



Science Fiction in Portugal - The Drawing up of a Territory

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(Translated by David Prescott)

In memory of José Diogo Nazareth Sousa de Almeida, (1924-1997)

[\(originally published here\)](#)

This work intends to present the outlines of science fiction and of a certain fantastic literature related to it, having a reference in the national space in which it has been produced (Portugal). Although it contains a sort of introduction, it is mainly focused upon the production of the eighties and nineties, in which there has been a slight defining of a new paradigm. It does not aim at drawing up a history, but at simply defining some guidelines for reading. This is not a question of going from world SF in order to refer to its reflections; on the contrary, the aim was that of reading the greatest number of texts possible in order to present some questions which seemed essential. It is a carefully studied journey based on the critical reading of dozens of books, on a study of some of their authors, and on the probably subjective choice of some individual cases.

As belonging to Science Fiction, I have considered all of the books that are presented as such, whether explicitly, by means of a textual or paratextual reference, or implicitly, by means of a collection in which they are grouped or through their later recovery by the genre. I have opted for a conventionalist approach, which states that it is impossible to define the «essence» of literature and the genres, sub-genres and forms which constitute it or contest it. This was a bold choice, especially as I am aware of the fact that most of the narratives written in Portugal are closer to the so-called fantastic literature than to SF proper, as, indeed, will be shown.

I started, however, from some presuppositions. In the preface to the anthology *Side Effects*, published in 1997, Luís Filipe Silva states that SF is not «an aspect of Literature which can be catalogued», «a ghetto within a slightly larger ghetto», but as «a philosophy of behaviour», «a means of reaction to change and to life itself». We here once again encounter the reasons for which it refuses to be classified: the force which breaks down frontiers opposes the form which is necessary for a definition, and creates alternative spaces, subverts and deconstructs. Thus, in responding to the stability of the past with the dynamics of the present, SF ends up by not being

on the edge in which it has chosen to live or to which it has been relegated, but in the hidden centre of the vortex which it is in itself, the mirroring of a period which blinds itself because it is afraid to look at itself. It would be in no way ironic for me to quote the words of George Slusser: «if any literature is mainstream in the twentieth century, it's science fiction». The history of literature is not made up of a pre-established canon, but of genres which, in going against the tradition, became absorbed in it from the moment they were able to be classified. The literary institution has always included texts which were marginal, censored, forgotten or damned during their period, showing a rare capacity for tolerance towards the past and a remarkable blindness in relation to the present. The fact that it has not yet included SF is homage to the vitality of the genre.

SF carries within it an ambitious project, which again takes up the moment which witnessed the birth of the concept of Literature, at a time in which it still presented itself with all the potentialities of a new form of writing. To the contrary of the mainstream, it does not intend to be a depicting of the real, but intends to act upon it, opening up alternatives to the future or showing the possibilities presented by the present. In this sense SF has inherited the subversive nature of the eighteenth century novel, a genre which was able to integrate the scientific discoveries of its time, at a moment when fixed forms, codified by Rhetoric and Poetics, were unable to respond to the issues presented to them by their time.

Like all genres which live on the edge or on the frontiers, SF is characterized by its capacity to absorb all the discourses and all the voices of the so-called counter-culture, transforming itself into a sort of laboratory in which new forms of expression are tested, and providing the ground for, as so often has been stated, a type of looting on the part of official literature. As always happens, its marginal character seems to be the reason for its very versatility. Those who dwell on the fringes of institutions are unusually aware, do not settle within the canons, and know the freedom which imagination allows.

The Outline of a Story still to be told

In Portugal, SF lives within a clandestine situation. It is completely ignored by the national literary institution, by schools and, with notable exceptions, by the critics. «It has been relegated to authors», publications, specialized collections, briefly-lasting fanzines and some historical anthologies. There are neither crossings nor contaminations, excepting one or two works by a consecrated author. Faced with this oblivion, it responds by the same token. In 1992, João Barreiros, one of the most lucid SF critics, wrote: «In Portugal we don't burn books nor prohibit cartoon strips. We don't do any of this simply because the new works written in these fields are not published, or are published and no one reads them. In Portugal, bookshops are a desert full of the crammed anguish of stock gathering dust». In a slightly less pessimistic view, Álvaro de Sousa Holstein and José Manuel Morais, the authors of the only *Bibliografia da Ficção Científica e Fantástica Portuguesa [Bibliography of Portuguese SF & F]*, the second edition of which was published in 1993, produce the following diagnosis: «In a country in which there is practically no science nor scientific research, SF literature lives in a rarefied atmosphere, which is difficult to nourish writing by authors who favor this genre. And yet they continue to appear, surviving with the tenacious stubbornness of weeds growing between the pavements of the streets. SF and F written by Portuguese authors are alive and well, and are recommendable, and if it often does not yet correspond in terms of quality and quantity to the output of countries with a demographic and cultural dimension similar to our own, it is still true that it is little by little gaining the rights to its own space». The problem of SF and the fantastic literature associated to it in Portugal is still that of a legitimizing and delimiting of a space of its own. Its existence appears to have gone unawares except for those who belong to the fandom.

I may state that for those who come from the mainstream, the quantity and quality of the authors who write SF or who use it to write other types of texts which may perhaps be classified

nowadays as F (Fantasy) is astounding. This is an underground territory, a type of reverse of official literature, with different codes and different laws, and perhaps with a different history.

As always happens during a process of affirmation, it was SF itself which felt the need to find its antecedents, its founding myths, thus establishing its own history. If we look again at the *Bibliografia* we have already referred to, we may establish a course which begins with the visionary attitude of Father António Vieira, takes account of the emergence of the romantic imagination, and recovers fundamental narratives in Portuguese Modernism, devoting particular attention to some writers connected to Surrealism.

If we look at the history of fantastic literature from the point of view of the literary institution, we see the emerging of a territory which is not especially valorized except when it is forgotten. In the article dedicated to the «Marvelous» in the *Dicionário de Literatura Portuguesa [Dictionary of Portuguese Literature]*, Jacinto do Prado Coelho remarks that «it is in the nineteenth century that a fantastic literature is introduced into Portugal», and considers that this genre has a limited scope among us. He recuperates some romantic writers, referring to texts which have a founding character: the short story by Júlio César Machado, «Uma récita de Roberto do Diabo» [A Performance of Roberto do Diabo], included within the *Contos ao Luar* [Moonlight Tales], 1861, the *Contos Fantásticos* [The Fantastic Tales] by Teófilo Braga, 1865, the *Prosas Bárbaras* [Barbarian Proses] by Eça de Queirós (1866-67) and the *Contos* [Tales] by Álvaro de Carvalho, 1868. He highlights the particular case of Fialho de Almeida (*O País das Uvas* [The Country of Grapes], 1893) and calls attention to some symbolist writers, João Rocha and Henrique de Vasconcelos, who were influenced, just like Álvaro de Carvalho, by Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe. He considers the particular case of Teixeira Gomes, with *Blood Lust* (1909) and draws attention to the experience of Mário de Sá-Carneiro, forgetting some of the texts from Portuguese Modernism, such as the case of Almeida Negreiros with «The Turtle», or even Fernando Pessoa himself. The article mainly deals with some writers who made incursions into the genre: José Régio, Ruben A. (*A Torre de Barbela* [The Tower of Barbel], 1964, *Myself the Other*, 1966), David Mourão-Ferreira (*Os Amantes* [The Lovers], 1968). Strangely, he forgets Jorge de Sena and surrealist production, but he includes the work by Domingos Monteiro (*Histórias deste Mundo e do Outro* [Stories of this World and the Other], 1961 and *O Dia Marcado* [The Appointed Day], 1963). Portuguese SF is completely ignored by the manuals and dictionaries, having, however, the right to four lines in the *História da Literatura Portuguesa* [History of Portuguese Literature] by Óscar Lopes and António José Saraiva, in a chapter dedicated to the bibliography.

The presupposition that fantastic literature has very little importance in Portugal deserves to be reanalyzed, especially considering that it is the history of literature itself which grants greater or lesser importance to a genre, integrating or excluding authors and works according to criteria which are rarely made explicit. As for myself, I would like to draw attention to some authors and some works.

In 1906, in the *Ilustração Portuguesa*, a text was published which it is difficult to characterize, but which might be considered, according to José-Augusto França, as the first Portuguese work of SF. It is entitled *Lisbon in the Year 2000*, and was written by Melo de Matos, a civil engineer. It is a view of the progress in technology, industry and commerce, centered around the description of a bustling and modern capital city, the center of the world, criss-crossed by revolutionary forms of transportation, «the raised metropolitan railway», and accessed by new forms of communication such as, for example, the tunnel connecting Lisbon to Seixal, on the other side of the river. The text, which has significantly just been republished, has been studied by Daniel Tércio, who states that the author projected «a highly technological modern city around a sort of domesticated capitalism».

Secondly, I would like to mention surrealist production, now no longer in the field of SF but in fantastic literature. I would recuperate the magnificent text by António Pedro, *Apenas uma*

Narrativa [Just a Narrative] (1942), a lyrical and corrosive masterpiece of irony and humor, and would add the works of Virgílio Martinho and Mário Cesariny.

A history of fantastic literature in Portugal was finally made in the sixties, with the publishing of the *Antologia do Conto Fantástico Português* [Anthology of the Portuguese Fantastic Tale] , which recuperated romantic, modernist, presencists, surrealists or those connected to neo-realism, ending in Almeida Faria, after having included texts by David Mourão Ferreira, Ana Hatherly and Herberto Helder.

At the same time, in 1966, we witness an attempt to draw up the limits of the field of SF, with the publishing of *Terrestres e Estranhos* [Earthlings and Aliens], with authors who, with the exception of Dórdio Guimarães and Natália Correia, did not appear in the anthology by Ribeiro de Mello. The book presents a set of texts which, although they are different, have a common factor in that they deal with the fate of mankind, taking up old myths (*Fumos siderais* [Sidereal Smoke] by Manuela Montenegro or *A criatura* [The Creature] by Dórdio Guimarães) and are contaminated by the philosophical short story, as is true of the fiction by Fernando Saldanha, an author who would publish, in 1969, the book *O Planeta Prometido. Antecipação 69* [The Promised Planet. Anticipation 69]. In the short story «Destruição» [Destruction], by Hélia, we penetrate into the world of terror: a woman witnesses a horrific metamorphosis taking place on her body and on the surrounding environment. To the contrary, the story *Os dois Marcianos* [The two Martians], by Lima Rodrigues, shows us the distraction of a character who chooses not to see the reality in front of his eyes, in a clear allegory of human blindness, whilst Luís Campos (*O Homem que não quis viajar* [The Man who didn't want to Travel]) tells us of a character lacerated by a choice presented to him by a being from another world. Among all of the short stories I will highlight *Barbo* by Natália Correia, a text written in the first person and narrated by the last survivor of a technological civilization, and which equates the birth of the myth, its precarious strength in a world without hope, and the simultaneously divine and finite nature of the human being in the cosmic solitude of the universe. The authors chosen are part of a sort of corpus of Portuguese SF and Fantastic, determined empirically by their repeated inclusion in other collections. Manuela Montenegro, Luís Campos, Fernando Saldanha, Hélia, and Natália Correia turn up once again in the editions of *Seleções Mistério*, published in the eighties, along with texts by Fialho de Almeida and by Teófilo Braga, both recuperated within the tradition of fantastic literature.

The history of SF and the fantastic will once again be implicitly re-written in the eighties, through the magazine *Omnia* , which, during its short period of existence, devoted an important space to the genre, promoting new writers (João Barreiros, João Paulo Cotrim, José Manuel Morais, Ernesto Rodrigues and Daniel Tércio) and including previously published texts by Romeu de Melo, Mário-Henrique Leiria and Natália Correia, as if stating that this latter group were after all the recognized predecessors. On the other hand, the anthology *Side Effects*, published in 1997, is dedicated to the memory of the first two writers.

Romeu de Melo appears neither in the histories of literature nor in the literary dictionaries, as if did he in fact not exist. Of greater interest than his first novel, *AK. A Tese e o Axioma* [AK. The Thesis and the Axiom], published in 1959 in an edition by the author, are his short stories, which, in my view rank alongside the best works which have been published in Portugal. His texts, moving within the world of allegory, pose a question, analyze a problem, and leave the reader in suspense and without an answer. I will highlight the short story *Os Anões Cegos* [The Blind Dwarfs] , in which a higher species protects a lower one merely to amuse itself with its absurd conversations. In the evil consciousness which periodically attacks the higher people we may note the complex relationship between the exploiter and the exploited, whilst in the blindness of the *girofantes*, who consider themselves to be great and intelligent, we may find a portrayal of humanity itself. In opposing the world of intellectuals and scientists to that of politicians and the police, Romeu de Melo appears to advocate a sort of spiritualization of mankind, within a political

philosophy which seems to be diffuse and ideologically ill-defined, although it appears to be clearly pacifist and is open to a world which holds some promise.

The caustic world of Mário-Henrique Leiria is very different. He translated *Brave New World* and other SF texts, and published *Casos de Direito Galáctico* [Cases of Galactic Law], a short masterpiece ignored by official literature. As has been shown by Maria Manuela Pardal Krahler, the texts may be included within the field of surrealist black humor, irony, parody and satire, also functioning as a limit case in the creation of an alternative world which is proper to SF. The narrative is made up of a set of «exemplary cases presented for analysis in the Course of Galactic Law for students of the mixed federation (humanities of the 1st Stellar Agglomerate) in the Regional University of Aldebaran», in an obvious satire on the university system, and which almost always function as a paradox for which the solution is arbitrary and impossible to judge, not only because they present beings which function with eccentric and conflicting paradigms, but also because, as Manuela Pardal states, the referential function of language itself is disturbed. Very rarely has there been a creation in Portuguese literature of such a subversive universe, which not only questions the earthly world but, in a final analysis, questions the very possibility of communication and dialogue which should be inherent to language itself.

In the individual efforts and in the collective works of the sixties and seventies we may see a somewhat incoherent attempt to draw up a territory which has variable frontiers. Indeed, the majority of the texts quoted have more to do with fantastic literature than with science fiction, although here and there we may encounter the presence of a Martian or the description of an alternative universe. Yet, through these choices we may note that there is a tenuous sharing between a fantastic literature which recuperates little known texts by consecrated authors (Ribeiro de Mello's *Antologia*) and another one which plunges into the edges, defending a degree of relationship with science fiction, that is, making Portuguese production live side-by-side with international production, as is the case of *Terrestres e Estranhos*, and of the two volumes of *Alguns dos Melhores Contos de Ficção Científica* [Some of the best Tales of SF], organized by Romeu de Melo, which include works by the author himself and the short story «Os filhos de Anaita» [The Children of Anaita], by Natália Correia.

Another distinction may be established. Mainstream writing decisively excludes Romeu de Melo, an author consecrated by Portuguese SF and translated abroad, just as is the case of Strong-Ross (Francisco Valério de Rajanto de Almeida e Azevedo) or Fernando Saldanha. On the other hand, the short stories of Natália Correia transit among genres, whilst the case of Mário-Henrique Leiria appears to be more complex, given that the *Casos de Direito Galáctico* seems to belong to SF, and are claimed to be such, whilst the publications of the *Contos do Gin-Tonic* [Tales of Gin & Tonic] make him become included within a literature which, if it is not official, is at least officialized.

The difficult legitimizing of a genre: the eighties and the nineties

In 1986, Editorial Caminho publishes a book with 597 pages, written by two Portuguese authors, João Barreiros and Luís Filipe Silva, entitled *Terrarium. Um romance em mosaicos* [Terrarium. A Novel written in Mosaics]. In the second post face, João Barreiros states: «It is indeed true, gentlemen, a monstrous SF novel, totally accepting itself as what it is, post-modernist, cyberpunk, with Artificial Intelligences, aliens, Big Dumb Objects, apocalyptic visions of the end of the world, and a pinch of metaphysics which one critic once suggested that no one in their right mind would include here». It could have been considered as one of the literary events of the year, but it wasn't: critical reviews were rare and the silence was heavy. In this distortion one may see that which appears to be one of the characteristics of the Portuguese SF of the nineties: the creativity of its authors contrasts with the almost total absence of critical activity, which, with rare exceptions, has been losing ground in the press. And yet, in the case of *Terrarium*, one can almost understand the critics' terror when faced with a novel which radically breaks away from

the Portuguese tradition which might legitimize it, integrating it within a story in which influences are woven and pacts are drawn up.

Terrarium is a magnificent parody of the western imaginary and of some forms of expression particular to the twentieth century: the cinema (with a clear preference for B movies), comic strips, children's stories popularized on the big screen, TV series and, above all, SF. Pulp magazines live alongside androids by consecrated authors, TV heroes converse with characters from comics. The mainstream is discreetly referred to either by the use of a name (the Kreepo who works in the Fantasia Inn store is called K) or through an ironic quotation, as is the case of a best-seller by someone called Virginia Gordon, entitled *Visit to the Radio-Lighthouse*. The reader finds it difficult to become lost within the impossible game facing him (that of deciphering all the references one by one) because the novel, divided into five parts, each with its own style, its preferential work, its tone, and its story, preceded by a prologue and finished off by three alternatives, moves at a lightning pace which almost loses sight of its base project.

However, the plurality of stories which are here played out «between the inhabitants of the earth, both human and exotic, between the latter and the Potentates, among the Potentates, and between them and some others and the Ixytils, involving beings which metamorphose voluntarily or against their will» clearly show firm aims and radical criticisms. Firstly, in favour of SF and against any and all types of subjectivity: the theory of art for art's sake or art as narcissistic self-contemplation is violently subverted when the allegories become literal, as takes place in the third part of the novel. Secondly, against a certain type of SF (the canonical, represented by Bradbury or Asimov) and in favour of another kind, in which we may note the synchrony brought by the cyberpunk movement, in erasing the line which separates life from death or reality from the virtual space.

It would be difficult to state the theme of the novel, as it is impossible to make a summary of it. It is a politically incorrect work: the exotic beings and the earthlings may be necessarily cruel, because nothing seems to be more important than individual life or the survival of the species. There is no room for fine sentiments in a world which reflects a journey to the heart of darkness and in which each being, whether programmed or a victim of outer programming is forced to choose between the minimal possibilities offered to it, when they are offered, because they often have no choice.

If it opted to be a strict definition of SF, that which states that the genre draws up or proposes alternatives bearing in mind current science, this article could almost begin and end here. Due to its monstrous and encyclopaedic nature, due to the project which justifies it and due to the reading which it makes of itself, *Terrarium* may be read as a challenge and a manifesto, a founding break with a history which still cannot be made.

However, another world may be considered, more modest in its aims, but no less creative, being full of promise and of authors with a notable work. We will leave the pure and hard world of the end-of-century SF in order to enter the field of texts which are difficult to classify, which cross over frontiers or live on the edge of the mainstream.

The eighties witnessed the appearance of the fanzines mentioned in the Bibliography by Álvaro de Sousa Holstein and José Manuel Morais: some were short-lived, and others continued their existence into the nineties, as is the case of *Célula Cinzenta* [Gray Cell] in which new authors were published and texts from the past have been recuperated. At the same time a space was occupied in the magazine *Omnia* (from 1988 to 1991), with a project which revealed new authors and old texts, drawing up a new paradigm. And finally, Editorial Caminho publishers created an SF collection, in bright blue and easy to spot in bookshops, which became the preferential vehicle for discovering Portuguese writers.

It is difficult to present an overall view of the vast Portuguese production. I will firstly define the individual histories of the authors.

With five books published, João Aniceto creates a technologically advanced universe which, although located in the future, presents us with the image of our old, tired world and of the old humanist values which might still be able to structure it. With the exception of *A Teia* [The Web], which seems to mark out a turning point, his novels and short stories, present a beginning and a voyage, depicting an outer adventure which is basically the reflection of man's confrontation with himself, of that of Good versus Evil, of freedom versus slavery. For example, in *Os Caminhos Nunca Acabam* [The Pathways never end], a crew leaves in search of another planet and another civilization. The mission never achieves its aim: three characters remain on the planet and the other three returns, being unable to communicate an experience which has altered their behavior and their values. An identical situation is posed in the novel *O Desafio* [The Challenge], although the issue may appear to be reversed in the sense that it portrays mankind's confrontation with an almost unsurpassable barrier, which clearly refers to the finite nature of the human. In *A Teia*, a novel which depicts an authoritarian and technologically advanced society, but which is coming to its end, the figure of the Apocalypse, which had already appeared in previous works, is more clearly presented. The world of the generals, controlled by using androids, is opposed by the world of the heroes of the resistance, with the romantic figure of a couple in love. There is no hope in this universe tormented by pollution and the greenhouse effect, and in this manner the epic and Utopian aspect which characterized João Aniceto's previous fiction is radically dissipated.

In 1987 the Editorial Caminho SF collection also introduced a new writer, Isabel Cristina Pires. In her *Universal Limitada* [Universal Limited] she transports us to a world which might be able to be included in the universe of fantastic literature, as it seems to obey the rules of the genre: the construction of a text in which a maternal and day-to-day world is threatened by the breaking out of strange facts. The short narrative describing the impotence of a cleaning lady who is unable to perform her duties because the course of time has been destroyed is an impressive work, as is the case of «A menina feia ou a flor do desejo» [The ugly Girl or the wishing Flower], in which a forgotten dream is realized through the recourse of the world of wonder. In the same year was published a book by Artur Portela, entitled *Três Lágrimas Paralelas* [Three Parallel Tears], a set of twenty-six narratives which may be situated within the field of the fantastic.

Totally different is the world created by João Botelho da Silva, a writer who tragically died at the age of 27, after having written a novel, *Beduínos a Gasóleo* [Beduins on Petrol], Caminho Science Fiction Prize in 1993, and left an anthology of short stories for publication entitled *As Horas do Declínio* [The Hours of Decline]. The first book describes the struggle between a hunter, Nose Jones, and cars which suddenly behave like living beings, the last survivors of a lost society. This is a literature of anticipation, a tendency which is partially confirmed in the following anthology. In the short story «Cidade dos novelos de algodão» [The City of Fluff], a fascinated elegy of the planet earth, in which two cyborgs meet one of the last representatives of humanity, the narrator seems to condemn technological progress in order to praise a lost civilization (ours). On the contrary the text «Algures na Mongólia» [Somewhere in Mongolia] takes us to a cruel universe which shows that which could be called SF in order to then dive into the fantastic.

Contrary to this, the world of SF is clearly drawn up in the short stories *O Caçador de Brinquedos e Outras Histórias* [The Toy Hunter and Other Stories] by João Barreiros, a hyper-lucid testimony of a genre which, in his words, «has created the future in countries in which the future exists». It is presented as a «rite of passage» to the coming millennium, and its narratives often deal with the difficult learning process of adolescence, caught within the desire to plunge into the world of the child (which is the world of commercialized dolls, one should note) and the violence demanded by the struggle for survival, establishing an imaginary universe of its own, which is coherently articulated around the scientific discoveries on which it is based.

Which the novel *A GalxMente I & II* [The GalxMind] , published in two volumes by Luís Filipe Silva, who is also the author of *O Futuro à Janela* [The Future at the Window], an anthology of short stories, we are plunged into the world of virtual reality which, after all, we already inhabit, in order to then slowly return to the human world, which discreetly seems to be valorized in its condition as finite and infinite, ephemeral and immortal. Its reflection upon art and on the artist is central to this novel, which may be analyzed as the illustration of a dual question: is it necessary to suffer in order to create; is it not true that those who enjoy artistic creations are not, themselves, deriving parasitic pleasure from the suffering of others? Curiously, although it is presented in a different manner, the problem of knowing what poetry is and of what are the criteria for its assessment appear to be central in the novel *A Fraude* [Fraud], by Rui Miguel Saramago .

Mixing SF with fantastic literature, António de Macedo presents us with a strange and disturbing world, in which irony is always present. In the work *O Limite de Ruzky* [Ruzky's Limit] , made up of three short stories, we firstly see a world in which science is suddenly upset and undone in order to give way to the appearance of beings which until then had lived in ethereal or infernal regions. In this first story the reaction to the appearance of the divine becomes a satire on a well-known present-day institution, as if time had nothing to teach, at least to certain societies. The other two narratives, which are impressive due to their strangeness and poetic beauty, are closer to fantastic literature, as is also the case of the *Contos do Androthéllys* [Tales of the Androthelys] , 1993. After *Sulphira & Lucyphur* , in which a realistic description of Portugal at the end of the nineteenth century clashes with another dimension which goes beyond it, António de Macedo gave us a magnificent novel entitled *A Sonata de Cristal* [The Crystal Sonata] . Its imaginary world, now centered on the artist, on the scientist, and on the fabulous mediating and impassioned female characters, reflects upon the relationships which may be woven between music and life. There is a surprising choice made in the name of love and not that of the sterile celebration of art for art's sake, the magical power of which is, however, never shown to be questioned, and also surprising is the transfiguring which the real world sees itself going through when it is affected by the strangeness of a different reality. In the fantastic universe of António de Macedo, the real world merely provides a set of signs which can only be deciphered with a key coming from another universe, to which only a few people have access. Thus the reading of his works becomes an initiating process in which the reader seeks out the occult truth hidden behind the story.

Some of the authors mentioned here have taken the care to locate their fictions in Portugal, expressing a sort of distanced criticism. This is the case of Maria de Menezes, the author of *Três Histórias com Final Feliz* [Three Stories with a Happy Ending] , 1993, which ironically and incisively subverts the genre which they parody, yet paradoxically include some benevolence. In the two last short stories the description of Portuguese reality comes together with the irruption of a strange element which ends up being integrated due to the fact that the characters are flexible in their blindness: Elias the guard ends up by not fining an alien spaceship, Mrs. Etelvina and Mr. Antunes manage to domesticate a vampire, as if the country and society had the gift of taming the strangeness within a familiar and day-to-day life.

Ana Godinho's alternative universe is very different. In *Artiauri* she presents us with a world populated by strange beings, with their own codes, rituals and founding myths which, through their magical beauty, hark back more to the world of the wonderful than to the SF which is their starting point.

Finally, it remains to highlight the work of Daniel Tércio, the development of which from 1984 to 1998 may document, in a certain manner, the transformation of the genre itself in Portugal. His first book, *A Vocação do Círculo* [The Circles's Vocation] , tells us the story of a character who is suddenly transported, firstly to an alternative Lisbon, in which Portugal is a part of the Iberian Federation and King Philip II is a national hero, and then to Olissipo, a city in which there still echoes the nightmare of a type of Inquisition. Lyricism comes together with irony, creating a

universe which we recognize in its difference and its strangeness. His capacity to make Portuguese reality the object of an intelligent game with the reader appears again in the short story collection *O Demónio de Maxwell* [Maxwell's Demon], in which there is for example, in the title story, a portrayal of the meeting between a door-to-door shoe salesman with a male (and female) alien. His reflection upon time and history may perhaps be the justification for his latest work, *Pedra de Lúcifer* [Lucifer's Stone], a violent exercise on an alternative world, which takes on the darkest side of the western world. Subversion appears at the end, when the reader understands that one of the aims of the novel may be that of its own deconstruction.

An anthology fulfils a project and allows a reading which it usually legitimizes in a justification through a preface. This is the case of *O Atlântico Tem Duas Margens* [The Atlantic has two Shores] by José Manuel Morais, a collection of thirteen short stories and a poem, published, once again, in the Editorial Caminho's SF collection in 1993. In a contrast with Portuguese pessimism, the tone appears to be almost euphoric: «The fact that science fiction in Portuguese has produced enough authors and works to fill an average sized volume might be surprising to some people, but the reality is precisely this». Portuguese and Brazilian authors appear side by side in a work of over two hundred pages, showing an exchange of experiences and an intertextual dialogue which apparently does not exist in other fields. As José Manuel Morais stresses, «the authors have very little in common in themes and styles». Yet it may be possible to draw up territories and to define some main lines. The first separation is made by the editor, who points out that some of the texts belong to SF and others to fantastic literature, noting that it is not possible to theorize on a genre through the narratives (and the poem) here included. One notices, however, a sort of insistence on that which could be termed political fiction. The ferocious vision of a normalized and racist Portugal, given to us by José de Barros »" an author about whom one may know nothing »", may be linked to the denunciation of contemporary Brazil which transpires in the short story by Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro, an alternative history, and the fiction by Ivanir Calado, which brings us the not always happy union between power and organized crime. Equally critical, despite the note which accompanies it, is the fiction by Roberto de Sousa Causo, a Brazilian writer, who portrays the somewhat less pacific efforts of the peace-keeping forces. In a similar manner, Luís Filipe Silva's economic fiction is a serious warning as to western cultural centralism.

In «A Capilomante» [The Hair-Diviner], José Carlos Neves provides us with a first person narrative in which daily life is transformed through a moment of magic, whilst Finisia Fideli seems to tell us that not all desires should be satisfied. José Luís Calife's «A Sonhadora» [The Dreamer] is a nine year old girl who traces out shipping routes and deviates them from their point of arrival when the dream finds its own path. The difficult world of adolescence is expressed in the short story by João de Mancellos, the author of *Veleiros do Tempo Cósmico* [The Ships of the Cosmic Time], published in 1988 by Edições Vega, and in the disturbing fiction by José Manuel Morais, the author of several short stories, in which the commanding figure of Jorge Luis Borges may often be noticed. In a strange narrative, Manuel F. S. Patrocínio presents us with a world in which nothing is known besides that which is told, besides a maxim which seems to play with the narrator's ignorance.

Some of the texts even propose a reflection upon the genres in which they work. This is the case of the fiction by Daniel Tércio, which gives us an allegory of the fantastic itself, in describing how a self can discover itself, in its strangeness, through the drawings which it itself produces or through the vision of a figure standing out in a window. The final sentence («And I draw myself, alien, on the page») could well be the epigraph for the enigmatic poems by João Paulo Cotrim, written by someone who does not seem to move within our paradigms. On the contrary, João Barreiros presents us with a reflection on SF itself, in contrasting two narratives (*The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells, and *Martian Fantasy* by Ray Bradbury, with the latter being fictitious and ironic), which represent two alternatives which come together and suddenly annul each other, with each of them ending up functioning as a form of resistance to the other, although in different manners.

Some of these authors (José Manuel Morais, Daniel Tércio, João Barreiros and Luís Filipe Silva) will be included, along with António de Macedo, Maria de Menezes and David Alan Prescott, in the anthology *Non-Events on the Edge of the Empire*, which is the result of the First Encounters of Science Fiction and Fantasy. *On the Edge of the Empire*, organized by the Cascais Town Council Department of Culture. The tone of the introduction by José Jorge Letria is that of a counter-attack: «Literature of the fantastic and science fiction: a damned brotherhood in a country whose literary institutions have yet to get used to dealing with difference, with heterodoxy, with transgression. A damned brotherhood, which joyfully forms a common front in this Edge of the Empire Here to stay». And so it was. In 1997 the project is extended to internationally renowned authors (Joe Haldeman), it has the presence of Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro, and once again includes David Alan Prescott, who thus may be included within Portuguese production. The second anthology *Side Effects* is the first official publication by SIMETRIA, Portuguese Association of Science Fiction and the Fantastic, «whose goal is to promote the efforts of Portuguese writers and fans». Besides a more lucid and clearer awareness of the problems of the genre, the existence of a group will surreptitiously draw up a series of tendencies. We once again find João Barreiros' fascination for the violence hidden behind the childish and childlike universe of the consumer society, Luís Filipe Silva's concern for the perversion brought by virtual reality and the irony, this time more violent, of Maria de Menezes, here about the excesses which the so-called new pedagogies may lead to, whilst both António de Macedo and Daniel Tércio himself seem to be moving progressively towards the universe of SF. David Alan Prescott, who in the previous anthology had written an ironic and subtle short story in the first person, in the form of a diary in which a sort of progressive madness emerges, here writes a fantastic narrative in which he portrays, with distance, the reality of the Portuguese university. José Xavier Ezequiel, a new author, presents us with a narrative which shows the violence of an exterminator, in a universe which reminds one of João Barreiros. The short story by Helena Coelho, who won the Fiction Prize since established by Simetria, is very different, and describes the confrontation between two worlds whose rules are tragically incompatible.

In analyzing the joint production of the authors mentioned and the anthologies studied, we may once again note the diversity of the options, of the genres, of the themes and of the styles, which does not prevent one from noticing a sort of convergence. Firstly, a certain type of irony runs through almost all of these texts, whether cruel or playful, as if the marginal situation of SF and F allowed a type of lucidity and distance. Parody, a «repetition with critical distance», according to Linda Hutcheon, is also a process favored by many writers, who use it not only to show the models they use and the paradigms governing them, but above all to subvert them in a creative manner. Thirdly, crossing over into parody, there is a concern for Portuguese reality, as if at times there were an obsessive desire to nationalize SF itself. Finally, there is a slight tendency, perhaps more Brazilian than Portuguese, to create political fictions, of which EuroNovela [EuroNovel], the recently published novel by Miguel de Almeida is an example.

The history of SF (& F) draws out a territory, defended vehemently by some, like João Barreiros, or in a surreptitious manner by others who ignore the distinctions between genres or play with them in a distant and ironic way. But whatever are the paradigms governing them, all of the authors have to do with that which Literature has always been, not as a normative institution, ruled by the critics and the school, but simply as a set of the production of those which constantly subvert it: a shifting terrain, with oscillating frontiers and wide edges, which offers, between the joy of a promise or the terror of a threat, a world which insistently represents its own alternative.