china arrived here. Cups and saucers were sold for 30,000 *réis* each. This is a lot. However, there were some ladies who disdained them and said that cups for 30,000 *réis* could not be good for a tea set. Maria Bárbara has witnessed this with astonishment and gets angry with such luxury... this land is good. However, it is for whoever has lucrative employment, because those who live from their own goods have great expenses and what is worth is that the income of landowners is also great ... [the Aramaré sugar mill] does not produce sugar, it has produced and continues to produce lots of gold. These are the best properties in the world, but this land in fact only gives little money. (vol. I, p.92-93)

During the nineteenth century in Brazil the significance of ostentatious wealth was reinforced, coming to increasingly mean the visible quality of this wealth and its use in social life. In 1819 Luís Paulino wrote to his brother-in-law José, the only one who remained in Portugal, “Do not doubt to see me reach a great position, even to achieve a title” (vol. I, p.155) and the following year, “My relatives here are surrounded by the purest and best nobility, they live in abundance and splendor and thus, having nothing to be ashamed of or to afflict me, I cannot be better. I have travelled in a great steam boat, crossing this spacious Bahia at top speed to attend various functions and invites from the large properties of the *Recôncavo*” (vol. I, p.185). He also stated “Anyone who does not deal with and not spend does not maintain the dignity of their representation, nor preserve their friendships and I have many and good ones in the Court” (vol. I, p.179). However, through the reading of the correspondence exchanged by the couple between 1821 and 1823, it can be seen that all this ostentation was based on constant indebtedment, and that the obtaining of letters of credit and favors of money lenders sustained the social representation of the family.

For those involved in this correspondence Brazil is much more (or much less...) than a ‘new world.’ Brazil is a means through which it is intended to quickly and easily build fortunes, or to recover that which centuries of indigence and maladministration have dilapidated. Fortunes that were real or still utopian, acquired through trade, traffic, ‘mercies,’ the political game, the production of sugar, or matrimonial strategies: all these possibilities are referred to and weighed in letters with the most declared and cruel pragmatism.

THE MEN SPEAK: (BRIEF) WORDS ABOUT WOMEN

The first volume of the *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira* is undeniably dominated by male characters. Of the 68 letters compiled, 60 are handwritten by men and focus on questions of politics, money and games of interests. Symptomatic of this is a missive sent in 1818 between the two Garcez brothers in Rio de Janeiro and Penafiel: after many long pages concerned with request, favors, family intrigues, strategic alliances, questions of money and inheritances – questions which seem to dominate all life, whether in Portugal or in Brazil – the letter concludes with the simple and reductive phrase: “In relation to the women, my friend, it is always the same thing” (vol. I, p.109).

In all the letters the courteous imperative to write to women, whether they are spouses, mothers, or sisters, is not forgotten, but it never is more than an

always postponed intention, declaredly neglected due to a lack of time (and of value, it can be assumed), restricted to mere notes of courtesy at the end of the text. In the discourse of the subjects of all the action and all the writing – which the men appear to be – what representation do women then deserve, mere objects of their decisions and sparse attention? In effect women are represented as objects who should be passively placed in the few acceptable spaces society reserves for them, with it cautiously never being forgotten that “daughters in Brazil at the age of 12 are already women” (vol. I, p.46). In relation to unmarried nieces, sustenance had to be provided through the ‘turns’ of the sugar mill to those who escaped from primogeniture. The married nieces who contested in vain the discrimination resulting from primogeniture are called ‘torments’ (vol. I, p.51). If, despite the best efforts, negotiations for a useful marriage failed, it was possible to send the single woman to an accessible convent. In general women commended themselves on the moderation resulting from Portuguese education, in opposition to the taste for luxury and indolence, which were said to be characteristics of Brazilian acculturation.

In the placidity of the Portuguese province, news from distant Brazil was received with great pleasure, whose luxury and exoticism were difficult to understand, due to the lack of common references in their description. For example: “I have already told you something about the expenses and luxury of this country, which may seem extraordinary, but persuade yourself that, I have described for you only a shadow of what it is” (vol. I, p.93). For this reason many letters contain detailed listings of the presents which accompanied them on the journey from Brazil to Portugal, with rigorous instructions about their recipients and what hierarchy was to be followed at the moment of choice. For the women of the family, fans, earrings, necklaces, scarves, belts, bundles of sugarcane, wood, passion fruit sweets, coffee, “hats from Costa da Mina made by blacks”, flowers, and pearls were sent, amongst many other ‘exotic’ objects.

The Transatlantic narratives written by the women who subsist in the first volume of this collection are the eight brief notes which Maria Bárbara sent to her parents and brothers in Portugal. In the short missive written in Bahia in 1812, sent to her father in Penafiel, Maria Bárbara, then aged 33, reiterates her homesickness and constant remembering of her family; expresses profound happiness at shortly being able to receive her husband who was returning to Brazil; she proudly refers to the military achievements of her oldest son, Bento, in the resistance to the Napoleonic invasions; laments the undefined illnesses and melancholia from which she suffers and ends with some notes about her two youngest children, Luís Paulino Filho and Sabina. Together with this is a

very short ‘annexed letter for her mother,’ with a few short lines about ‘missing her.’ Two years later a new letter can be found, from Bahia to Penafiel, in which Maria Bárbara narrates to her parents the miscarriage she had just suffered, as well as her eternal illnesses and her homesickness; she alludes to the fall of Napoleon and the life of the royal family in Brazil; refers to some religious and palace festivities; dedicates long lines to family intrigues and games of influence in court; and laments the ‘poverty’ in which she lives and the misadventures she has suffered due to the lack of ambition and excessive rectitude of her husband (vol. I, p.86). Curiously these observations are the complete opposite of what Luís Paulino wrote to this father-in-law just a week later: “Yes, I am a victim of great desires and enterprises and I do not have the ability for everything that is proposed to me” (vol. I, p.91).

In the *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira* there emerges, albeit briefly and almost always indirectly, other feminine characters, such as, by way of example, Maria Libória Máxima Guilhermina, mother of Maria Bárbara, two of whose letters are reproduced, actually small exercises in writing in the baroque style, befitting a lady born in a humble family who had recently made a fortune in Brazil. These texts contain nothing other than formulae of amiability, laments about health and the inevitable asking of favors for the bearer. In relation to the two daughters of Maria Bárbara and Luís Paulino – Sabina and Francisca – the letters complement what the biography proves. Maria Sabina, docile and vulnerable lived subject to devotion to a brutal husband and would see her only daughter die, soon afterwards substituted by mixed race bastards who would dissipate the inheritance. In the sole brief letter that exists from Sabina to her father, about a recent sickness of her mother, the young woman includes some extemporaneous notes about the conjugal happiness in which she lives, with a husband “who seems to love me each day more” (vol. II, p.67). Lie or illusion, the truth is that in an almost simultaneous letter Maria Bárbara reiterates that Sabina is unhappy, sick, virtuous and lives isolated on her husband’s sugar mill, this ‘viper’ whom she blindly loves. By her side, Maria Francisca is the last daughter, born in Brazil and who would die unmarried at 48, 13 years after her mother. She would leave to her nephew Salvador, a distant Portuguese, her *sobrado* in the city of Bahia, which was promptly sold. Due to her age, the letters contain only the comments her parents make about her, always praising her and aware that she is a daughter of Brazil: “she has united to the gentle European beauty Brazilian grace and vivaciousness” (vol. I, p.185).

From the reading of the letters collected in the first volume, it could be

understood that the activities of women such as Maria Bárbara and the other women among her companions were restricted to complete leisure, consisting of going to have a bath in the sea on Botafogo beach, visits with the reading and commentary on letters and much satire of the habits of rural provincial Portugal. In 1814 the recently-arrived Luís Paulino wrote: “The painting of the fair, the clogs and long heavy coats, and the rustic gentry, who even make even any mulatto slave from this land laugh, as they are more polished and sugary and more rhetorical than the wise Friar Bártolo in his sermons” (vol. I, p.99). It certainly would have been humiliating for the author of the letter, the brother-in-law José Garcez in Penafiel, to discover that his description of Portuguese habits was the target of public scorn by “Viscountess Vila Nova and other of her lady friends who were with her [Maria Bárbara] when the letter arrived” (vol. I, p.99). In a single paragraph, Luís Paulino declared his breaking with provincial Portuguese and exalts the social circle which brightened the daily life of his family, aware that the community of origin would immediately become aware of this.

The idleness of Maria Bárbara is revealed in the various arguments she evokes in order not to write more often to her family in Portugal, in contrast with the extraordinary volume of correspondence she addressed to her husband, after his departure for Lisbon. From the daughter “who has given her so much to do with the frights which befell with the growing of her teeth” (vol. I, p.143), to the sand that the wind blew on the letter paper, as well as long months taking ‘baths and airs’ in São Cristóvão (vol. I, p.113), these are all pretexts to delay writing. In a short letter in 1818 to her brother in Porto, Maria Bárbara, then in Rio de Janeiro, excuses herself for not writing frequently and maintains the same themes as six years previously: the permanent lament about ‘tears,’ ‘wrinkles,’ ‘sadness,’ longing, the family, the time that passes, the undefined illnesses (vol. I, p.120-1).

In addition to the evident idle daily life, the natural characteristics of an individual identity can be inferred from here, as well as the dynamics of such a large and geographically dispersed family circle. Nonetheless, much of the apathy and unhappiness expressed in Maria Bárbara’s letters arises out of the need to comply with social conventions and the expectations of recipients’ common sense. In other words, Maria Bárbara wrote what was expected of someone with her social role as a military wife, modest and devote and obedient daughter, just removed from her family by her conjugal duties. In reality it can be quickly understood in a reading of the (few) letters written Maria Bárbara and by the (few) references she deserves from her husband and broth-

ers, that she played a very active part in family conflicts and intrigues, not restraining herself from taking sides and forging alliances. It is Luís Paulino who provides the first clue about the 'lady of the sugar mill' who would dominate all this correspondence from 1821 onwards, when delayed in the court, he wrote that he did not have time for the administration of the mill, a task he had delegated to his wife... or that she had taken for herself, much before becoming a widow (vol. I, p.140).

In the male correspondence the woman only assumes a leading role in the context of matrimonial alliances, in which marriage is exclusively connoted with obtaining property and/or social ascension. Here, women are simple transacted objects, necessarily lucrative for the families involved, in a reality that can be summarized by the phrase with which Luís Paulino alludes to the intention of a brother-in-law to contract matrimony: "He has always wanted to marry, as we know, to get money" (vol. I, p.93). In effect the matrimonial trajectory of the brothers Henrique Garcez (a man of court, brigadier in the Brazilian army and commodore of the Order of Christ) and António Garcez (appeals court judge in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro), the most present in this correspondence, is very illustrative. Henrique Garcez married ('took possession of') a rich widow, 'old and ugly' and with many children, with whom there were no children: "Henrique could... if the lady who is not a young girl died, bring 100,000 *cruzados* to the kingdom... They tell me that the boy 'siphoned off' a few thousand *cruzados*. God help him!" (vol. I, p.93, 97-98). The first woman António Garcez wanted to married, chose another, since "the heart won and not the law, because modernism and everything has arrived" (vol. I, p.83). At 40, however, he married a 16 year old girl, "from a good, non-noble, family ... not beautiful, but gallant ... who will help me in old age" (vol. I, p.101 e 163). In a letter to his brother José in Portugal, António Garcez describes with great calculation and coldness the circumstances that ruled the wedding, as well as the relations he had in another form with the opposite sex:

I will come to possess the best part of 60,000 *cruzados* upon the death of the father, who is old, and the mother, as soon as he goes, it will given to my discretion, and of this amount I will receive in goods twenty. So, it is not very much, though there are no others, and if there are girls of that age, they want boys, which I am not. From now on the courting will end, even so because I will only be able to fuck with the price of money or by theft, but by theft there comes a pox which makes life much shorter... I assure you I am not in love, I hold the young girl in high esteem and passions last until the 30s... I have already told

you that my Teresinha brings in properties the value of 50,000 *cruzados* and promises me for the house as soon as we receive it, what comes to 22. To that they are bound. On the same day before tying the knot, this agreement will be satisfied. It comes to 70 and a bit, and upon the death of the old ones, it will be 30 – 40. (vol. I, p.144 and 163)

He also states that he has been dealing with this ‘business’ for two years, with ‘experience and security,’ and that he was satisfied with the prospect that the bride to be would not demand luxuries as “she has been treated by the European system, because her mother is from Lisbon. Her father is a son of the islands. This is a dowry in Brazil, where it is rare for a family not to have ‘goats,’” (vol. I, p.163). It can be understood that the value of the bride increased in an inverse proportion to the acculturation and miscegenation of the family. Once the alliance had been made concrete, he describes with the same crudity in the same paragraph the most petty wedding gifts and resumes the consummation of the marriage as “at first the tears started, for the enjoyments to follow afterwards” (vol. I, p.166).

However, Luís Paulino and Maria Bárbara vehemently rejected this alliance, which they described as ‘embarrassing’ (vol. I, p.186), since the pecuniary value of the bride was not accompanied by an aristocratic title, a condition which seemed *sine qua non* for the couple’s aspirations, which the defamed groom described as ‘ridiculous labels’ (vol. I, p.193). This assumption was proven by the marriages of their oldest son and daughter, Bento and Sabina. For the first born child Luís Paulino had ambitious matrimonial objectives: he chose as her bride the daughter of Baron Santo Amaro, a marriage that would project the family into the heights of the local nobility, with “a financial interest of the greatest splendor of nobility ... whose dowry, apart from what would come afterwards as inheritance, was above half a million” (vol. I, p.197). However, Bento decided to marry the daughter of a coronel, with identical social status to his family, which unleashed the unrestrained fury of his father, who broke with him, calling him in his letters, amongst many other dysphoric expressions, ‘the man who was my son,’ ‘a monster of ungratefulness,’ ‘monster and worthless ... lacking balance and feelings,’ ‘a soul stripped of the love of glory and good representation,’ ‘anyone lacking the highest feelings is not my son,’ ‘vile scum of my issue,’ who married ‘like a black, in the hidden away’ (vol. I, p.197-198). Nonetheless, this case illustrated the growing affirmation of affective individualism, which sometimes led to personal destinies prevailing in relation to the interests of the family.

To compensate this setback to his strategy of social ascension, Luís Paulino explicitly conferred even more luster on the marriage of his daughter Sabina to Rodrigo António Brandão Pereira Falcão, future Baron Belém, a wealthy man who, with all the goods he would receive in inheritance, could become one of the richest vassals in the kingdom: “My grief, far from making me falter in terms of magnificence and dignity, will encourage me to see more in this alliance that is so agreeable to me” (vol. I, p.192). The qualifications of this union, described like the actual commercial contract which it was, are very eloquent: ‘illustrious distinction,’ ‘lavish and valiant,’ ‘born with 300 slaves to serve him,’ ‘better than him in terms of birth, no one,’ ‘an advantageous contract,’ ‘dignity,’ ‘my choice and contentment,’ ‘glory and decency,’ ‘apparatus,’ ‘magnificent,’ ‘great state,’ ‘pomp,’ ‘brilliance,’ ‘servants richly dressed in new uniforms,’ ‘magnificence and delicacy at dinner,’ ‘brilliant ball with full splendor,’ ‘in accordance with all the formalities of weddings of the nobility and people of quality,’ (vol. I, p.197-201). The ostentation of luxury— characteristic of the life in Brazil with which Luís Paulino was visibly fascinated from his first letters – explodes in the detailed descriptions of the formalities and pomp at the marriage of Sabina, in a letter to his brother-in-law José Garcez, with instructions that this be read to his wife’s family in Penafiel. Luís Paulino proves and publicizes his success in the demand common to everyone in the intercultural Portugal-Brazil transit: the obtaining of a fortune and social ascension.⁶

Almost simultaneously, Maria Bárbara wrote about the same subject to her brother, in a much more laconic tone, referring only to the ‘rules and pomp’ of her daughter’s wedding (vol. I, p.202-203). She expresses some concern about the future of Sabina (which her brothers in Brazil shared among themselves without subterfuge, since it was already public knowledge that the groom had various illegitimate mixed race children) and about her husband’s anger with their son Bento. However, she is inexorable in supporting her husband’s disdain for the ‘inferior in nobility and age’ women who the ‘men of the family’ (Bento and his brother António) had married. Without a doubt, Maria Bárbara shared the ambitions and prejudices active in the common sense of this petit nobility without titles, transferred by circumstances to a ‘new world’ in which, if truth be told, little or nothing changed.

As a cause and consequence of the dominant socio-material ambition, nineteenth century Bahian society was strongly hierarchical. At the top of *Recôncavo* society was a rural aristocracy who aspired to the conditions of nobility in the form seen in Portugal. Kátia Mattoso reiterates that in Brazil a noble could be recognized by his lineage or by the placing of his goods and

education at the service of the patria. Even if an individual was not a noble by lineage, he could be thanked by the Emperor in accordance with his willingness to serve the Empire.⁷ Anna Ribeiro de Araújo de Góes, owner of a sugar mill in the second half of the nineteenth century, left an elucidating reference in this respect:

The Araújo Góes from Catu, who there occupy a vast area of territory, always enjoyed the reputation of upright men, who always fulfilled their contracts, never denying the type of aristocracy formed from the much considered class of sugar mill owners, who were the second nobility of this country, as the magistrates in France. Having enjoyed great privileges in colonial times, they had even more guarantees under the Empire, as I saw in my youth.⁸

Kátia Mattoso highlights that, despite the aspiration to the status of nobility, the *Recôncavo* mill owners essentially constituted an aristocracy of wealth and power, which performed and assumed many of the roles of the Portuguese nobility. It was this aristocracy which gave Bahia certain tones of its opulence. Mattoso also argues that endogamous marriage was one of the principal tactics used by these clans to expand their possessions and reinforce social and political ties among the local aristocracy.⁹

However, all these concerns of the Pinto da França and Garcez families were quickly left behind, with the explosion in Porto of the do 1820 *Pronunciamento Liberal* (Liberal Revolt), which led to the *cortes* being summoned and the return of the king to Portugal, and the subsequent developments which would lead to the independence of Brazil under the aegis of D. Pedro. In this troubled moment of history there would also emerge in the micro-cosmos of *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira*, a renowned female character, as independent as the new nation.

THE WOMAN WRITES: MARIA BÁRBARA, SENHORA AND MILL OWNER

The second volume of *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira* (1821-1823) is dominated by the assumption of Maria Bárbara Garcez Pinto de Madureira, now 43 years old and plenipotentiary administrator of Aramaré sugar mill, acquired by her father-in-law in the middle of the previous century. Due to the strong links she had built up with Brazil and feeling indispensable in the running of the mill, she did not go with her husband to Portugal, when he was

elected a deputy to the 1821 constituent *cortes*. These circumstances are at the origin of her 25 letters compiled here, part of the vast volume of correspondence between the couple before Luís Paulino's death in January 1824. Maria Bárbara's letters were now distinguished by her vivaciousness and descriptive rigor, very distant from the idle notes of courtesy and lament previously sent to her brothers and family in Portugal. They also function as a key to comprehending many of the implicit understandings that are sewn throughout the correspondence of the male figures, by unveiling both the true reference of many of their veiled allusions, and the true state of the family finances, in contrast with the descriptions of pomp and circumstance which Luís Paulino repeatedly sent to his in-laws.

In her texts Maria Bárbara attacks and accuses with a singular fervor the political enemies of her absent husband and states that she almost took the initiative of having compromising documents against the conspirators published. She stated that she was capable of killing, inciting Luís Paulino to vengeance and action, complaining of the general laxity of customs and of justice: 'I want to see those infamous scoundrels punished,' 'If I could I would tear out their tongues ... and drink their blood,' 'I, I have the courage to tear out that heart,' 'Defend yourself or I will take your life, I am capable of this, do not doubt it,' (vol. II, p.57-61). As a mill owner Maria Bárbara lived constantly in transit between Bahia and Aramaré, where she would remain alone for long periods, against the will of her children and relatives, since the interior of the state and the Bahian *Recôncavo* were already in the power of the forces fighting for independence. The journey between Salvador and the Aramaré mill, deep in the heart of the *Recôncavo*, was not exempt from difficulties and was done by boat until Santo Amaro and afterwards by horse or by carriage pulled by oxen or horses for around 20 kilometers. One of the risks of isolation was revealed when Maria Bárbara fell sick from 'fever' and no doctor from Salvador would accept to travel to treat her under the 'deluge' which was falling incessantly. With great difficulty and expense, an army doctor and her daughter Sabina managed to mind her there for some weeks (vol. II, p.65). Incidents such as this and the previous episode of the shipwreck remind us that Brazil was still to a great extent a hostile territory that was difficult to domesticate for the white colonial elite.

The letters exchanged with both her husband and her sons, Bento and Luís Paulino Filho, constitute a real 'commercial correspondence,' in which Maria Bárbara mentions precise figures and amounts of harvests, announces the acquisition of cattle, decides income and whether or not to withhold the

part of the children and narrates the severity with which she rules and disciplines the servants:

I will be happy if we reach Christmas with 1200 loafs of bread. I find the cattle very thin and everything has to be done. A of neighbor of ours has already gone bankrupt and I will look after another for Bento, but he does not get any income or moiety; for what I give to Luís I will only forgive the income. If I did not come here we would soon have nothing to mill, not even our farmers from Xangô [the children], as you call them. I have purchased 34 cattle. I am now waiting for the foals, to buy at least 36; but the expenditure is horrendous, the family has bent me double, and how so! God remember me... the still is going bad, since Peregrino, Mocinho and Onofre, such a great thief... The lack of assistance now for the mill is not doing me harm, since I know how to regulate myself. Ah, poor, poor Aramaré, you have been a victim of the great thief Coelho. I am finding things! If we leave together, I assure you that Aramaré will end. This was what was decided... Yes, my Luís, I am alone, alone. You tell me that if you are delayed you will have me collected. I would love to hug you, but believe that if I had not stayed, the Aramaré mill would be in a short time the field where Troy used to be! (vol. II, p.63, 89 and 105)

Through the representation which Maria Bárbara makes of herself in the letters, it can be concluded that her sons had to rigorously account for everything and that their incompetence made her indispensable for the survival of the mill. She justified in this way her choice to remain in Brazil and let her husband leave, exacerbating her concern with the growing family, with the slaves to sustain and the need to create savings and assurance for the future: "And I will finish by saying that by 1824 I want to find myself in Portugal. I want to finish my days in my homeland, kiss again the dear hand of my mother and embrace the brothers left to me. But I do not want to leave mine without bread and to assure this many sacrifices" (vol. II, p.132). The 'sacrifice' of remaining in Brazil acquired an added value in moments of despondency and danger, such as those which followed the departure of Luís Paulino for Portugal (when Maria Bárbara wrote: "Infamous people. I hate it. I will go, I will go as soon as luck allows. I want to leave a country where science and virtue are unknown," vol. II, p.58), or which would arise out of the chaos created by the war of independence: "Of Mother I can tell you nothing, because for four months I have heard nothing of her, as there are no communications whatsoever ... I am not exaggerating: the wages are not being paid, here everything

is expensive, we eat nothing except pastries ... all the ports are forbidden to send any food to the city whatever ... I hope to God that nothing has happened to my Mother, because she is a lady of great respect and judgment; therefore she has to be respected. And also her staying out there [in the mill] means that the goods will not be confiscated" (vol. II, p.138-139), Bento wrote in March 1823. Her first born kept this negative view for a long time, saying that Brazil "is not inhabited by people who know the rest of the world and who have lived in it. Here you do not live, you vegetate," written in an 1818 letter, sent to an uncle in Portugal (vol. I, p.146). This pessimistic vision of Bento contrasts with everything which his father simultaneously praises to the same recipient, describing to him the opulence.

Assuming the role of the courageous mother, leader in the absence of her husband, Maria Bárbara's discourse never shows doubts or asks for authorization. She narrates without wavering the administrative decisions taken, in the context of an evolution/liberation of identity, which the political and historic circumstances provided. However, in order to moderate her assertiveness, without breaking with her emancipation and always remaining within the canons of the expected, Maria Bárbara structures her writings with laments and affirmations on longing and that she is sick, but working incessantly for the good of the country and the love of her husband, now without time to go to the 'baths' which would allow her recover her health.

It was relatively common for the wives of the large plantation owners to assume, when widowed, entire authority and control over their property, including slaves. Charles Boxer is categorical when he states that "there can be no doubt that a widow, rich or poor, could lead a free life, less confined and demure than a married woman and her daughters."¹⁰ In their *História da vida rural no Brasil*, Mary del Priore and Renato Venâncio stated that in 1759 there were already six female mill owners in Santo Amaro and 37 male. In the 1818 Goiás census various female mill owners can be found, such as Dona Marina Pereira, who had bought the property and had 11 slaves working on the plantation.¹¹ In daily life the female element was the center of all family routines and their activities in this sphere had great social significance compared to the labor activities in the public space reserved for men. Ladies of the time were responsible for a whole range of services and work in the home: dealing with teams of cooks, nurses for children, porters, *ganhadores* (slaves who earned money for their masters), spinners, seamstresses, washer-women, women who did ironing, painters, laborers and barbers. The female mill owner played a prominent function in the harmony of the daily life of a patriarchal family

(Mattoso, 1997, p.157). Anna Ribeiro de Araújo de Góes, mentioned above, argues that women had to be prepared to take the place of man, if the situation required this, which is clear in the plots of their novels and moralistic serials. In *Letícia* (1908), for example, the leading character assumes the role of her father after his death, ordering slaves, negotiating with middlemen and selling the production. Maria Bárbara, however, assumed these functions during the life of her husband, when neither the tragic end of Luís Paulino, nor the danger of expropriations during the phase of independence could be predicted. She counted on his complete consent and support, even having two adult sons, who reported and justified everything to their mother, desiring approval, as can be seen in the letter Luís Paulino Filho sent her in February 1822: “The mill is going at full speed and I feel it licit to say that it has not done this in years and I have done it in days” (vol. II, p.66). Ironically, almost simultaneously Maria Bárbara reported to her husband the incompetence of their sons as administrators, which made her vital for the survival of family resources. The protagonists altered depending on the author of the letter, but it is undeniable that in addition to the traditional functions of a women, Maria Bárbara had determinedly added the functions of administration and decision in the exterior space of the mill, a masculine territory *par excellence*, which only shows the character of exception of this person and the family and historic circumstances that surrounded her.

In general, the men and women who commanded the sugarcane plantations were followed by a diversified group of specialized workers and sharecroppers, who orbited on the margins, providing the landowner with their services. These included sugar-masters, purgers, box makers, caulkers, boiler-makers, carpenters, laborers and boatmen, amongst others. To these were added other groups with animated the economic and social life of coastal areas. Merchants, planters, artisans, subsistence workers, and sugarcane laborers, and even unemployed composed the population who gravitated around small and large landholders. The number of slaves which these last two sectors held (from one to many dozens) allows an enormous diversity of social origins and situations to be inferred. Most of the mills were nestled in the forest, which is explained by the greater fertility of the lands covered with a green cloak and the abundance of firewood, necessary for furnaces, fed in a task which lasted at times day and night, eight or nine months. Along with the mills it was common to set up stills, as happened in Aramaré. The mills could not move far from the coastline, under the threat of not being able to compete with the other plantations whose products did not have transport expenses, since there

was a single price for export goods. For this reason most mills were located along rivers such as Paraguaçu, Jaguaribe and Sergipe in Bahia (Priore; Venâncio, 2006, p.42 e p.36-37).

Without a doubt the adversities faced by any mill owner in a Brazil in a time of convulsion were immense, irrespective of their gender. In all the family letters from this time there are constant allusions to debt, credit requests, lack of money, repayment of favors, and the desperate resort to the wage of the first born, to moneylenders and to the improvised sale of boxes of sugar. Maria Bárbara stated that despite being provident and parsimonious, she had even greater difficulty in obtaining credit after the departure of her husband:

In relation to the assistant Almeida, I have already told you that I, even making the greatest sacrifices, in the coming harvest, I want nothing of him, because since you have left here, I am not obliged to him in anything. I have even lately reduced the allowance, since he said he could not and that he made sacrifices. It is I who cannot put up with him. Recently, needing his signature on the two due letters, he refused this without payment. ... What a thieving world! ... I pay clothing for the blacks, ninety mantles, carts, everything, everything, and the still is no use for anything, since *aguardente* is very cheap, as well as sugar. So you know if I like to save or not, since I very much like to take care of me. The worst is that we are without horses and many of the cattle are dying. God give me patience. (vol. II, p.93-94)

To all of this were added the constant political intrigues, family rivalries, generalized enmities, refusals to 'sign letters,' violent weather, illness, death of animals, etc., in a list of setbacks always unmitigated by the courageous forecast of good harvests and fortune in an undefined future, this 'afterwards,' when Maria Bárbara could handover administration of the mill to her son and leave to meet her husband, would never happen. Taking the letters as a whole, it is possible to infer a recurrent rhetorical pattern in Maria Bárbara's discourse: long paragraphs of lamentation for various motives, (health, money, work, the climate, family, politics, betrayal, intrigue, age) all invariably end in a brief declaration of hope that, according to her, would be exclusively motivated by the desire to meet the concerns and expectations of her husband.

Fully integrated in the structures of thought then in force in Brazilian society, Maria Bárbara is assumedly a slaveholding sugar mill owner, essentialist in her animalization of the 'black' collective group, scandalized by the mere hypothesis of emancipation.¹² She expresses the fear that blacks and mulattoes,

freed or slaves, would revolt under cover of conflict among the white elite, but she understands that in this area there occur political manipulations and alarmist strategies: “The damned goats and blacks are our sins, who if they attacked misfortunate families would die horribly at their hands” (vol. II, p.74); “It would not happen, as they say it happened now in Pernambuco, that the blacks and coloreds (a gang of the devil) stoned and beat up the storeowner” (vol. II, p.90); “I do not deny that the mulattoes are notorious. They are, and they are proud, but we have good laws, we gave them people to listen to them and punish them. Did you know that the creoles from Cachoeira had petitioned to be free. They are fools, but the whip will settle this. I warn you, in the name of the captives here, that there are those here who are sending petitions to the *Cortes*” (vol. II, p.87). In effect the numerical weight of the slaves in Bahia and the recent revolts that occurred there could not but frighten mill owners, fearful of a rebellion similar to that of São Domingos, which led to the black republic of Haiti. The idea that only European troops could contain slaves, due to the weaknesses of local forces, was much invoked by defenders the union, and certainly with the intention of capturing the support of mill owners, various voices exaggerated the risk, giving as imminent a formidable slave rebellion. However, not everyone let themselves be convinced, as can be seen in this quote from Maria Bárbara: “Everyday they pretend that the blacks are to be feared so that the troops stay here. Arm the provincial regiments and have no fear. I am in Brazil for 12 years and the dangers that could arise because of slavery in the province Bahia have been talked about so much, but during this time what deaths have there been? Nothing, nothing, only good laws and sweetness. Everything else is lies” (vol. II, p.118). The use of the word ‘sweetness’ to describe the laws and customs which governed slavery in Bahia has to be seen as curious.

Attentive of political, social, economic and military matters, which now dominated almost all the letters, family daily life became a residual note in Maria Bárbara’s correspondence, referred to only when affected by historic circumstances. Her children, her husband, she herself, became social actors in the full meaning of the word, living their daily life on the stage of history, a life with became confused with the construction of history itself. The epistolary narrative is strewn with violent scenes, such as the flight of Maria Bárbara to a Dutch ship in April 1822, during the bloody episodes in Bahia, resulting from opposition to the provincial governor of arms taking up[his position. For all the events a commented participant vision is offered, and if necessary contrary to the versions propagated by the factions in conflict, such as “I saw, I saw in

a newspaper an official letter... I saw, I saw, I am a true witness” (vol. II, p.87). Without advocating independence, rather demanding just and equal treatment for Brazil, Maria Bárbara did not restrain herself from admonishing politicians and criticizing the excesses of all those involved in that historic moment, without distinction. As a privileged participant spectator she vehemently clarifies and exhorts her husband and his peers in the *cortes* in Portugal about what she believes is the reality of the situation and the real aspirations of Bahia, as can be seen in these excerpts from May, June, July and August 1822, on the eve of ‘Ipiranga,’ the Independence:

You cannot have an idea of the rivalry between Europeans and Brazilians, and the damned *praístas* [from the “Partido da Praia”] made this irreparable harm. Do not deceive yourself: nothing can be done with the Brazilians by force. Sweetness and more sweetness, equality and more equality. (vol. II, p.106)

The continuous disorders have put this beautiful Province into pure misery. Its poor inhabitants, who have suffered much. And they are still scolded and still insulted. What else do you want of them? Give them iron? That is all that was lacking. (vol. II, p.113)

I do not understand politics, but in my opinion, with what little I have thought of such a fastidious object as this Brazil. Brazilians are infinitely hurt with some of the things that have been said about this fertile kingdom. And in truth the Deputies who have said that Brazil is some den of blacks, where, forgive me, for long they have been wrong, but the worse is that we pay what is done there. (vol. II, p.125)

I cannot remain silent for much more time. I despair to see in this court that there only appear lies and the truth is hidden, so that poor Bahia is not helped with its calamities. No, no, here they do not want independence. Here they only want to enjoy the privileges that have enjoyed. Brazilians are not stepchildren, they are sons. (vol. II, p.127)

Little by little the appellative discourse is increasingly based on dichotomies between the ‘here,’ and ‘there,’ between ‘this court’ and this ‘fertile kingdom,’ reflecting the distancing and the progressive secession between Portugal and Brazil which being so omnipresent in daily life that it had already invaded thought and individual expressions. Despite the fervor with which she defends her country of adoption, Maria Bárbara does not make an apology of independence, nor does she hesitate in expressing profound horror by the cutting down of trees and the occupation of *Igreja dos Aflitos* by the rebel troops sup-

porting D. Pedro (vol. II, p.128), in a curious proto-ecological note. From a wider perspective, she did not perceive how close independence was nor how generalized and violent the aspiration for it was.

Curiously, in a letter to his father, the firstborn son states that Maria Bárbara is “a lady who does not get involved in politics” (vol. II, p.136). In the male correspondence between the two sons and Luís Paulino, Maria Bárbara is relegated to a mere family role, ignored or reduced to a brief note about her health and her obstinacy in refusing to abandon Aramaré. This alternation between omission and condescendence resulted from the sons’ incapacity to evaluate Maria Bárbara’s real qualities (an incapacity very much dictated by prejudice) and also lack of knowledge of her life of complicity with her husband. This can be associated with the difficulty in accepting to their paternal figure that she is actually the owner of the mill, due to the incompetence that the ‘Xangô workers’ have shown (vol. II, p.63). In reality, the letters which Maria Bárbara wrote to her husband – always confidential and sent with great care, by trusted bearers – did not differ from those of her sons in relation to themes and events narrated, she differentiated herself from them only in the intensity of the lamentations and the expressions of hate and affection.

At the end of this epistolary narrative, which the Pinto da França and Garcez families created in an involuntarily manner, the independence of Brazil and the death of Luís Paulino dispersed its members. Maria Bárbara assumed herself to be an adept of the Brazilian cause and remained in Brazil until her death, as did her younger son. Bento, the oldest, remained loyal to Portugal, but Sabina would follow her husband, a fierce supporter of independence. In a happy epilogue, there remains the radiant description which Bertand Filipe Alberto Patroni made of Maria Bárbara, in *A viagem de Patroni pelas Províncias Brasileiras de Ceará, Rio de São Francisco, Bahia, Minas Gerais e Rio de Janeiro nos anos de 1829 e 1830*. Six years after the death of Luís Paulino, in a widowhood which would last 28 years, the *senhora* of the Aramaré sugar mill still shined in Bahian society, gathered in the Brito de Iguape mill, between Cachoeira and Santo Amaro:

Illustrious and most beautiful widow of marshal Luís Paulino Pinto da França ... The company was chosen: all the rich farmers of Iguape appeared there; abundance and joy reigned everywhere; and the goddess to whom so many offerings were dedicated made the soul of that congress respectable. I heard it sing a brief aria, the sweetness of its vice enchanted my feelings and gave me the same impression that Venus had on the father of the gods, when her lactating breasts

trembled in the celestial council, congregating to decide the luck of the Lusitanaians on the seas of India.¹³

TRANSITS, TRANSLATIONS AND INTERCULTURAL NARRATIVES: THEORIES AND CONCLUSIONS

The *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira* traces the itinerary of a constant movement between cultures, narrating in various voices a process that is not always successful of intercultural transit and adaptation. The need to translate into words the practices, values and realities of a new culture, – in other words to carry out an intercultural translation – is most evident in the letters sent from both sides of the Atlantic and in the commentaries on life in Brazil, in comparison with Portugal. This polyphonic representation of a movement of personal, family, social and group transculturation over almost two decades, functions as a translation that is sometimes consecutive, other times simultaneous, to the events lived and witnessed. This ‘consecutive and simultaneous translation’ has a profound documentary value as it is not subject to the filters of memory, something which always interferes in the process of representations, since remembering is not seeing, but rather reconstructing the experiences of the past, with images, ideas, judgments and values of the present.

Together the autobiographies, the letters, and the diaries compose a sub-genre which can be called ‘literature of the intimate.’ The personal letters, as they are manifestations par excellence of the private sphere, have their writing associated with women, especially at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth. Although the anonymous and daily missivist practice prevailed – a characteristic which does not make it less important, taking into account the new spaces of sociability which the letters constitute –, the correspondence of many women has become a recognized source of study, especially when dealing with influential characters with their vast webs of relations. Women in general were reserved the task of keeping distant relatives informed about daily family life and making more recent news circulate. A type of female specialization thereby emerges acting as a secretary, simultaneously maintaining the ties of family life. In the case of Maria Bárbara, whose domestic daily life included not just family life, but also the supervision of property and the administration of the mill and its slaves, this occurred in a context very distinct from the middle classes in ascension in Europe.¹⁴

Since the letters have the structure of informal communication, this per-

mits their content to occur not just in the narrative of emergencies, but also the narrative of absences, adapting here the concepts developed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2008, p.11-43; 2006, p.87-125). In this case, in *Correspondência* there occurs a narrative of emergence and through this can be heard the subordinate, but rising, voice of women, the colony, and the bourgeoisie, epitomized in the figure of Maria Bárbara. What also can be found here is a narrative of absences, since in addition to the emerging voices, or through (and because of) these same voices, the narrative can still be accessed – in another silenced manner– of private life, of the personal, the intimate, conjugal dialogue, the daily life of the emancipated woman within the current and acceptable social structures. This ‘report of norms,’ this ‘history of private life’ in such an abnormal historical period, and one so full of public events, constitutes a great source of vital information that can complement official histories, information that is usually absent from the canon of great narratives. It allows us understand the infinite diversity of the human experience and the risk that is incurred of, with the limits of knowledge and by the exclusions imposed by each type of knowledge, wasting experience, in other words of taking as non-existent or impossible cultural experiences that are actually available (‘absences’) or possible (‘emerging’) (Santos, 2008, p.33).

The diversity of practices, knowledge and actors resulting from this narrative of absences and emergences could, without a careful critical interpretation, lead to a plurality of narratives and identities closed in on themselves, which are found and lost, without resulting in any constructive interaction. The translation work is, for this reason, the capacity to relate, to communicate, to create reciprocal intelligibility between the experiences of the world, and to find points of convergence, as well as points of divergence. In the letters analyzed here, starting with a Eurocentric vision, new elements are introduced in the daily framework and a move is made towards intercultural translation. Concepts and worldviews are shared, expressing them in the most comprehensible form possible for the reader distant in space and time. However, there exist elements which cannot be translated, for which reason the political incomprehension between the metropole and Brazil is alluded to, the dichotomy between ‘here’ and ‘there,’ the satire expressed by ‘Brazilianized’ ladies toward rural Portugal, among so many other examples of incommunicability. However, this hiatus in communication is also a fundamental part of intercultural translation.

Translation allows reciprocal intelligibilities to be created between various experiences in the world, both the available and the possible, revealed by nar-

ratives of absences and narratives of emergences. In the case of *Correspondência*, due to the multiplicity of voices registered in it, the process of intercultural translation that occurs does not attribute to any set of experiences, either the status of exclusive totality or of a homogenous part. Experiences of the world are seen in different moments of the work of translation as totalities or parts, since they are realities which are not exhausted either as a whole or in part. They also allow us see the subordinate both inside and outside the relationship of subordination, as in the case of the paradigmatic figure of Maria Bárbara, who is both hetero-represented as mother of a family almost deprived of autonomous discourses, and self-represents herself as owner of a slaveholding mill, both eloquent and autonomous. Her knowledge and the other narratives of absence and emergence increase extraordinarily the number and diversity of experiences available and possible, since the work of translation creates intelligibility, coherence and articulation in a world enriched by this multiplicity and diversity (Santos, 2006, p.114 and 119).

Maria Bárbara Garcez started her trajectory between cultures as a simple spectator and passive reader of her social role. As time passed – always moving within the strict limits permitted by the norms – she progressively became a clarified commentator, an autonomous actor, a protagonist of a character, and finally the author of her own role, in society, in politics, and in history. A role she always carried out with resourcefulness, despite (or perhaps because of) being a new role and almost unknown to her and to society in general. Belonging to the dominated group of a seigniorial society, Maria Bárbara knew how to move within the paternalist logic, achieving her objectives, without clashing with the dominant ideology and frequently using the discourse of the dominant. Maria Bárbara evolved within the limitations imposed by the dominant canon and took advantage of her privileged social position to build her own trajectory.

For all those involved in this correspondence, the narrative of personal experience helped to confer sense and coherence on the frequently random and chaotic references that constituted their experience of the real. For this reason, they classify the experience by placing it within a narrative structure, because telling or writing history always involves interpretations, since, among all the experiences lived, the events and personalities to emphasize have to be selected, and this is in itself an act of interpretation. Personal narratives are never simple reflexes of the reality lived, above all they are meditated by the need to represent the individual as possessing a certain sense of identity and control, of themselves and of others. Each territory provides different means

of ideologically mediating the experiences, characters and events. However, when the temporal-spatial territory – like the colonial territory or the space-time of the revolution and independence – is still almost unknown, when it is an unstable space, with various mobilities, without well defined cultural frontiers, when there are no previous ideological mediators, everything has to be reorganized, represented, and translated into an intelligible code.

Pre- and post-colonial Brazil functioned like a zone of contact, using once again Boaventura Sousa Santos' terminology, a frontier zone, where the peripheries and margins of knowledge and practice are the first to emerge. Only the deepening of the translation work allows the aspects which each form of knowledge or practice consider most relevant or central to be brought to the contact zone (Santos, 2006, p.121). Physical space, identity and discourse mutually intersect and influence each other, and the different spaces and territories frequented or represented in images and narratives are experimented and understood in various manners. For Michel de Certeau, the space is activated by the rhetorical practices of those who frequent it, and the semiotic and enunciative options of the traveler privilege, transform and omit spatial elements in order to make them signify something or, to the contrary, nothing at all.¹⁵

In the intercultural contact zones, each cultural practice has to decide which aspect are to be selected for translation. In each culture there are aspects considered too central to be put at risk by the confrontation with the contact zone can represent, or aspects which are considered to be inherently untranslatable to another culture. An example of this, and central to this study of *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira*, is the liberation of the woman from her state of oppression – a basic premise for the maintenance of patriarchal society –, a aspect which could be afforded by the extraordinary historical circumstances occurring in the contact zone of Brazil, though the dominant culture would never put this at risk. The question of what is or is not translatable is not limited to the criteria of selectivity which each practice or knowledge decides to adopt in the contact zone. More than the active selectivity, there is what we can call passive selectivity. This consists of what in each culture becomes unpronounceable due to the extreme oppression of which it was victim for long periods. Deep absences are involved, vacuums without possibility of being filled, emptinesses which give form to the unfathomable identity of the knowledge and practices in question (Santos, 2006, p.121). In the *Correspondência*, the question of slavery is dealt with without any doubts about the question of slavery. The main absence, the main silence is that which, nonetheless, sustains the entire structure of the mill, the economy and society: the slave.

In the case of the *Correspondência*, there is a clear dominion of the themes linked to political and family intrigue, money, and social ascension, as if the practices and values of the Portuguese province had been transported unharmed to the new Brazilian territory. Brazil, an immense space, so different and exotic, emerges in descriptions of the mill, the vegetation, climate, the luxury, the indolence, but transformed into a simple supporter or opponent in the omnipresent narrative of enrichment and social promotion. The contact zones created are never truly hybrid. Everything which does not fit in this great underlying narrative, the guide of all transit between Portugal and Brazil, is simply omitted, since it does not have any significance for the actors in scene. All the processes of silence and production of non-existence which occur in these letters – such as the silencing of women in male correspondence; the silencing of slaves in all correspondence; cultural processes without words which recognize them or nominate them – contribute to the construction and strengthening of asymmetries in the relationship between cultures, individuals, societies and genders, of both colonialism and patriarchy. Because, citing again Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “cultures are only monolithic when seen from outside or far away. When seen from within or from close up, it is easy to see that they are constituted of various and at times conflicting versions of the same culture” (Santos, 2006, p.121).

At the moment of writing the letter what was in play was not only the preservation of family memories, but also the individual and social identity of its author. Memories are constructed by social groups because, although it is individuals who ‘remember’ in the literal meaning of the word, it is the social groups who determine what is or is not ‘memorable’ and also the manner in which something is recorded.¹⁶ It can thus be stated that memory is a constituent element of the feeling of identity, both individual and collective, to the extent that it is also a basilar factor in the feeling of continuity, coherence and the self- (re)construction of an individual or group. The greatest contribution of these letters is not so much in their credibility as a document, in the positivist sense, but as Sidney Chalhoub said about literary fiction, it “seeks reality, interprets and states truths about society, without it having to be transparent or the mirror of the social ‘question’ which it represents and with which it interferes.”¹⁷ The interpretation made here of *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira* seeks more complex meanings by critically analyzing the discourse which rules the logic of the intercultural narrative and the practices which move the representations of the real.

NOTES

¹ See: SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *A filosofia à venda, a douta ignorância e a aposta de Pascal*. Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais, n.80, p.29-30, mar. 2008.

² SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *A gramática do tempo: para uma nova cultura política*. Porto: Afrontamento, 2006. p.124.

³ CARDOSO, António Manuel Monteiro; PINTO DA FRANÇA, António d'Oliveira (Ed.) *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira*. 2v. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 2008. All the references will be to this edition and to the respective pages stated in the text in brackets.

⁴ See: BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Razões práticas sobre a teoria da acção*. Trad. Miguel Serras Pereira. Oeiras: Celta, 1997 [1994].

⁵ “Your Sister and Sabina, who jumped out of bed in their nightshirts, ran around like mad women, almost without sense, from one part to another. Maria Francisca, naked, whom they had dragged along, screamed and seemed to understand the danger. Consider how I was. It was between four and five in the morning. I ran to encourage them and to tell them to calm down, I ran from one side to the other, shouting at people not to lose their minds. Some understood me, others did not (because the ship was English, as well as all its crew) and others did not obey me and everyone looked after themselves. So, in the middle of those horrors, using promises, and then threats, I managed to launch the lifeboat to save the ladies, and this being in the sea, I jumped into it. Under one arm I had Maria Francisca and under the other the papers and warrants belonging to His Majesty, the only thing I saved along with my family. So I rowed towards a coast we did not know, without knowing if on reaching the beach the boat would be torn apart on rocks or if it would capsize. Let me leave the details of the narration and conclude that having been saved, it was a touching scene to see the ladies naked and with their hair loose, kissing the sand and raising their hands and eyes to the heavens! The work I had to save the rest would make a long story ... However, my loss was great, since I had freighted the said ship at my own cost and freighted in it, as it is said, my house in money. To save anything I had to spend two days and nights on the beach, making promises and spending a fortune, and continually going to sea, surrounded by bands and bands of barbarian thieves, in such a way that those who escaped the waves only with great difficulty escaped them” (vol. I, p.179-180).

⁶ Ironically the marriage of Bento would be happy and produce heirs. Bento would be ennobled (1st Earl of Fonte Nova, peer of the kingdom, general, a knight of *Torre e Espada*) and both he and his wife and children – already ‘pardoned’, but always with great resistance on the part of Luís Paulino and Maria Bárbara – would constitute the mainstay of the family during the war of independence. For her part, as has already been mentioned, Sabina would die neglected at the age of 56, two years after her mother and year before her husband, without any surviving children. The fortune would be dilapidated by the illegitimate descendants of Rodrigo Falcão, who died in 1855 during a cholera epidemic. Falcão revealed himself to be fervently in favor of independence and promptly abandoned all and any contact with his in-

laws, showing great hostility towards Luís Paulino while he was alive, born in Bahia, but a representative of D. João VI in the armistice with the revolutionaries.

⁷ MATTOSO, Kátia M. de Queirós. A opulência na província da Bahia. In: ALENCASTRO, Luiz Felipe de (Ed.) *História privada do Brasil*. v.II. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997. p.154.

⁸ See: BITTENCOURT, Maria Clara Mariani (Org.) *Obras de Anna Ribeiro de Araújo de Góes: longos serões do campo*. v.2. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1992. p.1.

⁹ MATTOSO, 1997, p.154ss. In relation to the matrimonial strategies of the families of the nineteenth century Bahian elite, see: MATTOSO, Kátia. *Família e sociedade na Bahia do século XIX*. São Paulo: Corrupio, 1988. p.136-159.

¹⁰ BOXER, Charles. *A mulher na expansão ultramarina ibérica*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1977. p.75.

¹¹ See: PRIORE, Mary del; VENÂNCIO, Renato. *Uma história da vida rural no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2006. p.29-46 e 101-122.

¹² In Goiás in the nineteenth century there are witnesses that white women, in addition to being mothers, were landowners and cruel to employees and slaves. The history of the submission of women is loaded down with the myth of fragility which historically justified the paternalist of women by men. Nevertheless, in the history of Brazil, and specifically in the region of Goiás, violence by white women, owners of sugar mills, against black women and slaves dates from the middle of the nineteenth century, with there being many stories of slaves who had eyes, teeth, nails or ears torn off at the orders of their female owners. See: GODINHO, Tereza Martins. Traços da violência praticada por mulheres brancas contra mulheres negras no período escravocrata, em fazendas no estado de Goiás. SEMINÁRIO INTERNACIONAL FAZENDO GÊNERO, 7. *Anais...* Florianópolis: ago. 2006; SILVA, M. J. *Quilombo do Brasil Central: violência e resistência escrava 1719-1888*. Goiânia: Kelps, 2003.

¹³ See: PATRONI, Bertand Filipe Alberto. *A viagem de Patroni pelas Províncias Brasileiras de Ceará, Rio de São Francisco, Bahia, Minas Gerais e Rio de Janeiro nos anos de 1829 e 1830*. Lisboa: 1851.

¹⁴ See: GONÇALVES, Andréa Lisly. *História & gênero*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2006. p.99ss.

¹⁵ CERTEAU, Michel de. *The practice of everyday life*. Trad. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 [1984]. p.196-198.

¹⁶ BURKE, Peter. *Variiedades de história cultural*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2000. p.70.

¹⁷ CHALHOUB, Sidney. *Machado de Assis historiador*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003. p.92.

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