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JORGE DE LIMA'S *INVENÇÃO DE ORFEU*: TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF A TWENTIETH-CENTURY COSMOLOGICAL AND CHRISTIAN EPIC

A *INVENÇÃO DE ORFEU* DE JORGE DE LIMA: TRAÇANDO A EVOLUÇÃO DE UM ÉPICO COSMOLÓGICO E CRISTÃO NO SÉCULO XX

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RESUMO: The purpose of this article is to introduce some considerations on the preeminent twentieth-century epic poem produced in twentieth-century Brazil, *Invenção de Orfeu*, published in 1952. The work was authored by Jorge de Lima, a poet whose career spanned four decades, and referred in multiple ways to all the poetic movements of his age. The article will argue that *Invenção de Orfeu* represents the consolidation and integration of the poetics evolved by Jorge de Lima in all his preceding volumes, adapted to the eschatological and Christian matrix which had informed the poet's direction and purpose from 1935 onwards. I will approach the poem from three different perspectives. Firstly, I will draw some parallels with other key twentieth century poetic works whose response to the issues of the age and methods of composition are similar to those of *Invenção de Orfeu*. Secondly, I will trace the development of Jorge de Lima's Christian vision as the informing doctrine from which the poet's complex poetics evolved. Thirdly, I will explain the choice of epic genre as the framework within which Jorge de Lima structured his poem, focusing, with examples, on the way in which key motifs encountered in the epic are adapted and configured within the Christological eschatology which underpins *Invenção de Orfeu*.

Keywords: *Invenção de Orfeu*; Jorge de Lima; Epic cosmogony.

RESUMO: O objetivo do presente artigo é apresentar algumas considerações sobre o proeminente poema épico escrito no Brasil no século XX, *Invenção de Orfeu* publicado em 1952. O autor da obra foi Jorge de Lima, poeta brasileiro cuja carreira durou quatro décadas e se referiu em múltiplos caminhos a todos os movimentos poéticos de sua época. O artigo argumentará que *Invenção de Orfeu* representa a

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consolidação e integração da poética desenvolvida por Jorge de Lima em todos os seus volumes anteriores, adaptada à matriz escatológica e cristã que havia informado a direção e o propósito do poeta a partir de 1935. Vou abordar o poema de três perspectivas diferentes. Em primeiro lugar, traçarei alguns paralelos com outras obras poéticas célebres do século XX, cuja resposta às questões da época e métodos de composição são semelhantes às de *Invenção de Orfeu*. Em segundo lugar, traçarei o desenvolvimento do cristianismo que Jorge de Lima adotou como a doutrina central de *Invenção de Orfeu*, a partir da qual a poética complexa do poeta evoluiu. Em terceiro lugar, explicarei a escolha do gênero épico como o arcabouço dentro do qual Jorge de Lima estruturou seu poema. Vou analisar como principais temas encontrados no épico são adaptados e configurados dentro da escatologia cristológica que sustenta o poema.

Palavras-chave: *Invenção de Orfeu*; Jorge de Lima; cosmogonia épica.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to introduce some considerations concerning the poetic evolution which informed the composition of *Invenção de Orfeu*, the preeminent twentieth-century epic poem produced in twentieth-century Brazil, *Invenção de Orfeu*, and published in 1952. The author of this work was Jorge de Lima, the poet whose career spanned four decades and related in multiple ways to all the poetic movements of his age. Dating from the first publication of a volume of sonnets entitled *XIV Alexandrinos* in 1914 (LIMA, 2014), Jorge de Lima's poetry was consistently characterised by a process of constant transformation in subject-matter, theme and style from volume to volume, in parallel with key ideological and literary developments in Brazil from the early to the mid-twentieth century, in particular those which pertained to the renovation of Catholicism in Brazil. In the words of José Fernando Carneiro:

Poeta a um tempo, regional e cósmico, clássico e modernista, profano e místico, Jorge de Lima foi talvez o poeta mais versátil do Brasil e suas metamorfoses chegaram até a irritar alguns críticos.
(CARNEIRO, 1954, p. 8)

Jorge de Lima's final volume of poetry, *Invenção de Orfeu*, published a year before his death, integrates all the metamorphoses to which Carneiro refers in an epic consisting of almost ten thousand lines, divided into ten cantos after the manner of *The Lúsiads*, the founding Portuguese Renaissance epic authored by Luís Vaz de Camões (1572). The ten cantos of *Invenção de Orfeu* comprise innumerable citations and references to the entire canon of Brazilian and Western literature from antiquity, and

integrate these references is a continuous montage, or stream, of images, symbols and metonymical figures within a broadly cosmological and Christian matrix.

The fundamental enigma of *Invenção de Orfeu* has been a source of debate and divergent analyses in the sixty-eight years since its publication. The length, density and complexity of the poem, together with a composition based on multiple layers of both theological significance and poetic citation means that *Invenção de Orfeu*, in its totality, remains only partially discussed. My aim in this article is to affirm that much of the “enigma” that the poem represents is, in fact, comprehensible if we relate it to Jorge de Lima’s stated poetic intentions and purpose, as expounded in and numerous essays and interviews, and, still more significantly, to the evolution of Jorge de Lima’s uniquely Christian aesthetic in the volumes of poetry published prior to *Invenção de Orfeu*. I will therefore regard *Invenção de Orfeu* as a representation of the consolidation and integration of the precepts, themes and styles developed by the poet in all the volumes he published from 1925 onwards. With this in mind, I will approach the poem from three different perspectives.

Firstly, I will draw some parallels with some key twentieth century works produced by Anglo-American authors whose intentions mirrored those of Jorge de Lima: in that, informed by a number of ideological and doctrinal stances in response to the conflicted twentieth century, their response was no less a renovation of language and the creation of a poetics capable of responding and, indeed, influencing the age into which they were born, and the adaptation of the epic genre in order to do so. Secondly, I will trace the development of Jorge de Lima’s doctrinal Christianity and Catholicism as the matrix from which the poet’s complex poetics evolved in successive volumes, up to and including *Invenção de Orfeu*. Thirdly, as turning finally to *Invenção de Orfeu* itself, I will posit some explanations as to why, after various phases of extensive experimentation, the poet finally chose the epic genre as a framework from which to compose his final poetic cosmogony. I will focus, with examples, on some key themes which illustrate the way in which key motifs encountered in the epic, such as the tripartite structure, a descent into an underworld, and the voyage undertaken by the hero of the poem are adapted and configured within the Christological eschatology which underpins *Invenção de Orfeu*. This adaptation of the epic enables the complex stylistic construction of the poem, which consists of an incessant interchange between

the Word, or Logos, of eternity and the fragmented discourse within time, which the Orphic figure of the poet recomposes with the purpose of affording humankind a glimpse of consummation in Christ, and a final redemption.

The publication of *Invenção de Orfeu*

The year 1952, at the median point of the twentieth century, is known for a key event in Brazilian letters and cultural thought. This event was the publication of *Invenção de Orfeu* by Jorge de Lima, who, by the 1950s, had been long established as a nationally recognised figure in Brazilian letters. He was known especially as author of poems which had become well-known landmarks in the nation's cultural landscape, such as "Essa Negra Fulô", a poem held to be exemplary within the poetics of Brazilian modernism, rooted in Jorge de Lima's own Northeastern heritage. Indeed, "Essa Negra Fulô" had been republished as part of a volume entitled *Poemas Negros* in 1947 (LIMA, 2016). In contrast, *Invenção de Orfeu*, Jorge de Lima's final and most extensive work, appeared to have no connection with the poet's founding contributions to the literary currents of his age, nor with the developing trends in poetry developing in the early 1950s. The principal characteristic of the poem was both its length and the complexity of its composition: hermetic in its language and poetic style, the poem presented no discernible narrative structure, nor any readily comprehensible theme, which partly explains the poem's decidedly ambivalent reception from the outset of its publication.

1.1 Context of publication

Invenção de Orfeu was launched against the backdrop of a key phase of transition in Brazilian society. An optimistic climate prevailed as the decade of the 1950s began: the transition to more democratic models of governance and accelerating industrial and economic development promised the construction of a Brazil whose modernity had come to fruition. This sense of direction was no less reflected in the nation's literature and cultural life. By the early 1950s, Brazilian modernist poetry had attained full maturity: Jorge de Lima's contemporaries, Manuel Bandeira (1886 – 1968) and Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902 – 1987) published copiously throughout the decade, and future trends in Brazilian poetry had been foreshadowed in the previous decade by the

members of the “45 Generation”, such as João Cabral do Melo Neto (1920 – 1999) whose attention to the formal properties of language and conscious construction of words relating to material reality were evident in poems such as “O Engenheiro” (MELO NETO, 1994). This post World War II generation anticipated the poetic neovanguards of the 1950s and the Concretist movement, which sought to relate poetry to international graphic and representational trends with a poetics which embodied constructive rationality, direct perceptions of words in space and the participation of the reader (CHIARELLI, 2013).

1.2 Reception of *Invenção de Orfeu*

It is not surprising therefore, that the critical reception of *Invenção de Orfeu* upon its publication in 1952 was conflicted and uncertain as to the poem’s intent and purpose. The work appeared to have nothing in common with prevailing trends in Brazilian letters of the age: with abundant references and citations to the European canon of literature from its origins in classical antiquity, the evident epic structure of the poem must also have called to mind the first major works of Brazil’s colonial era, such as *O Uruguai* (1769) by Basílio da Gama (1740 – 1795), which was partly based on Camões founding narrative of Portugal, *Os Lusíadas*, and also the religious Baroque poetry of Gregório de Matos (1636 – 1696). All these works are explicitly referenced and cited in *Invenção de Orfeu*, and the association of Jorge de Lima’s work with the Baroque movement has been a constant feature in critical study of his work (SIMÕES, 1980, p. 17 – 18; FAUSTINO, 1977, p. 239). Yet, confronted by a poem of almost prohibitive length and diversity, with no discernible referents to any one theme or subject, critical reaction to *Invenção de Orfeu* broadly confessed to lack of comprehension or, indeed, demonstrated active hostility: for example, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, soon to become highly influential in the 1950s and 1960s Concretist avantgarde, publicly censured the poem (CAMPOS, 1992, p. 208). This hostility persisted in subsequent decades: for example, the influential scholar Wilson Martins in his *História da Inteligência Brasileira* describes *Invenção de Orfeu* as “uma daquelas ‘memoráveis catástrofes’ que transformam a história literária em história trágico-marítima” (MARTINS, 1979, p. 308 – 309). This may account for the relative lack of critical scholarship relating to *Invenção de Orfeu* in the 1950s and 1960s: since then, however,

a growing number of reassessments of the poem's contribution to Brazil's literature have been published, within a diversity of theoretical frameworks.

1.3 Critical scholarship on *Invenção de Orfeu*.

From the point of *Invenção de Orfeu's* first publication, critical studies of the work have tended to fall into three broad categories. Firstly, the poem has been analysed from the perspective of genre: critics have developed the concept of *Invenção de Orfeu* as an epic poem recast and adapted for the contemporary era, as explicitly affirmed by Jorge de Lima himself (SILVA, 187, p. 68 – 70; STERZI, 2001, p. 286 – 291). Another approach, as an early article by Waltensir Dutra demonstrates, has been to affiliate the poem within one broad literary movement such as the Baroque, or, in Dutra's case, Neo-Symbolism (DUTRA, 1952). Thirdly, scholars such as Luiz Busatto have placed their analysis of *Invenção de Orfeu* with the framework of one informing literary method or device, interpreting the poem as an artefact which is intertextual in nature, composed of a montage of citations drawn drawn from the last two millennia of Western poetry (BUSATTO, 1978; ASSUNÇÃO, 2003). In the last two decades, nonetheless, studies have been undertaken which trace the long development of the multileveled perspectives which underpin the poetics of *Invenção de Orfeu*, including the acknowledgement and analysis of the poem's "mythopeia", informed by a cosmological and Christian metaphysics which the poet interprets and elucidates in his epic (ANDRADE, 1997; CAVALCANTI, 2010).

The aims and purpose of *Invenção de Orfeu*: key frames of reference

The intentions behind the composition of *Invenção de Orfeu* may be more readily understood if we extend our consideration of the poem away from its Brazilian contexts, and compare the work to Anglo-American poems of extensive length and ambition constructed by twentieth century authors and intellectuals in the era of "high modernism" between 1920 to 1940. These works include *The Waste Land* by T.S Eliot (1922), which contains multiple allusions to Christian themes informing the Western epic. T.S. Eliot's poem also refers to a founding text of Hinduism, the *Upanishads*, dating from the eighth millennium BCE (ELIOT, 2002). Another work of vast historical and

geographical range, the *Cantos* by Ezra Pound, a series of poetic volumes published in continuous sequence from 1922 to 1962, is structured explicitly on similar antecedents (POUND, 1999). Equally, the intention of James Joyce's long prose narrative *Ulysses*, was to recreate another founding epic, Homer's *Odyssey*, set in contemporary Dublin (JOYCE, 2010). *Ulysses* was also published in 1922, a year no less important for the accession of Brazilian modernism.

When considered *in toto*, it becomes clear that the explicit appeal to the literary antecedents of epic genres were an integral component of the aspirations by the modernist authors of the twentieth century to dramatize, in poetic and narrative form, the problems of the modern epoch, to confront the crisis in ethics and values, and the related crisis of the human adrift in a world in which all certainty and fixed points of reference had been lost.

2.1 The modernist crisis and renewal of language

This sense of "crisis" from which twentieth century modernist poetry and prose was engendered, whether a conflict in human consciousness, an impasse in modes of representation, or a contest between conflicting values, was also a confrontation with language itself, and manifested in diverse attempts by modernist authors to free the word itself from its purely referential function. Anglo-American and, indeed, international tendencies in poetry were characterised by a multiplicity of perspectives, stylistic plurality and linguistic heterogeneity: allusions which are not easily or logically explained, the conscious disintegration of linear narratives: a mode of composition which Jorge de Lima took to its apogee in his twentieth-century epic poem. The observations of Bradbury and MacFarlane on the modernist aesthetic can easily be taken as pertinent to the composition of *Invenção de Orfeu*:

An explosive fusion (...) that destroyed the tidy categories of thought, that toppled linguistic systems, that disrupted formal grammar and the traditional links between words and words, words and things, inaugurating the power of ellipsis and parataxis and bringing in its train of the making of new juxtapositions, new wholes, or, in Hofmannsthal's words, of creating 'from man and beast and dream and thing' an infinity of new relationships' (BRADBURY and MCFARLANE, 1991, p. 48).

The recreation in some mode or form of the epic genre which was undertaken by Jorge de Lima and his Anglo-American contemporaries was a textual enterprise, an intended recreation of language as an answer to the crises of the modern era: it was not a restoration of the epic's function as the foundational text of a religion, nation or civilisation. Faced with the sheer scale of the challenges confronting the modern era, the poet, in response, responded constructing a text which may at least partly explain these challenges, and a text which may attempt influence the direction and purpose of human society. In further contrast to the epics of previous centuries, the long poems of the twentieth century reach no definitive conclusion: they remain ambivalent in their composition, possibly open to rescripting, to further inclusion. Yet while these texts, with the possible exception of Pound's *Cantos*, did not seem to be explicitly engaged with specific social or political issues of the present, nonetheless, they aimed at influencing the era in which they wrote, to encourage their contemporaries in society to imagine, through the medium of a renewed language, alternatives to the "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history", to "make the world possible for art" (ELIOT, 1923, 483).

3.1. Antecedents and development of Jorge de Lima's poetics

The mission of Jorge de Lima, no less than that of his contemporaries, was to confront the great issues of the age, the lack of orientation, increasing secularisation and the loss of values. In an interview given in the late 1930s, he asserts:

A época presente é época propícia, o clima vital do poeta. O século XIX preparou para os tempos que começam dois acontecimentos importantes para o poeta, na ordem material – extinção fatal do predomínio burguês, o despojamento do supérfluo, de que o espírito eminentemente revoltado do poeta é o maior antagonismo; na ordem espiritual – o poeta assiste ao reflorescimento litúrgico, fenómeno coletivo e social num outro plano e que veio alargar imensamente a visão mística do poeta (SILVEIRA, 1938, p. 66).

As the quotation above indicates, the difference between the production of the Anglo-American modernists and *Invenção de Orfeu* resides in Jorge de Lima's more explicit and extensive adoption of an informing framework of Christian and, more specifically, Catholic eschatology for his poetics, and, in addition, the extensive

integration of his own Lusophone and Brazilian literary heritage, in which the epic genre has been a foundational element (SILVA, 187, p. 21). This informing principles behind Jorge de Lima's poetic trajectory were the outcome of a religious vocation which impelled his quest to renew and, indeed, transform the relation between modern twentieth-century poetics and Christian doctrine. The poet affirmed in 1943 that: "Para mim, a poesia sempre é uma revelação de Deus, gratuíde, transcendência, vocação. Longe de mim o egoísmo de dizer que sou poeta porque nasci poeta". This vocation had informed three volumes of poetry prior to the publication of *Invenção de Orfeu: Tempo e Eternidade* (1935), *A Túnica Inconsútil* (1938) and *Anúnciação e Encontro de Mira-Celi* (1950), all of which were composed from a fusion of such diverse literary genres as the surrealist mode, the French Symbolist tradition and Biblical exegesis within a cosmological and Christian matrix, anticipating the grand synthesis of *Invenção de Orfeu*.

3.2 Formation of a free poetics: Brazilian Modernism

The first phase of the Jorge de Lima's work, beginning with the publication of "O Mundo do Menino Impossível" in 1925 and continuing throughout the 1920s with subsequent volumes such as *Poemas* in 1927 (LIMA, 1927) comprised a cultural mission of defining the ethnic, cultural and national identity of his native North East. In this, Jorge de Lima was encouraged by Brazil's own expression of literary modernism in Brazil, which found its first expression in São Paulo, amid the social and economic dynamism and the expanding middle class that had emerged after World War I. Forces for artistic change expressing the need to break down the ideological and cultural superstructure of nineteenth century colonial relations with Europe coalesced around the Modern Art Week of 1922, led by Jorge de Lima's contemporaries, including the poets and intellectuals Mário de Andrade (1893 – 1945), Oswald de Andrade (1890 – 1954), the artist Anita Malfatti (1889 – 1964. For these writers and cultural activists, the renewal of a "uniquely Brazilian artistic intelligence" as Mário de Andrade put it (COUTINHO, 1966, 269), entailed a literary rebellion against formal stylistic conventions, a poetics which emerged from the poet's immediate creative inspiration in relation to his or her environment, and a radical and iconoclastic attitude towards the use of language. Inspired by the movement from his own base in the Northeastern state of Alagoas, Jorge de Lima adopted many of the poetic precepts and aesthetic ideas of his

colleagues, and was inspired also by the Northeastern Regionalist movement, founded by the sociologist Gilberto Freyre in the state of Bahia, for the purpose of renovating and affirming Brazilian life and culture (FREYRE, 1955, p. 7). Beginning with the publication of “O Mundo do Menino Impossível” in 1925 and continuing throughout the 1920s with subsequent volumes such as *Poemas* in 1927 (LIMA, 1927) the poet embarked on what was essentially a cultural mission of defining the ethnic, cultural and national identity of his native North East. Jorge de Lima added his own contribution to this concept by persistently emphasising the innate spirituality of the region, which, in his view, lay in a syncretism of Afro-Brazilian religions and folk Catholicism, and asserting the value of this spiritual mix as a defence against encroaching capitalist development and urbanisation, virulently condemned in all the poet’s works.

3.3 The break with Brazilian Modernism

In the volumes of poetry representing Jorge de Lima’s 1920s affiliation with Brazilian Modernism, we can perceive the genesis of the poetics which were finally brought to their full realisation in *Invenção de Orfeu*. The Modernist movement created a literary climate in which the poet, free from the formalist strictures of any one school, could participate in “the destruction of the conservative and conformist spirit” as Mário de Andrade put it, and exercise the “right to aesthetic exploration” (COUTINHO, 1966, p. 269). Yet it was quite clear, that, for the poet, the ultimate aim of both modernist and regionalist thought should be to assert the innate spiritual quality Jorge de Lima regarded as unique to Brazil. Modernist renovation came about, according to the poet, “tão-somente com o fim de patentear à espiritualidade do país, uma velha e tradicional aspiração de alma brasileira que se apresentava agora com uma perfeita organização moderna” (NUNES, 1958, p. 81). Thus the spirituality which was the defining principle of Jorge de Lima’s poetry was still identified with nationalist sensibilities, and to that extent he remained in accordance with the broader aims and direction of Brazilian letters, and those of his intellectual contemporaries. Nonetheless, as climate of economic depression and political instability took hold in the 1930s, as much in Brazil as on a global scale, the effort by writers and poets to define their relation to nation and society took the form of explicit affiliation to one ideology or another, whether Marxism

or neo-Fascist variations of nationalism, This led to the fragmentation of Brazilian intellectuals and writers into various groups (CÁNDIDO, 1987, p. 189)

Jorge de Lima's own response to the decade was to undergo an ideological and poetic crisis of faith, based on his disgust at the increasing secularisation of modern society, disintegrating due to the lack of a principle of unity, with no certain or even workable knowledge of the meaning or end of human life. His public adoption of orthodox Catholicism as the ideological framework underpinning his poetics is described in the following terms:

Senti-me inteiramente à vontade para empreender a desejada renovação, já havendo compreendido que o plano mais elevado para isso seria a poesia que restaurasse em Cristo, que é a mais alta Poesia, a mais alta verdade, o nosso destino mesmo, e tivesse, não uma tradição regional ou nacional mais sim a mais humana e universal das tradições (SENA, 1958, p. 74 – 75)

During this phase Jorge de Lima had formed a poetic and ideological alliance with another of his friends and contemporaries, the poet Murilo Mendes (1901 – 1975). The two collaborators authored and published the volume *Tempo e Eternidade* in 1935. The avowed aim in the work was to “restore poetry in Christ” (LIMA and MENDES, 1935, p. 2), and the volume's forty-five poems comprise a proclamation announcing a total allegiance to an agenda for literary activity. This agenda aimed to inspire a response to poetic texts that would result in the transformation of society through the participation in God's plan for divine redemption. The poems are composed for the most part using ritualistic liturgical discourse, attempting to make the Word of God accessible to the reader through reworking of psalmic, prophetic and invocational modes. From this point on, Jorge de Lima's religious poetry was founded on two fundamental themes, developed throughout all the poet's subsequent volumes of poetry. These may be summarised as the following.

Firstly, that the alienated condition of human beings in the modern age is the result of the Fall, caused by the sins of the first man, Adam. Nonetheless, there still exists the possibility of restoration and atonement through the incarnated Word of God in Jesus Christ. Secondly, the poetry expounds the spiritual quest of the poet himself, the central protagonist in the cosmic drama that unfolds in all the volumes published from

Tempo e Eternidade to Invenção de Orfeu. The constant theme throughout all the diversity of Jorge de Lima's poetry during this phase is the voyage of the poet himself between two orders: that of chronological time, wherein the world and the universe are located, and eternity, which may be reached through mystic communion with God. Within the poems, Jorge de Lima depicts the physical universe as the realm of the profane. This means that it is subject to the decay that comes with chronological time and contingency, or the division of time into past, present and future. Juxtaposed to this dimension of existence is the divine order of God, which, standing beyond space and time, is fixed, unchangeable and free of the chaos inherent in the material plane.

The role of the poet, then, is to make the transforming presence of the divine Logos immanent in time, and his duty is to mediate the Logos effectively to his fellow mortals. To "restore poetry in Christ" is to further God's purpose in redeeming fallen humanity, including the disintegration and corruption of language, and bring about a transformational participation in the activity of God:

Dividamos o mundo em duas partes iguais:
Um para portugueses, outra para espanhóis:
Vêm quinhentos mil escravos no bojo das naus:
A metade morreu nos campos de batalha.
Dividamos o mundo entre a máquinas:
Vêm quinhentos mil escravos no bojo das fábricas,
A metade morreu na escuridão, se mar.
Não dividamos o mundo.
Dividamos Cristo:
Todos ressuscitarão iguais.
(LIMA, 1980, p. 200)

3.4 A *Túnica Inconsútil*

Jorge de Lima next volume, *A Túnica Inconsútil*, was published in 1938. In this work, the poet consolidates and expounds all the concepts which would be fully realised in *Invenção de Orfeu* four years later. The core idea which informs this volume is that all the elements of the world are inextricably bound together in God and which each part of creation is some way reflects another. The poet's quest for redemption in God's Logos takes various forms, some contradictory, yet none being mutually exclusive. The contradictions inherent in the doctrinal framework set out in *Tempo e Eternidade* are developed further in a series of dialectical processes which will subsequently underpin

the poetic *modus operandi* of *Invenção de Orfeu*. The principal dialectic in the volume derives from the particular moment in cosmological history in which the poet is placed: the poems in the volume are shaped by the thesis of the divine and the antithesis of the alienated temporal world, in a state of incessant interplay. These two forces are superseded by the promise of the second coming of Christ and universal redemption for humankind. Throughout *A Túnica Inconsútil* Jorge de Lima links these patterns in his own personal history and sacred and cosmic history together, revealing the ways in which one essential salvation drama is played out through the archetypal patterns of the Christian mythos. The poems in the volume, therefore, sacrifice their authority as independent and separate verbal acts to the source of the Logos that they seek to convey. This is vision that owes much to the French poet Paul Claudel's belief that the Logos, or creation itself is God's poem (CLAUDEL, 1990), and that the task of the poet is to transform language itself from its contingent and separated status in time, to regain its transcendent power and reveal an infinite facet of the eternal word which lies behind all words. From this point on, Jorge de Lima's poetic quest seeks to dissolve and align the multiplicity of words brought forth by the "profanação dos homens do Babel", and fuse them to the Logos in which they find their true origin. Thus the poet refuses all division and categorisation of experience, constructing instead a poetic mode which dissolves subject and object, playing literal and symbolic meanings against one another, and using every figure of poetic language at his disposal to evoke the possibility of the supreme manifestation of the divine:

E, por acaso, o poeta não foi designado
Para vivificar a palavra do novo?
.....
E, não foi ele apontado para restituir-lhe
A sua essência
E reconstituir seu conteúdo mágico?
(LIMA, 1980, p. 468)

Invenção de Orfeu: cosmogony and epic

Invenção de Orfeu, published four years after *A Túnica Inconsútil*, integrates all the concepts developed in Jorge de Lima's poetic trajectory over twenty-five years and brings these to a final consummation. The informing theme and purpose of the poem

continues with the affirmation of the second coming of God's Word in the terrestrial and profane world in which humanity resides. Equally, the overarching movement in *Invenção de Orfeu* remains the continuous dialectic between the Word, or Logos in eternity and fragmented language in chronological time. This dialectic is made accessible to the reader through the depiction of the dynamic interaction of the poet with his own divine origins and the collective memory of humanity since its first creation.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that *Invenção de Orfeu* is far more ambitious and comprehensive in its scope than those religious and metaphysical works authored by Jorge de Lima in the 1930s and 1940s. As the quotations above illustrate, the poems in *Tempo e Eternidade* and *A Túnica Inconsútil* were brief, and broadly didactic or liturgical in tone and style. Each poem in turn presented one theological or aesthetic aspect of the Christological poetics which Jorge de Lima developed in continuous and incremental sequence throughout both the volumes.

In contrast, the principles of composition in *Invenção de Orfeu* diverge considerably from Jorge de Lima's preceding volumes. The informing structure of the poet's last work is based on the epic genre and its modes; these configured within the poem in a number of specific ways. On the most fundamental level, *Invenção de Orfeu* conforms to Aristotle's most influential definition of the epic: that the long poem or narrative should be structured around a fundamental unity that is greater than the sum of its components; that the structure of the text should be tripartite, following the pattern of reversal, recognition and calamity; and that the epic should present something that is probable, or at least attainable in the world (TOOHEY, 1992, p. 10). Yet, since Jorge de Lima's stated purpose was to adapt and reinvent the genre by mapping its basic characteristics and motifs in accordance with his Catholic and Christological poetics, the poet engages with both the modes of the genre and foundational epic narratives of the Western literary canon such as Luís Vaz de Camões' *The Lusiads* (CAMÕES, 1980) and Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* (ALIGHIERI, 2008) on a number of levels.

On a first reading of *Invenção de Orfeu*, the patterning of the poem according to the structure of Camões' *The Lusiads* is clear: as noted above, the poem's ten thousand lines are structured in ten titled cantos of varying length. The cantos also reference *The Lusiads* in their titles, beginning with "Fundação da Ilha" and concluding with "Missão

e Promissão”. The content of each canto comprises a continuous and indivisible sequence of stanzas consisting of multiple references, intimations and allusions to biblical and mythological themes, together with existential and philosophical tracts, especially those pertaining to language and the poetic form. Interwoven with these passages are citations and intimations from the entire canon of Western poetic texts which influenced the poet’s aesthetic over the twenty-five years of his trajectory, ranging from Biblical psalmic modes to the poetry of Jorge de Lima’s own Brazilian contemporaries, all linked in prismatic and fluid ways through metonymy, synecdoche, alliteration and other poetic figures.

Thus the choice of epic genre as the defining principle of composition is the result, or the logical outcome of the cosmological principles which inform Jorge de Lima’s aesthetic. According to João Gaspar Simões, Jorge de Lima originally intended to give his work the title of “Cosmogonia”: a mythological narrative concerning the creation of the world and the universe (SIMÕES, 1952, 14). Indeed, he himself asserted, “Eu pretendi com este livro, que é um poema só, único, dividido em 10 cantos, fazer a modernização da epopeia” (STERZI, 2001, p. 289). *Invenção de Orfeu*, therefore, represents an opportunity to create a new cosmogony which transcends human history, composed from the vestiges of a fragmented and destroyed Western culture. The divinely originated or appointed task of the poet is to create, or recreate a world from inchoate mass through access to the sacred Word has ancient origins and antecedents in cosmogonic poetry, from the biblical Genesis itself to the classical and Renaissance epics, whose purpose is to describe the foundation of a people, a nation, or a civilisation, and the intervention of metaphysical or supernatural forces in that people’s actions, or their fate. Jorge de Lima adapts for his own text the function of the poet in Camões’ *Lusiads* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, to instruct his audience in their ancient roots and sacred origins, divine and transcendental purpose which guides the final destination of humankind. Jorge de Lima repeatedly addresses his classical and Renaissance epic antecedents directly, and, as noted previously, includes also the foundational epics of his own Brazil. *Invenção de Orfeu’s* transformational compendium of these texts functions as a conduit through which the poet may undertake the precarious and often tortuous voyage back to, maybe a discernible origin in the one Logos. For example, in

Canto IV, “As aparições”, the poet appeals directly to the echoes of Dante and Virgil he encounters in his traversal:

Dante, falo por ti, por mim, por quem?
As palavras fieis ligam-me a ti,
com teus augúrios, números e círculos.
Ó, não temeste, por me dar guarida:
eu como tu, nós todos os mortais,
penetramos um dia o inferno horrendo!

.....
Ó poeta de eternas contingências,
(eu me disse com a boca dos do inferno):
contra não podem como tinhas ido
parar na mesma selva tenebrosa,
tendo perdido a verdadeira Estrada;
ó repetida viagem, sal constante
nos lábios e no pranto, no batismo
de quem nasce na lua em que vivemos.
(LIMA, 1980, p. 138-139)

4.1. The composition of *Invenção de Orfeu's* cosmogony

Within In the successive ten cantos of the poem, the poet elaborates and describes the structure of the *Invenção de Orfeu's* cosmogony. In contrast to his classical and national predecessors, the poet is not seeking to explain the origin of a physical or territorially situated world, given that his poetic landscape he creates results in a metaphysical entity which, unlike the founding epics of western civilisation, refers to no specific place located in human history, and does not seek to confer an identity on any one nation or people. The poet reminds us that everything, which includes the most abandoned and the most impoverished, is part of a world once created by God, and, even though it presently exists in a state of separation from God, it is redeemable, and it is the poet's task to redeem it. Redemption arises from taking up again the task of Adam, that is, the act of naming, and therefore the poet must enumerate without ceasing:

É preciso falar-se de criaturas,
Verdadeiras criaturas animadas,
Das vivências, totais, arbítrio e tudo
.....
Que um poema pode ter: esse clamor
Essa indefinição, esses apelos

.....
Que depois de refeito e decifrado
É a condição do bicho: carne, pêlos,
E sangue breve do homem desgraçado.
(LIMA, 1980, 74)

Jorge de Lima also exhorts his fellow poets to include everything, not only what is lost and in a present state of inferno (in order to redeem it) but also what is apparent in the world of materiality, and also what is invented and fictitious. The poet-protagonist and all his companions, in antiquity and in the present, create a space, a geography, a reinvention through this process of naming.

The creation of *Invenção de Orfeu's* cosmogony, then, is a necessary precondition for its transformation through the affirmation of the poetic word. Within this language exist certain archetypal images which recall the origins of the human in the Word of God.

Quereis pleonasmos, grandes beija-flores.
Tereis de pré-memórias e pecados,
Tereis dessas palavras mas não louvas.
.....
Só vejo referências e sigilos
Que o mais é necessário esclarecer
Em meio aos sedimentos desse breu.

E é preciso dar fomes a esses trigos,
Ensinar os casuais a acontecer,
Cantar dos cantos como um novo Orfeu.
(LIMA, 1980, p. 589)

4.2. Tropes of the ocean, the voyage and the island

One trope informs and underpins the poem's creation: the mythos of the voyage and the ocean, established at the very beginning of *Invenção de Orfeu*. The poem, in keeping with its epic structure, begins *in medias res* with a journey undertaken by the protagonist unnamed but in some way ennobled or marked out:

Um barão assinalado
Sem brasão, sem gume e fama
Cumprе apenas o seu fado:
Amar, louvar sua dama,

Dia e noite navegar,
Que é de aquém e além mar
A ilha que busca o amor que ama.
(LIMA, 1980, p. 28)

Thus the theme of navigation through the sea, characteristic of the classical epic from Homer's *Odyssey*, is recast in *Invenção de Orfeu* as a voyage whose meaning exists in several dimensions, and serves a number of purposes in the poem. On one level, the motif of the sea evokes to Camões's concept of the ocean as a witness to humankind's explorations of their destinies, and as a space for connecting diverse experience of human civilisations "por mares nunca dantes navegados" (CAMÕES, 1980, p. 3). In *Invenção de Orfeu*, the ocean assumes a dimension, not only of space, but of depth. The "barão assinalado" has, in fact, embarked on a voyage in search of the origins of the human imaginary, within the inchoate mass of the sea, the origins of life and the material world. The ocean, in its basic characteristic as a reservoir of innumerable things submerged and buried in its depths, is evidently a traditional symbol of the unconscious, but, as a vast and incommensurable surface, also serves as a trope of the infinite. Jorge de Lima's poet-protagonist's voyage is also a journey towards Eternity, which, by its very nature, cannot have a fixed beginning or a fixed end. The search is infinite, and the impossibility of ever encountering the vision the poet seeks in time and space is foreseen from the beginning of the poem:

A ilha ninguém achou
Porque todos a sabíamos
Mesmo nos olhos havia
Uma clara geografia.

Mesmo nesse fim do mar
Qualquer ilha se encontrava
Mesmo sem mar e sem fim
Mesmo sem terra e sem mim.
(LIMA, 1980, p.28)

Yet the motif of the ocean also enables the poet to expound on the theme of the cyclical renewal and regeneration of a disordered world made possible by Christ's intervention in time. The ocean also functions as a paradigm for the central theme of *Invenção de Orfeu*: the dialectic between humankind and the fallen world, symbolised

by the fluid, frequently turbulent nature of the same, and, in contrast, the divine presence, which created the world, and which resides latent within the material realm, to be rediscovered, unveiled and disseminated by the ordained figure of the poet. The ocean is an entity in which originary creative forces may be recovered and made immanent, but it is also a repository for the entire trajectory of accumulated myth, legend, and human language, which, if traced back by the poet through the thread of his predecessors' epic foundational texts, the originary creative forces may be recovered and made immanent. We can also discern in these passages of the poem the tripartite structure comprising the forces of reversal, recognition and calamity, in the Greek sense of the conversion of great disaster into something beautiful: but also the three dimensions of transcendental heaven, the material plane of earth, and the forces of the underworld represented by the ocean (SILVA, 1987, p. 70 – 71). In *Invenção de Orfeu*, these three dimensions gradually evolve through the voyage of the poet-protagonist whose quest through the repository of the ocean leads back to the primordial unity of the pre-Fall, the universal source of all the archetypes, myths and texts that have ever existed. That is why the poet continuously returns to a pre-natal state in order to be born again begin the quest anew, and continue with creation of an island from his almost infinite repository of language. Frequently glimpsed in the poem, this motif is clearly a reference to Camões Ilha dos Amores of the *Lusiads* (CAMÕES, 1980, p. 315) with its vision of redemption in heaven, but is also linked to the island as traditional symbol which represents the refuge from the sea of the chaotic and unformed collective unconscious, for the poet to revive, regenerate and begin the journey once again.

Antecedo-me, esbarro-me em mim mesmo.
Filiei-me à eternidade se querer
E agora vago como se vaga a esmo.

Verto-me em ilha, vejo me nascer
Retiro dessa ilharga verdadeira
A minha perdição por companheira.
(LIMA, 1997, p. 747)

4.3 The role of the poet-protagonist

The poet-protagonist is a being who Jorge de Lima defined as a “dreaming sailor”, a being capable of penetrating the depths both of the individual unconscious,

the realm of dreams and visions, but also that repository of the collective memory of humanity that Carl Gustav Jung termed the “collective unconscious” (JUNG, 1959, 21-2). Canto I, “A Fundação da Ilha” introduces the first of the multiple protagonists, or maybe a simply a facet of one protagonist, an indeterminate figure barely noble through his memories, a possible or potential poet becoming apparent here and there in the world of time without direction through all its conflicted histories. The fundamental condition of this being is that of potentiality: he remains among and between the planes of sea, earth and sky in a present and latent state. His distinctive voice cannot be heard, although he has a voice. In so doing the poet himself manifests and creates his existence and assumes a form, or a multiplicity of forms. There are several reasons for the constant state of metamorphosis manifested throughout the poem.

Firstly, and as indicated in the title of the poem, the figure of Orfeus represents the poetic vocation as a force for both redemption and perdition, and as a conduit for dialogue between apparently opposed and hostile cultures. Orfeus renews the poetic vocation of a mythic order in the chaotic and contradictory modern world, and thus transcends the limits of the world of materiality (TREECE, 2014: 168 – 173). The poet-prophet, or poet-mystic is a dual being: he is a son of Adam, and therefore implicated in the world of the Fall, sharing its tribulations; as a being who may be called by God, he is able to pass through a transcendental point within the temporal world. Ambivalence and duality are central to the Orphic creation. While the poet seeks to transcend or integrate reality, simultaneously he reminds us that he is fallible and fragile being, in constant peril of falling back into perdition. Since the opposition between time and eternity remains at the core of *Invenção de Orfeu's* theme and structure, history amounts to the flux of time, and every human being, including the poet himself, remains trapped in a state of contingency. The earth, in common with humanity, maintains an ambivalent status throughout the poem. The world in time may amount to an illusion of progression, or it may be a demonstration of God’s work in the world – in which humanity may yet, possibly attain a permanent and transcendent status.

4.4. Memory and language

A possible solution, then, lies in the poet’s recovery of his own memory and , from that point, the collective memory of humankind, which is one and the same

phenomenon. The “barão ... nobre apenas de memórias”, introduced by Jorge de Lima at the very beginning of *Invenção de Orfeu*, also represents the memory which links apparently the most disparate phenomena in the flux of language and perception and coheres them into the image, into analogical ideas. As we have seen, the poet’s appointed task is to aspire to a poetics capable of recomposing language itself to bring to full consciousness the eternity which still exists in the depths of the collective unconscious. The poet, therefore, must return to his own origins, and embark on a new journey through the depths of the personal and collective unconscious, ultimately rooted in the divine Logos:

Palavras ancestrais, previmos que eram chaves,
E fomos nada mais, que puros arrastados.
O vento é sempre um ser que nos entreabre as asas.
Ó vai-te em vento ser um doce verso abalado.

.....
Mas por encantação às vezes volto a mim,
Perdido d canção, regresso às ondas raras
Que as cinzas guardarão, ó últimas grisalhas,
Que as mágoas comerão, ó cândidas voragens!
(Lima, 1980, p. 185)

A closer examination of the stanzas in *Invenção de Orfeu* reveals poetic language as an instrument of discovery by the poet through his journey through memory in its multiple dimensions: the poet’s own personal memory, the collective memory of humankind and the literary memory of the epic predecessors of *Invenção de Orfeu*. This is a quest achieved through relations and links between the most apparently disparate words, phrases and linguistic figures, which, in mundane discourse, normally belong to different semantic fields, reunited through mystic faith in their ultimately divine provenance in the Logos. If the poetics of *Invenção de Orfeu* represent an endeavour to overcome a disintegrated world of arbitrary events in time, separated by language, this can only be achieved by seeking the primordial elements of language itself.

This quest is the reason for the enigma of *Invenção de Orfeu* which has left so many critics baffled: the seemingly near-infinite multiplicity of signs in the poem, a polysemy united within one poem, whose origins lie in one sign: the Logos of God. On the one hand language can never be sufficient to express experience and meaning: on

the other hand echoes and resonances exist in language which are almost impossible to fully recover. The poet must attempt to develop a method whereby the primordial secrets of language, or that which lies behind language is revealed, recovered and united. The mythological consciousness, recovered by a collective memory, is still present in the contemporary world and can be encountered in language, in its riddles, paradoxes, enigmas and disparate associations.

Nesse poema informe e sem balizas
Recria-se uma ilha repetido
com seu tomo de pedra adormecido
seu rochedo de sono é tão fechado
que ele vale na vida como um fado,
sete cordas caladas em seu gole.

Ilha de infâncias idas, hoje achada,
virada para todos os quadrantes,
inícios de ontem, hoje renovados,
mas inconsútil corpo religado
pelo umbigo celeste de Três Pessoas,
presentes na precária geografia.
(LIMA, 1998, p. 787)

Yet, as we have also seen, language can never attain complete and redemption in the Logos. The lack of definitive form and stability in *invenção de Orfeu's* composition, remains in a state of constant flux and internal transformation, and the half-created island of poetic transcendence never fully materialises or takes concrete form. Throughout *Invenção de Orfeu*, the poet's creation is a manifestation of a crisis of existence in time, and yet, perhaps, may also represent a solution to this same crisis. This solution lies in the poem's total cosmogony which creates a space, a dimension or a geography apart from mundane existence, through which humankind may be prepared for the advent of the Logos, and within which the Logos may make itself immanent. This final, possible conclusion is foreshadowed in the closing stanza of *Invenção de Orfeu's* final Canto, "Missão e Promissão":

No momento de crer,
criando
contra as forças da morte
a fé.

No momento de prece,
orando
pela fé que perderam
os outros.

No momento de fé
crivado
com umas seta de amor
as mãos
e os pés e o lado esquerdo
Amém.
(LIMA, 1980, p. 285)

Final considerations

In this article, I have attempted to address several issues with the critical reception and perception of *Invenção de Orfeu*, which have persisted since the work's first publication in 1952. Chief of these is the reaction to the poem's sheer length, density and complexity, first expressed by Murilo Mendes in his assertion that: "O trabalho de exegese do livro terá que ser lentamente feito, através dos anos, por equipes de críticos que o abordem com ciência e intuição" (MENDES, 1997, p. 128). Linked to this question is the fundamental question of why Jorge de Lima should have published such a work, apparently with no connection to the literary trends of the mid-twentieth century, and what he intended by its composition and form. My contention is that the enigma of *Invenção de Orfeu* may be resolved, and the task of exegesis made clearer, if we do not, in fact, regard the poem as a completely separate entity, but rather as the culminating point, or the full realisation, of a poetics already developed in a series of successive volumes published by the poet over a period of thirty years, expressing the full and consistent engagement of the poet with all the literary movements of his age, motivated by a vocation which reached its final expression in *Invenção de Orfeu*. This vocation, arising from a sincerely held belief that language and poetry has a transformational power to confront and transform the fragmented nature of material reality in the twentieth century, and the concomitant rupture and fragmentation of language, finally led to the achievement shared by Jorge de Lima's contemporaries and predecessors in the Brazilian and the Western canon of literature: the modernisation of the epic poem for the contemporary age.

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