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### **Memory and Oblivion in *Utopia III*, by Pina Martins: the missing statue of Raphael Hythloday**

#### 1. Statues in *Utopia* and *New Atlantis*

They do not only fear their people from doing evil by punishments, but also allure them to virtue with rewards of honour. Therefore they set up in the market-place the images of notable men and of such as have been great and bountiful benefactors to the commonwealth, for the perpetual memory of their good acts, and also that the glory and renown of the ancestors may stir and provoke their posterity to virtue. He that inordinately and ambitiously desireth promotions is left all hopeless for ever attaining any promotion as long as he liveth. (Thomas More, *Utopia*, p. 103)

For our ordinances and rites we have two very long and fair galleries. In one of these we place patterns and samples of all manner of the more rare and excellent inventions; in the other we place the statues of all principal inventors. There we have the statue of your Columbus, that discovered the West Indies, also the inventor of ships, your monk that was the inventor of ordinance and of gunpowder, the inventor of music, the inventor of letters, the inventor of printing, the inventor of observations of astronomy, the inventor of works in metal, the inventor of glass, the inventor of silk of the worm, the inventor of wine, the inventor of corn and bread, the inventor of sugars; and all these by more certain tradition than you have. Then we have divers inventors of our own, of excellent works (...) For upon every invention of value we erect a statue to the inventor, and give him a liberal and honourable reward. These statues are some of brass, some of marble and touchstone, some of cedar and other special woods gilt and adorned; some of iron, some of silver, some of gold. (Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, p. 214)

It is clear from these two excerpts of *Utopia* and *New Atlantis* that there is a difference in the logic of erecting statues. In Bensalem statues are

built in the logic of the reward-system that pervades the whole society. The state of Bensalem is a protective one, never indebted to any of its citizens. By erecting statues to the inventors, recognized as the main promoters of the welfare of society, the state pays its debt (along with “a liberal and honourable reward”, whatever that means). The material of which the statues are made – brass, marble, touchstone, cedar, special woods, iron, silver and gold – is proportionate to the contribution of those who are to be rewarded.

On the island of Utopia the idea of rewarding “notable men” and “bountiful benefactors to the commonwealth” is also present, but in a different way. First of all, this “reward” is seen as a “reward of honour” and is invested with a moral significance. Secondly, rather than a passive monument related to a remote past, statues are seen as capable of interacting with the present and with the future, by generating “good acts”. And it is this idea that statues erected in “perpetual memory” of people’s acts can “provoke their posterity to virtue” that interests me in the working hypothesis I intend to examine today.

The aim of this paper is to study the way the memories of the past embodied in statues are seen as dynamic agents of the future in Pina Martins’s novel, *Utopia III*, published in Lisbon in 1998. Before looking at the novel, though, I’ll take into consideration Tzvetan Todorov’s conceptual distinction between “literal memories” and “exemplary memories”. As I hope to prove, the latter are crucial to a good understanding of Pina Martins’s message.

## 2. Memories

In *Les Abus de la Mémoire* (1998), Todorov draws our attention to the importance of memory, and of its uses and abuses. As Todorov explains, complete restitution of the past is impossible, so whatever memory we may have of a past event, either as individuals or as a nation, depends on the conservation of some aspects of that event, on the one hand, and on forgetting other aspects, on the other (all memories thus depend upon a selection of aspects) (Todorov 1998: 14). But in Todorov’s view what is important in a memory is the use we make of it after its recollection.

According to Todorov, recollected events can be used either in a *literal* way or in an *exemplary* way. In the first case, events are preserved in their

literality (which does not necessarily mean that they are true); they are what Todorov calls “intransitive events” in the sense that they do not impel us to go beyond them (Todorov 1998: 30). Exemplary memories work differently: while they do not deny the singularity of events, they present recollections as models that provide us with a better understanding of new situations, with different agents. Exemplary memories imply a reading based on analogy and generalisation; from them we can always draw the moral of a lesson (*Ibidem* 30-31). The relationship between past and present is thus different in the two types of memory: in literal memories, the present is looked at in the light of the past; in exemplary memories, the past is used with the present in mind. As Todorov says, by reminding us of lessons of injustice exemplary memories are potentially liberating (*ibidem* 31).

Although there is no specific reference to statues in Todorov’s book, the typology of memories he suggests suits our case well. Indeed, by using Todorov’s terminology, we can better understand the difference between the use of statues in More’s and Bacon’s works. In *New Atlantis*, statues evoke literal memory, they celebrate a certain achievement and are seen as a tribute to an “intransitive event”. In *Utopia*, statues summon up moral behaviour that is presented as a model and are thus exemplary memories. They are projected into the future or, as we read in the text, they aspire to “provoke their posterity to virtue” – through statues, the past becomes a transforming agent of time.

### 3. Statues in *Utopia III*

There is frequent (almost obsessive, one could say) reference to statues in Pina Martins’s novel, *Utopia III*. The novel, formally presented as a sequel to Thomas More’s *Utopia*, describes the way Utopians live at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The information is provided by a descendant of Raphael Hythloday, Miguel Mark Hytlodeu, who tells Pina Martins that, after talking to Thomas More, his ancestor went back to Utopia, got married and raised a family there. Taking up the roles of Raphael Hythloday and Thomas More, Miguel Mark Hytlodeu and Pina Martins compare the real world to the utopian one – and come to the conclusion that while the real world must

urgently change, the utopian world is not perfect (although it has evolved through the ages) and needs to be “utopicized”. *Utopia III*, ostensibly written by Miguel Mark Hytlodeu (first author) but in fact by J. de Pina Martins (second author), presents utopia as a dynamic concept whose contents need to be constantly updated with reference to the evolving historical circumstances and the change of men’s desires. The history of the island of Utopia from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards is invented by Pina Martins in a hilarious feast of imagination, a real tribute to the Morean spirit. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, New Utopia is now composed of three islands (probably due to an earthquake in the 18<sup>th</sup> century): besides New Anglia (the island that Raphael Hythloday described to Thomas More) there are now New Lisia and New Ausonia, respectively the reverse images of Portugal and Italy.

There is much to be said about *Utopia III*, with its discursive strategies, its neologisms and anagrams, its triadic construction, and the way fiction mingles with reality, offering us a singular modern flavour of Thomas More’s creative imagination. But let’s go back to where I started this section and take up the idea of the obsessive reference to statues in Pina Martins’s novel.

Statues and busts pervade the whole book, both in the real and the utopian worlds. Thomas More and Raphael Hythloday, described by Miguel Mark Hytlodeu as “universal personalities”, have busts in all the gardens of the three islands of New Utopia. Other eminent humanists are paid homage to in specific gardens, according to their nationality or to the country they have influenced the most: the busts of Francis Bacon and Erasmus are in New Anglia; those of Giovanni Picco della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, Campanella and Galileo Galilei are in New Ausonia; those of Francisco Sá de Miranda and Miguel Servet are in New Lisia.

But Karl Marx’s bust can also be found in New Anglia; this is a special bust, a votive one, as Miguel Mark Hytlodeu explains to Pina Martins:

To Marx we have dedicated a votive bust in Utopia – (...) – we don’t think of him as a model thinker, just as a great thinker. (...) We don’t accept Marx’s theories nor have we used them for the organization of our society. That does not prevent us, though, from admiring the great spirit who, in *The Capital*, pays sincere homage

to Chancellor Thomas More, the author of *Utopia I*, which my dear professor, you must always bear in mind while writing *Utopia III*. (*Utopia III*, p. 144 – my translation)

Marx's bust is then different from the other busts that can be found in New Utopia. The description of the bust as "votive" allows us to understand that the Utopians draw a line between busts that aim to evoke an exemplary memory (all the busts mentioned before) and those which are erected as a tribute to an achievement. In religious contexts, votive statues (or busts, or candles) have been seen, throughout the ages, as a way to pay for a divine favour. By transferring this logic to lay life, the Utopians erected a bust to Marx to repay him for his service as a great thinker and for having dignified the memory of Thomas More. Like the statues we can find in *New Atlantis*, Marx's bust evokes an "intransitive event".

But not all the statues and busts in New Utopia evoke positive memories and actions. A most sinister bust of Henry VIII, the king who condemned Thomas More to death, is to be found in the cemetery of criminals. Henry VIII is described by Miguel Mark Hytlodeu as "a model of the spirit of death incarnate" and his statue is seen by the Utopians as "a damned statue that stands in a field of pollution and death" (*Utopia III*, p. 197). Here we are dealing with a different kind of memory: to use Todorov's terminology, Henry VIII is presented as the *superlative* example of bad behaviour (Todorov 1998: 39), of what must be condemned and proscribed.

Statues also abound in the non-utopian world described in Pina Martins' novel. The discussion of the "irrationality of Portuguese statues, of the bad choice of place for them, of their architectonic unsuitability and of their justification" (*Utopia III*, p. 107) occupies five pages in the book. Miguel Mark Hytlodeu is very critical of Portuguese policy towards statues. Let's consider a few examples:

How can we explain that in such a vast square [Praça do Comércio] a statue has been erected aspiring to be magnificent (which it is not) to the memory of such an insignificant personality as that of King José, who always lived in the shade of his "enlightened" despot, the famous Marquês de Pombal? (*Utopia III*, p. 107)

The most gigantic statue in Old Lisia is, as you know, that of Marquês de Pombal, in the so-called Rotunda (...). Was the said Marquês de Pombal in fact the greatest man in Portuguese history? Wasn't Camões a greater man (...)? Didn't Camões celebrate the universality of the Portuguese Discoveries (...)? (*Utopia III*, p. 108).

The biggest statue in Coimbra is not that of King Dinis nor of any of the university's professors. (...) Have you ever examined the statue of King João III in the main University patio? (...) It is not the representation of a man, but of a monster with a para-human figure. I know for a fact that he was the one who introduced the monstrous Inquisition in Old Lisia. (*Utopia III*, pp. 108-109)

What Pina Martins is denouncing here, through the voice of Miguel Mark Hytlodeu, is the fact that in Portugal statues do not evoke exemplary memories, but "intransitive events". Further on in the book, Miguel Mark Hytlodeu tells Pina Martins that he would like to have a bust erected to a Portuguese king in the gardens of New Lisia. They confer about it, considering the pros and cons of each name. After a discussion, which takes up four pages, they decide on Leonor, "the widow of King João II, a clever king and an excellent administrator, but unfortunately a very cruel man" (*Utopia III*, p. 131). The two men conclude that Leonor deserves a bust, as she was the founder of the Portuguese "Misericórdias" (devoted to the housing and treatment of the poor), and, most of all, of a big hospital, and was a highly educated woman, the owner of a remarkable library, and patron of the founder of the Portuguese theatre of the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and provider of funds for the publication of some of the most important books printed in Old Lisia." (*Utopia III*, p. 130). The choice of Leonor indicates the recommended policy towards busts and statues: in Thomas More's words, they should be erected "to bountiful benefactors to the commonwealth, for the perpetual memory of their good acts, and also that the glory and renown of the ancestors may stir and provoke their posterity to virtue." (More 1998: 103).

#### 4. Oblivion

As we have seen above, according to Todorov, a memory of a certain event is always the result of a process of selection of some aspects and of

rejection of others. If we are speaking of a collective memory, this process leads to collective oblivion. This a major subject of concern for Miguel Mark Hytlodeu while discussing the issue of the “irrational” building of statues in Portugal with Pina Martins: the Portuguese have been very prolific in erecting statues to people who didn’t deserve them, but a most important statue seems to be missing, that of Raphael Hythloday:

There [in Praça do Comércio], facing the wide paths of the sea that were taken by my ancestor Raphael, discoverer of Utopia, there shouldn’t be the statue of the mediocre King Josefino, but of the immortal sailor Raphael Hythloday (...) I confess, my dear Professor, I find it a scandal that I wasn’t able to find even one simple bust erected to the glory of my ancestor, immortalized by Thomas More as the philosopher-sailor! (*Utopia III*, p. 107)

Later in the book, Miguel Mark Hytlodeu agrees with Pina Martins on the possibility of replacing the statue of King José by that of Raphael Hythloday. Pina Martins explains to him that “unfortunately, Thomas More and Raphael Hythloday are entirely unknown in Old Lisia” (*Utopia III*, p. 111), even at the universities. In other words, Thomas More and Raphael Hythloday have fallen into oblivion.

Pina Martins’s concern with the lack of a statue of Raphael Hythloday can easily be understood if we take into consideration the moral value of statues in Utopia. They are examples of what is missing, what has to be recollected in order to ensure stability and a good life. It is particularly significant that what Miguel Mark Hytlodeu regrets the most is not the fact that the Portuguese have not erected a statue to Thomas More but to Raphael Hythloday. Indeed, a statue of Thomas More could be seen by the Portuguese as an evocation of an “intransitive event”. A statue of Hythloday, on the other hand, would certainly be perceived differently. Raphael Hythloday stands for the power of human imagination and for the rejection of the established order, of questioning the nature of things, and thinking of alternatives. This idea is particularly important if we take into consideration the theory of history that is put forward in the book by Miguel Mark Hytlodeu, and which is subscribed by the inhabitants of New Utopia:

(...) our thought is humanist. Contrary to Hegel and to what Marx received as his ideological legacy, we put Man in the centre of the universe, as an agent of the first historical outcome, as an agent of History. (...) We do not accept Toynbee's conception of History, that of the inevitable and fatal decadence of civilizations. (...) it was Man who made them flourish and decay, it was Man who accepted that those civilizations would die. But Man, in his vitality, can overcome death, because he transforms himself, he reproduces himself and he is the creator of cultures and civilizations. (...) Man can thus, we believe, somehow survive the fatal law of death, in the vital evolution of his cosmic existence. (*Utopia III*, 219).

A statue of Raphael Hythlodai, an exemplary memory of utopian imagination, is what Portugal (and the rest of the world) lacks. In his belief that Man is capable of forging his own destiny, Pina Martins calls for a dynamic attitude from his readers – as Thomas More did at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the end, the message is that New Utopia can benefit a lot from the real world – and will certainly change after Miguel Mark Hytlodeu goes back and tells his countrymen what he has seen in the non-utopian world. But the real world can only evolve by exploring alternatives – and that is in Man's hands.

By writing *Utopia III*, a book which revives the name of Thomas More, Pina Martins has evoked an exemplary memory, making a recipe from the past – i.e., utopian imagination, namely the desire to think that things can always be improved through the action of man – relevant for the present and for the future. And because he has done so, Pina Martins himself is entitled to a bust in the Literary Gardens of Old Lisia, as Miguel Mark Hytlodeu tells him:

You can be sure that one day, after *Utopia III* comes out, you will have a discreet bust (as discreet as you yourself, my dear Professor), in the enchanted gardens of New Lisia, very close to your Francisco de Sá de Miranda and not far from the three sacred monsters of Renaissance Humanism you love so much: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More. (*Utopia III*, p. 302).



The way fiction and reality mingle in Miguel Mark Hytlodeu's fantastic promise to Pina Martins brings up to date the really important message of Thomas More's *Utopia*: that the real and the utopian world must learn from each other but also from exemplary memories of the past.

**References:**

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