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Storying the “I” of Community, or How the Community is Shaped by Stories in José Francisco Costa’s Mar e tudo

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Abstract

This essay will first analyse *Mar e tudo* (1998) by José Francisco Costa as an American short story cycle that shapes the Azorean American community for the reader. Analysing *Mar e tudo* as an American short story cycle, as this essay concludes, uncovers how the collection contributes to the specificity of the Azorean American experience, and also forms part of a wider project of understanding the U.S. as a nation made up by individual ethnic stories which contribute to a larger collective.

Keywords

Portuguese Americans in literature, Emigration and immigration in literature, Friends and associates, Family, Azores, United States

Resumo

Este ensaio analisará primeiro *Mar e tudo* (1998) de José Francisco Costa como um ciclo de contos americano que molda a comunidade açoriana americana para o leitor. Analisando *Mar e tudo* como um ciclo de contos americano, como este ensaio conclui, descortina como a coleção de contos contribui para a especificidade da experiência açoriana americana, e também faz parte de um projeto mais amplo de compreensão dos EUA como uma nação composta por histórias étnicas individuais que se combinam.

Palavras-chave

Luso-americanos na literatura, Emigração e imigração na literatura, Amigos e associados, Família, Açores, Estados Unidos

Before making his case for the existence of an American short story cycle, James Nagel (2001) provides a useful definition of how short stories can both stand alone and combine to create a collective work: “[T]wo ideas become clear in the concept of a cycle: that each contributing unit of the work be an independent narrative episode, and that there be some principle of unification that gives structure, movement, and thematic development to the whole” (p. 19). He also observes the following:

a [short story] cycle is less unified than a novel but has much greater coherence and thematic integrity than a mere collection of interrelated stories. It can focus on the development of a single character, but it is more likely to involve scenes devoted to a series of characters that interact with each other throughout the episodes, so that the major character of our story may function in the background of another. In the history of the genre, the most persistent continuity in the form has been in setting, so that all shorter works constituting a cycle occur in some general location, with prominent landmarks recurring throughout, tying the events to an underlying sense of place. (2001, p. 17)

For Nagel, the American short story cycle includes the examination of ethnicity and of the drama of emigration. He argues that the American short story cycle centers on the drama of the immigrant experience, commenting that the “American experience is, after all, the process of making one of many” (2001, p. 258). To analyse José Francisco Costa’s *Mar e tudo* (1998) as an American short story cycle might not be immediately obvious, particularly when the stories are written in Portuguese and, at first sight, might not appear to be directed at an American audience. However, as Francisco Cota Fagundes (2003) points out, *Mar e tudo* has a certain unity at the structural and thematic level:

[a] análise sequencial e independente de cada um dos nove contos de *Mar e tudo* não pressupõe, de modo algum, que esta coletânea não seria possível de ser lida como uma sequência integrada. Tornar-se-á óbvio que vários padrões estruturais, temáticos e imagísticos, entre outros, se repetem, com variações, ao longo do volume. (p. 7)

Onésimo Teotónio Almeida (1999) also points to *Mar e tudo* being a long poem of linked stories. At the basic structural level, *Mar e tudo* is composed of 9 stories, referencing the number of islands that compose the Azorean archipelago. Each of the stories is preceded by a little poem that frames the reading of the story itself. As Fagundes (2003) notes, the nine poems function both as epigraphs to the stories and as a preliminary text that guides the interpretation of the story that follows, also suggesting that what looks like nine separate poems are, in fact, the verses of the same poem (pp. 2–3). The poems also provide a multi-layered intertextual reference to aspects of the Azorean cultural and literary landscape that works in many levels.¹ For instance, the poem that precedes the second

¹ *Mar e tudo* contains further intertextual references. For instance, in the first story, the estrangement felt after emigrating that concludes the memory of being escorted back to the bus at the end of the school day because a teacher “percebeu que não éramos ainda deste mundo” (19-20) as well as recalling the biblical reference, it is also a nod to João de Melo’s novel *O Meu mundo não é deste reino* (1983), where the inhabitants of an Azorean village struggle to make sense of how their lives change after a plane crashes in the village. Also in this first story, the child’s goodbye to his dog, Bocanegra, echoes Daniel de Sá’s *Ilha grande fechada* (1992), which describes how the main character kills his beloved dog on the eve of emigrating as a first step taken to sever the attachment to the island. Fagundes also states that the dog’s name, Bocanegra, is also the name of a fish found in the Azores, becoming another instance in which *Mar e tudo* explores the islander’s relationship to the sea (10). Fagundes also points further intertextual references to Jorge de Sena in the third story (see p.15 and 17), perhaps reflecting Costa’s interest in Sena (his doctorate examined this author), to Onésimo

story, “*sapateia teia teia / com fios entelaçados / no olhar*” (Costa, 1998, p. 11) is a multi-layered intertextual reference to the *Sapateia* dance of the Azores, to a collection of poetry by Vitorino Nemésio (1976) called *Sapatéia açoriana, andamento holandês e outros poemas*,² and to a short story collection called *(Sapa)teia Americana* that examines the life of the Azorean emigrants in the US, written by Onésimo Teotónio Almeida (1983). On a narrative level, the poem alerts the reader to the presence of the islands’ cultural parameters in the reality that the emigrant inhabits. These multi-layered intertextual references highlight one of the themes in the story: how imagination aids the creative act.

This essay will show how the individual short stories that compose *Mar e tudo* must be comprehended as a whole. To do so, the essay will group together the stories into sections that examine specific thematic or structural elements. The first section is composed of the second story, “Nome próprio,” the seventh story, “Fala comum,” and the third story, “Terra de longe,” and will analyse how the creative act is a structural link in many of the stories. The second section is composed of the first story, “*School bus*,” the fourth and fifth stories, “*Segundo shift*,” and “*Fio do tempo*,” respectively, and the ninth story, “*Enquanto a ilha for...*,” and will examine the strategic placement of the stories in *Mar e tudo*. The final section is composed of the fourth story once more, the sixth story, “*À nossa!*,” and the eighth story, “*Suor frio*,” and analyses the importance of friends and family as a thematic link in the collection. The essay concludes that the depiction of the Azorean American community in *Mar e tudo* forms part of the wider project of the US as a nation shaped by many emigrant experiences. In so doing, the essay will examine how a portrait of the Azorean American community evolves through the exploration of specific thematic and structural landmarks, making *Mar e tudo* an example of an American short story cycle.

The Creative Act

As was commented above, the creative act is a structural link in many of the stories in *Mar e tudo*, and this is particularly seen in the self-reflexivity of the writer-narrator present in the three stories that will be examined in this section. In the first of these, “Nome próprio,” the writer-narrator is preoccupied with how to move beyond the limitations imposed by the words on the page, and also by memory. For him, the task is not only in bringing a story to life with words, but also how to communicate feelings. It is also a story about how memory interrupts the flow of life.

The setting for this story is the interview for admission into an English for foreign speakers class. The plot of the story is simple: along the course of the interview, the writer-narrator learns about his new pupil Glória’s life, as she explains why she wishes to learn English. As the writer-narrator listens to Glória, he goes off into reveries. The island of origins emerges as a link between the two characters; the writer-narrator attempts to write Glória’s story by re-inscribing her within his own memory of the island environment. In so doing, the writer-narrator anchors Glória into the island environment:

Eu gostaria de pintar-te com uns óleos ainda mais cor de terra. Saia rodada pelo joelho. Andar ajeitado às tamanhas feitas, à medida do pé, por Ti Chico da Farinha. Deixa colocar-te no colo a toalha de bordar, e sentar-te à soleira da porta, na aldeia a que pertences. [...] Outras desejaram a tua sorte. E um sorriso estrangeiro tomou conta do teu destino. Eu também parti. Não deste pela minha ausência porque fui sempre embarcado. Cresci desconhecido. Para sempre fiquei com esta dor de alma de saber que, lado a lado, caminhávamos desencontrados.

Teotónio Almeida in the fifth story (26), to Vitorino Nemésio and João de Melo in the sixth story (30), to Fernando Pessoa in the eighth story (37-38), and to Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen in the last story (38).

² Vitorino Nemésio was the main literary figure in promoting açorianidade, which led to a cultural movement that saw Azorean literature and culture as being distinct from Portuguese literature.

Deixa-me pintar-te com as cores do chão de novelões, serradura e ramos de criptoméria, sinais da última festa que te aliviou o luto.... (Costa, 1998, p. 26)

By re-starting the narration of her life and interrupting the writer-narrator's reveries, Glória imposes her story, her reality. This establishes a narrative tension between the story told and the story imagined, presenting a to-ing and fro-ing between characters that is almost like a dance, recalling the references to the *Sapateia* dance of the poem that frames this story.

The seventh story, "Fala comum," also has a writer-narrator who struggles to put into words the story he is listening to. This time, the writer-narrator cannot hear the words of this story until the voice finally addresses him directly: "[n]ão sabes como iniciar esta estória, não?" (73). A conversation is then established in which the voice speaks about his family in the Azores so as to encourage the creative act of writing. When the writer-narrator realises that he is speaking with his grandfather, the grandfather states: "Debaixo da terra, sou a voz de muitas bocas em adeus constante. A fala comum dos teus mortos" (77). In what could be perceived as a structural mirror to "Nome próprio," the conversation in this story establishes a connection with the memory of the island past and unleashes the creative act of writing. The title of this seventh story, "Fala comum," echoed in the way the grandfather describes himself as one voice amongst many voices in the quote above, speaks of a collective project, or experience. This breaks the writer's block to create a self-reflexive project where the writer-narrator challenges the reader to join in:

ao viadante que acabou de arribar a este abrigo cerzido de meias falas se esclarece que não se lava a mal as duas possíveis atitudes que poderá tomar: ficar à porta da narrativa ou sentar-se na esteira a distribuir nacos do seu próprio pão feito palavra. Tudo lhe parecerá fácil se não quiser entrar. Ficarà estrangeiro, como os soldados-de-lisboa que, por uma questão de falta de ouvido, nunca acertaram com o sotaque dos homens-bons da minha terra. Estrangeiro, que não peregrino. E tire daí as ilações que lhe aprouver. Não se esqueça, porém, que está fora do seu próprio tempo e espaço. Pelo contrário, se escolher o nosso chão, será um dos santos nesta comunhão de errantes. Peregrinos solidários.... (Costa, 1998, p. 74)

The choice presented to the reader highlights the power of the written word to entertain, on the one hand, or, on the other, to empathize and be sensitive in understanding beyond what is stated in words. Participating in the act of constructing a story implies a communal dimension which, as Fagundes (2003) comments, "aponta para a solidariedade entre o escritor e sua fonte de inspiração, e para a solidariedade entre 'ele' e os 'eus' que o habitam" (p. 36). I would add that the reader is also involved in the story's construction, as part of the ultimate communal project; the story, a flight of imagination, is understood only if the reader is able to commune with the islanders. In so doing, the acts of reading and writing create a community of understanding so that the struggle of putting words onto paper that the writer-narrators face in both stories becomes part of accepting that some things can only be intuitively understood. The act of writing thus is exposed as requiring the use of appropriate language, as Glória explains in the second story when she chastises the writer-narrator for suggesting that, one day, she will be able to tell her story in English: "A vida só se conta a Deus e na nossa língua..." (Costa, 1998, p. 26). It is not that English is inadequate as a language, but that some things can only be understood and appreciated by those who move beyond the limitations of words towards finding empathy, and this empathy results in moving beyond a common language towards achieving a common and shared understanding. As Fagundes (2003) comments, Glória

se "recusa" a permanecer integrada no subjectivismo do seu criador e vem a ocupar o palco da realidade emigrante. Este choque entre a subjectividade poética e a realidade actual constitui

uma auto-reflexiva dramatização do duplo compromisso do narrador deste conto e do autor de *Mar e tudo*: dum lado o apelo à realidade exterior, da experiência, que desperta o seu empenho e o seu testemunho, do outro, o apelo ao poético, do devaneio lírico, da fuga à ficção transcritiva e à realidade permanente. (p. 14)

The act of writing, of learning how to write, of communicating, then, is an ongoing and incomplete process of finding meaning, underscoring the difficulty of writing something down so that it can be contained and examined. For the writing act to be successful, it requires a communal understanding of the shared experience of the Azorean American community that moves beyond the limits of language.

The placement of “Terra de longe,” the third story in *Mar e tudo*, makes sense if one considers how the second story, “Nome próprio,” has prepared the reader to transcend the physical limitations of words on the page. The third story consists of three smaller and intercalated stories: the story of an old man who emigrated, Tiago’s story, and the story that Tiago tells. In the first of these intercalated stories, the self-reflexive author-narrator speaks directly to the reader about an old man who emigrated, enticing the reader to suspend reality and see a narrative in the act of constructing itself. Once more, the reader is given an active role in the construction of the story:

Chegados que somos até este ponto, poderá o leitor imaginar o resto de vida que falta ao nosso amigo? Claro que sim. Uma vez que tal personagem é imaginado, recrie-se o leitor num sonho, e imagine-se menino nos joelhos do seu avô. Ou decida-se pela poesia, se o coração para tanto lhe der. Façamos roda no chão da nossa herança. Venha daí, que o velhinho, depois que atravessou o mar, tem uma ilha cheia de pequeninas histórias para contar. Ele não é louco, não. O leitor é que, sem o saber, é poeta!!! Não é sua a seguinte estória? Nunca a imaginou, contada ou vivida? Deveras? (Costa, 1998, p. 34)

The idea of the island as a place containing many stories raises the possibility of a never-ending connection of lives, and of a community made up of stories. Here, emigration enables further stories to be told, remembered, and to emerge. However, in all this, the act of emigrating is also presented as a reluctant journey:

Não queríamos fugir. Embarcávamos. O lado de lá do oceano chamava, latia como fêmea ciosa. É verdade que a terra, às vezes, metia medo. E o mar vomitava-se, medonho. A gente, em novelos, ficava ainda mais rente ao chão. Mas quando se partia, chorava-se. E ríamos por mor do choro. Vinham os velhos. E diziam que era pior que a morte a despedida em vida. (Costa, 1998, p. 35)

This “despedida em vida” is a thematic echo to the poem that frames the first story, “para quê o adeus /se partir é / ficar para sempre?” (Costa, 1998, p. 11), suggesting the emigrant metaphorically dies for those remaining in the island, and that, for the emigrant, the island becomes the memory of another life that is left behind. This perceived death is also a rebirth, if the writer-narrator’s request to the old man, and perhaps the reader, is heeded: “leva esta estória a quantos repousam nas margens deste rio de palavras” (Costa, 1998, p. 36). In so doing, the emigrant enters a community which constructs itself anew by the stories to be heard, read, constructed, told, and so on, which in turn shapes a shared understanding of the Azorean American community for the reader.

In “Terra de longe,” the request to carry on telling stories acts as a structural transition to the other intercalated stories, showing how the interconnection of stories within other stories that are waiting to be told can be done; here, the story of the old man who emigrates moves to Tiago, a child born in

the islands who now lives in the U.S., who tells impossible stories that he believes are true, then moving to Tiago's story about a field of flowers on the island whose work is to grow and provide color. The world outside of the field in Tiago's story is described as one of conforming to certain established behaviours, where the police extinguish any opposition or difference, including the red flowers that disappear every spring, and where these red flowers must be picked from the field.³ The third story ends as follows:

Muitos, do povo, fugiram receosos. Mas eram cada vez mais os que, da terra, aprendiam a tenacidade das flores. Os que fugiram e os que ficaram eram agora uma multidão sem conta que gritava, acenando, para a flor vermelha. [...] e Tiago já não sabe dizer se é sonho o que alguns da terra lhe trazem por notícia. Prefere olhar sobre o dorso do mar, à procura de outra margem. Assim vai crescendo o menino. Flor em outro chão. Longe da terra onde terá acontecido Primavera. (Costa, 1998, pp. 39–40)

Tiago, the “Flor em outro chão,” one of many people who left the Azores reluctantly, comes up with stories to make sense of his new life after emigrating, and also of the life he has left behind. The new political situation in Tiago's story, where the red flowers, read people who are no longer prosecuted, is heard second hand, and not directly experienced, becoming a story in itself. The use of the future tense in the last line, “terá” hints at a distancing effect between the events in the island, the so-called news, and the reality of the experience of emigration. As Fagundes (2003, p. 19) notes, Tiago is a “fusão dos que contam e escutam/lêem a sua estória,” echoing this essay's reading above of how writing in *Mar e tudo* is a communal experience in which the reader is asked to take an active role. In this way, the blur between reality and fiction becomes uncertain, perhaps reflecting the emigrant's changing relationship to the island of origin exemplified by the ending of Tiago's story; a celebration from afar of an imagined possibility (freedom from political persecution or from social restrictions) that has become a reality, but one that is not experienced directly. Fagundes (2003) describes Tiago's situation as one where “o menino está deste lado, isto é, na diáspora, olhando o lá, que para ele é o longe; e pensando também no que poderia ter sido e não foi. Esse longe é assim um longe especial, um longe temporal e existencial” (pp. 17–18). This suggests reality as subjective and, when seen from the perspective of the emigration setting, as having the potential of becoming a story. Emigration, therefore, enables a creative act that is guided by a shared experience of making stories, and this creative act slowly gives shape to understanding the Azorean American community as a universe of many stories for the reader. In effect, the Azorean American community shaped by the creative act is a place where the individual stories of the emigrant experience shape themselves as prominent landmarks, in the same emotional and spatial location, to echo Nagel's words about form in a short story cycle at the beginning of this essay.

The Strategic Placement of the Stories in *Mar e tudo*

As the universe of the Azorean American community shapes itself for the reader, *Mar e tudo*'s treatment of the island as a space also evolves. To explain, the first story in *Mar e tudo* places the island of origins as central within the life of the main character; the second story points to the need to acknowledge the limitations of calling upon the island space because it cannot be fully evoked; the third story slowly moves attention beyond the island borders so as to accept something more abstract; the fourth story

³ The story of the red flower suggests a carnation, the symbol of the April 1974 revolution, represents, as Fagundes comments an autobiographical moment in *Mar e tudo* for Costa, echoed also in the story's use of the names of his children (2003: 16, 18).

presents the emigration experience as unsettling upon which the fifth story develops to suggest that the island environment must be left behind in order for the emigrant to adapt to the new reality, and, as the stories in *Mar e tudo* are read, there is a movement away from the characters having the island as the center of meaning. By the last story in the collection, the emigration experience is not so painful. In a sense, the evolution of the emigrant's relationship to the island environment presents characters at different stages in that relationship. Taken as a whole, the structural progression of the stories enables a deeper understanding of the disorienting effect of emigration, and also the changing relationship that the Azorean emigrant has with the island of origins. This enables *Mar e tudo* to show the island space as the site of memory, as a landmark, as the universe of the Azorean American community emerges for the reader.

This section of the essay will focus on four key stories within *Mar e tudo*, so as to examine their strategic placement within the collection, and how they develop the structural progression outlined above.

The first story, “*School bus*,” follows a recently-emigrated boy during his first day of school in the US. As the story unfolds, the advice received from his grandmother, “*Nunca se olha para trás*,” is shown to be impossible to follow (Costa, 1998, p. 13). Like a ritual, the boy constantly remembers the island which, as the poem which frames this story had already warned, he is unable to leave behind. This is reflected in how familiar routines feel unfamiliar in the new setting:

Tinha de me levantar sem pensar mais em dormir. Lavar a cara. Vestir-me. Rezar. Comer. E andar pela porta fora direitinho para a escola. [...] se não fosse o cheiro diferente das roupas, do ar, das pessoas e das casas e das coisas; se não fosse sei lá o quê no sol e no céu que não era exactamente o mesmo do dia anterior... e sentir-me-ia ainda nas ilhas, no limiar de mais um dia do rapazinho de bata branca e mala de fardo à tiracolo. (Costa, 1998, p. 13)

Basing this story on the first day of school enables the exploration of an awareness that something has intrinsically changed, and that it will keep on changing, moving forward even if the mind wanders back to the island. The story, then, becomes an exploration of how the memory of the island, the memory of imagined life outside of the island, and the contrast with the new reality of emigration, become an evolving cycle of finding meaning. Fagundes (2003) describes these as “*ritos de passagem transformativos resultantes de conquistas mentais, psicológicas e emocionais*” (p. 11). Thus, memory is contrasted with direct experience, triggering a revisiting of the past to make sense of the new experiences. For instance, watching the snow on the ground as he gets ready for school triggers memories of how the schoolchildren back in the island had created a whole repertoire of stories and myths. This creates a reversed perspective so that, instead of dreaming about things that have not been experienced, like snow, what is now imagined and mythologized is the island space and everything that has been left behind by the act of emigrating. The landmarks which memory revisits remain the same, but their meaning shifts as the Azorean American experience unfolds.

The boy's first day at school is one more step on a journey begun by emigrating that will forever change his life. The literal journey of boarding the school bus joins up with a figurative journey of change caused not only by entry into the new educational system, but also the possibilities that this experience will bring. The temporal movement in the narration, particularly in the figure of the narrator of this story, is worth noting here. At times, the narrator's present seems to be in the island, at others, it seems to be in the emigration setting, echoing how a train of thought triggers associations. Fagundes (2003) explains this as presenting “*a ambiguidade de o conto ser ‘acerca de’ experiências de lá ou de cá. De facto, o conto é a fusão de ambas as “realidades”*” (p. 10). I would add that the timeline is collapsed further when one observes that there is also an adult narrator looking at his past child self, at the memory of the first arrival in the U.S., suggesting another pursuit of finding meaning by

revisiting the landmarks of past experiences. The quote below shows the crossing of these three timelines:

Apreensivos, entrámos na camioneta amarela que nos levou para a escola. Na memória, ficaram algumas aparas do que conversámos na primeira viagem. Foi um percurso cheio de vozes a que me iria habituando pelos anos fora. Era ainda muito verde, pelo que os meus olhos, a abarrotar da novidade, iam enchendo a alma deste outro mundo que rodopiava agora à nossa volta. Mas o coração, teimoso, ainda se batia por manter vivas algumas saudades nascidas na despedida da véspera. Foi assim que terei sonhado, no meio da conversa com meu primo, que me acotovelava todas as vezes que não respondia às suas interpelações, e a algarviada dos outros meninos, recheio trepidante e alegre do tacidurno autocarro. Era tão verde que ainda sonhava. (Costa, 1998, p. 16)

The impression created is of a rite of passage that is being experienced and acknowledged by the now adult narrator who understands a little bit more, yet still seeks to go explore experiences that changed him. This revisiting of key experiences is also present in "Enquanto a ilha for..." the last story of *Mar e tudo*. The narrator in this story comes across the obituary of an islander, Ti Cordeiro, who was his childhood friend.⁴ Reading the obituary results in the narrator's return to his island childhood. In broad terms, the story is the narrator's private obituary to his childhood friend and a story of a child's journey into adulthood, from the island to Lisbon and then to the day in Fall River (Massachusetts, U.S.), where he reads the obituary in a newspaper by chance. In effect, the obituary triggers an interweaving of memory and reality in the narration so that the last time the narrator meets Ti Cordeiro becomes the first memory of him. Ti Cordeiro emerges as a storyteller of adventures where the two friends defy the authority of the child's mother. After Ti Cordeiro ends telling the story about how the narrator learnt how to swim, the narrator confesses that he wants to leave the seminary, a decision that will result in emigrating. This is a beginning that is the end of a life in the islands, and also an end that is a beginning for memory to launch itself and create a story weaved from memories that act as landmarks of life after emigrating. In other words, a kind of rebirth is achieved through the construction of stories by the act of remembering as an ever-evolving story. As Fagundes (2003) points out, "[a]s reticências do título do conto [of the ninth story] apontam para um fim em aberto. [...] Trata-se, portanto e como é lógico, de um conto de despedida pela morte da personagem e de promessa de retorno pela sua estrutura aberta" (p. 38). As such, it reworks the examination of emigration as an eternal journey in Azorean literature (see Ramos Villar, 2006).

The adult narrator in the first story in the collection is perhaps the same narrator in the ninth and final story, emphasizing the idea of never-ending rebirth through stories and creating another structural layer that connects the stories in *Mar e tudo*, and making it an example of a short story cycle. The mixing of timelines within the narratives of the first and ninth stories is part of this connection. In the last story of the collection, the mixing of timelines give the idea of concentric cycles that contract and expand the narrative, making connections between the events remembered with the present of the narrative; the timeline of the last time that the narrator returned to the island from the seminary also intercalates with the timeline of how the two friends met, which is framed by a third timeline years later, when the narrator reads Ti Cordeiro's obituary and remembers him once more. In a sense,

⁴ Looking at the intratextual references in *Mar e tudo*, Fagundes examines Ti Cordeiro as a "personagem recorrente na coletânea: é o avó de "Fala comum"; é, como a personagem deste conto, um Alter-Ego do Autor" (38). I would add that further intratextual references in 'Segundo shift' that can be found in, for instance, the figure of the ESL teacher in the second story, the boy, the dog and the evocation of the grandparents in the first story, and the advice Raul receives from a friend in the eighth story, reinforcing this essay's analysis of the structural importance of the fourth story in *Mar e tudo*.

the third timeline in “Enquanto a ilha for...” brings the narrative full circle, enabling the narrator to remember, to make new connections as he revisits memories to see the many landmarks of memory anew. In many ways, these concentric timelines develop the shape of the whole in this story and also reflect the structural and thematic repetitions present in *Mar e tudo* that enable the construction of the Azorean American community to take shape for the reader. This concentric repetition permeates the whole of *Mar e tudo*, showing how the stories within the collection build up to create an experience that is both communal and individual.

As was noted above, the last story of *Mar e tudo* is an incomplete conclusion to the collection whereby the news of the death of Ti Cordeiro brings him back to life through the memories that the obituary triggers in the narrator. The first memory triggered by the obituary shows Ti Cordeiro as someone whose teachings are not immediately apparent:

Era o Ti Cordeiro. Quando me viu, afastou-se do grupo de Pescadores, e veio saudar-me com uma das costumadas sentenças de *ciência* que possui do mar. Com ele tenho aprendido a andar sobre calhaus e musgos. A ouvir o mar. A escutar a gente. (Costa, 1998, p. 90)

The idea of listening that Ti Cordeiro teaches is perhaps a reminder for the narrator and the reader to listen/read the many stories that are waiting to be told by the islanders, and also by the Azorean American community. In listening/reading, both the narrator and the reader gain an understanding of the emigration experience. This is an experience that can have an unsettling and destabilising effect, as the fourth and fifth stories in the collection examine in more detail. As will be shown below, these two stories act as a kind of a conceptual turning point within *Mar e tudo*.

The sea is central in the fourth story from the poem that frames it, “e em cada ilhéu / um barco / na linha dos olhos” (Costa, 1998, p. 41), which already hints at restless movement, at the possibility which a different reality brings. When the poem is combined with the title, “Segundo *shiff*” a duality of perception is brought to attention. For Fagundes (2003), this story is an attempt to “encontrar uma saída para o drama da emigração, sobretudo à condição tão pertinente que é a relação do emigrado com o país de origem e com o país adoptivo” (p. 20). The main character in this story, Duarte, exemplifies this duality in his struggle to come to terms with the culture shock resulting from emigrating. Duarte’s work in a factory presents the other side of emigration, where one day blends into the next, and time passes imperceptibly:

Como corria o tempo por aqui! Foi logo na segunda semana de América. Enfiara-se de cabeça no ritmo infernal do fazer dinheiro. Contraíu dívidas. Veio mais um filho. A vida exigia-lhe demais. Os planos que trouxera na bagagem ficaram, até agora, por terra. Apesar do ânimo que Alzira lhe tenta inculir, não sente forzas para fazer mais. A sorte anda-lhe destemperada. Roto. Todo roto, por dentro. Quase envergonhado de si mesmo. Anda frio nos últimos dias. Não lhe fala. Não lhe toca. Envelheceram. E, os filhos? “Alzira, por que nos fizemos a esta Aventura?” (Costa, 1998, pp. 44–45)

Duarte seeks refuge in a café frequented by other islanders, which is significantly described as “estas **ilhas espalhadas neste mar** feito de Rhode Island a Massachusetts” (Costa, 1998, p. 45, my emphasis).⁵ The emigrant communities as islands that are made up of people who seek a momentary connection presents a structural echo to one of the central themes in the collection; Duarte’s story is

⁵ This description recalls the idea of the Azorean American community composing the tenth island of the Azorean archipelago proposed by Onésimo Teotónio Almeida, which formed the central part of my analysis of the theme of emigration in Azorean literature (see Ramos Villar, 2006)

one of the many stories that arise in the isolation of being an emigrant within a wider social sea in the new setting. As the quote above shows, emigration is an adventure at first, but, as Duarte's experience likewise shows, it is also a journey of adapting to a new life, echoing the idea of emigration as a rebirth examined earlier in this essay. To echo the second word in this story's title, this is a conceptual shift of perception in how emigration is far from the dream of a better life, representing once more the exploration of communal experience of the Azorean American community that *Mar e tudo* lays bare. Duarte is at a crossroads in his life: he can either dwell on the negative aspects of emigrating, on the plans that did not come to fruition, or he can accept what he has achieved.⁶ The sea becomes a way to facilitate this acceptance, whilst also enabling a connection to the island past. This is evident in the description of *Tavatana* (Tiverton) beach as a place

onde a água se parecia mais com o mar que desde o nascer fora o seu conselheiro. Fora nesta praia de mais pedra que areia que, num dia de Inverno, chorara sozinho o luto do pai, o único homem que conhecera com a alma eternamente salgada. É-lhe querido este sítio. Há, por aqui, um silêncio que o atrai, uma serenidade que o consola, e um ar que o purifica. É o mar. (Costa, 1998, p. 50)

The sea is a stabilizing influence where Duarte is able to scream his frustration and, once this is done, invite Alex, a friend who accompanies him, to go back to Duarte's home to eat the limpets they picked. The beach, what the sea has to offer, and his wife's cooking skills become a synthesis for Duarte: "lapas *iankis* com molho d'afonso. [...] A mistura perfeita. Lapas de cá, receita de lá" (Costa, 1998, p. 51), which Fagundes (2003) describes as "o equilíbrio procurado (e encontrável) mediante o apego a certos valores ancestrais" (p. 20). These are landmarks that shape Duarte's individual Azorean American experience so that, when Alex proposes for Duarte to "combinar assim as coisas" (Costa, 1998, p. 52), he is presenting Duarte with a choice that highlights the value of family, cementing the synthesis between places and people, and presenting Duarte with the possibility of moving beyond the perceived loss towards appreciating what has been gained. This is a structural echo to Glória's situation in the second story of *Mar e tudo*, but it is slightly different in the shift it proposes: Glória accepts what she has in her second marriage to an American man even if the writer-narrator tries to pull her back into the island environment she has left behind. Alex, on the other hand, enables Duarte to see that he can still take refuge on customs that would be familiar in the island of origin, such as going to the café and reading the news whilst enjoying a coffee as it would be made back in the island, or picking limpets to then eat with his family. These simple acts, small connections with the island, become another way of exploring the evolving relationship with the island of origins for the Azorean American community in *Mar e tudo*. They also show the stories of emigrants at different stages in the emigration journey, as will be examined later on this essay. In this way, Duarte is on the cusp of realising that many connections are possible with the island space without being held back by its loss, the "conciliação entre as culturas e as gentes" that Fagundes (2003, p. 25) notes. However, this is a gradual process, as the last line of the story suggests: "Como em toda a parte, de mansinho, o dia aconchegava-se à noite" (Costa, 1998, p. 52).

The fifth story, "Fio do tempo," an almost mirror image of the fourth story, also presents further structural echoes within *Mar e tudo*. Like the first story, "School bus," António da Rosa observes the snow that covers the ground as he waits for a lift to take him to his first day at work in a factory.⁷ The

⁶ Fagundes suggests that the choice of "shift" instead of "turno" in the title of this story reflects the situation of the central character, namely "mudança, deslocação, alteração" (20).

⁷ The sea, including the presence of water in many states, such as snow, or the movement of the dialogue between characters, as noted when analysing the interaction between Glória and the narrator in 'Nome próprio', is a recurrent

poem that precedes this fifth story, “dias plúmbeos / indistintas manhãs / num tempo diluído” (Costa, 1998, p. 53), frames António’s situation as uncertain, but also echoes the mindless routine and the lost track of time inherent in the emigration experience of the first and fourth stories, suggesting a ritual cycle that the emigrant embarks upon when adapting to the new “island” of emigration, as a space for meaning is shaped from the experience of emigrating. While in the car on the way to work, when the conversation turns to a request for António to provide news from the island, this request is presented as the first step of an established ritual: “As perguntas foram rolando com o fumo que afavaga uma pontinha de saudade a despontar em todos. E António da Rosa, também ele com uma interrogação no fundo do estômago, foi respondendo ao como-vai-aquilo saído da boca de todos, em versões diferentes” (Costa, 1998, p. 56). Once more, the island environment emerges through stories, but, this time, it forms part of a ritual.⁸

Like other stories in *Mar e tudo*, “Fio do tempo” also contains a crossing of timelines: António is about to experience his new life in the factory, a new beginning, whilst mentally revisiting the events back in the island that led him to emigrate. Like “Nome próprio,” the narrative present is interrupted by the memory and imagining of the island past. However, the mixing of timelines enables António to reconcile himself with his new situation. In this way, it is not so much the memory of the island that imposes itself into the emigration setting, but it is the memory of the island that enables António to come to terms with his decision.

António’s story represents a conceptual turning point in *Mar e tudo*, particularly when taken together with Duarte’s story. Albeit at different stages in the journey, both Duarte and António are at a crossroads. Structurally, their situation is the same, almost like a mirror image, yet also subtly different. Like Duarte, António will eventually find his path of reconciliation between experiences and memories. Until then, like Duarte, António experiences the monotony of the work in the factory, and this monotony causes him to withdraw into retrospective examination: “António da Rosa passou aquela manhã debatendo-se entre o desespero de ter que olhar para o que fazia e a vontade crescente de fechar os olhos para dentro de si” (Costa, 1998, p. 57). Like Duarte, António’s monotonous work causes him to lose track of time. Crucially, unlike Duarte, António does not question his reasons for emigrating. António wishes to seek refuge in the sea, imagining himself wetting his feet on the shore whilst seated on a rock. However, the sea is not such a comforting presence for António as it was for Duarte. During his lunch break, António reminisces about the death of a fisherman, and of his own brother at sea. It is his individual story, but it is also the universal story of other islanders; António recognises that he could also potentially have suffered the same fate if he had remained in the island. The sea thus emerges as a space that can both provide life and take it away, a dangerous force likened to a “cão desconfiado do dono.” (Costa, 1998, p. 60). This presents an idea of cyclical fate, emphasised through António’s experience, suggesting the repetition of the same situations, an idea that is also echoed in the following line in the story: “A ilha é redonda e à sua volta é tudo na mesma” (Costa, 1998, p. 59). This is yet another structural echo of the infinite amount of stories to be found in the Azores that slowly shape the experience of the Azorean American community as a location for understanding the emigration experience in the collection as a whole.

The resulting shift that “Fio do tempo” causes is that the stories that follow it in the collection to begin to move further away from the island environment, and from its nostalgic depiction. Placing Duarte’s and António’s stories at this point of the collection, and ending António’s story with the

motif in the collection. As such, it represents another landmark, to echo Nagel’s words, to which memory returns, or which the character encounters.

⁸ Fagundes’ reading of the emigrants in the car is as “uma marcante analogia com os vários estágios em que cada um deles se encontra nessa outra viagem em que todos estão embarcados: a da emigração” (26), also reflected in the juxtaposition between António and Manuel da Marça, the supervisor of the place António works at in this fifth story.

statement “[a]qui... não há tempo para sonhar” (Costa, 1998, p. 60), provides a clear message to the reader regarding the changes needed to adapt to the emigration setting: the suggestion is that there needs to be a change in mindset in order to move forward and adapt to the new life after emigrating, but that this change will be difficult. In this way, dealing with life changes after emigrating is presented as one of the challenges that the Azorean American community faces collectively.

Beyond the Individual: The Importance of Friends and Family in *Mar e tudo*

As was previously stated, in “Segundo *shifit*,” Alex enables Duarte to appreciate what he has, his family, rather than what he has lost by emigrating. Alex, also an emigrant from the Azores, teaches Duarte English as a second language. As such, Alex has already experienced the process of adaptation, and has seen this process in other emigrants, making him an empathetic ear for Duarte. Like Duarte, the island past still forms part of his every day after emigrating: “Ainda me recordo que senti, no avião, o ladrar de um cachorrinho que vavô me tinha dado. E os olhos de vavó, na manhã do dia em que a gente abalou!... Tu pensas que me esqueci? Eu ainda sinto” (Costa, 1998, p. 49). As a character, Alex fulfils the role of someone whose experience is put at the benefit of helping others, becoming a guiding hand that steers other emigrants towards accepting their new life after emigrating, and a bridge between cultures or, more precisely, between stages, or landmarks, in the emigration journey, as this quote shows:

[Alex] Demorava-se no bar da associação para, como dizia, “não se esquecer do português”. Identificava-se com quase todas aquelas caras. Vivia-lhes os dramas que às vezes, até acabavam por fazer transparecer nas “composições” de inglês. Para alguns, mais do que professor, era um irmão com mais idade e já experimentado nos trilhos da imigração. Também ele fora romeiro neste sonho de tantos. Partira com a família. Chegara aqui o Alexandre com treze anos. Vivera a partida para a América com o entusiasmo certo para uma aventura de garotos. As saudades vieram depois. Conhece Duarte há pouco tempo, mas tem por ele uma afeição diferente. [...] Aí o tem a seu lado. Ele sabe, e sente-o no silêncio que agora os separa, que aquela alma, com apenas sete anos de América, anda em profundo desatino. (Costa, 1998, pp. 47–48)

Friendship also forms the background for “À nossa!,” the sixth story in *Mar e tudo*. The idea of the need to combine things to find purpose and meaning that Alex advised Duarte to do in the fourth story is taken up through the cross-stitch motif in the poem that precedes the sixth story: “para além do olhar / fazemos ponto de cruz / com a linha do horizonte” (Costa, 1998, p. 61). This is a further structural mirror in the collection, with the fifth story as the point in the middle between them, but not as an exact copy; as Fagundes (2003) points out, the sixth story’s return to the islands becomes a symbolic acceptance of being foreign in there too, presenting the idea of emigration as a process (p. 32). Here, the idea is to create (or stitch) something meaningful from the two separate concepts of seeing and feeling, which the call to action in the title, “À nossa!,” proposes as a communal project.

The sixth story focuses on a man who returns to the island and meets up with a friend, continuing “um hábito que viera desde o liceu” in what is perhaps their last meeting. Their last conversation discusses “o tema preferido dos dois amigos,” whether to stay on the island or emigrate, perceiving emigration as a “vaga monstruosa que nos leva os braços e alma” (Costa, 1998, pp. 64, 65). Once more, emigration emerges as an inevitable call on the islander and as an escape, be it from the island hardship or institutional expectations such as that of being drafted to fight in the Portuguese colonial war that one friend raises. As the friends toast the courage of both those who left and those who stayed behind, the toast signals their joint predicament of needing to take a momentous decision that

will affect their future, their turning point. Here, the island emerges as a more primordial presence where both friends recognise that “[a]qui sentimos muito mais perto a presença das nossas origens,” and where there is a thin line between life and death, as the “alma dos meus sobrevoa este lugar” (Costa, 1998, p. 68). This leads them to sing a song whose verses remember the dead, recognising a kind of shared community that is built from the hardship of survival. This, once more, presents the idea of the Azores as having many stories that are waiting to be told, showing that there is a collective story of survival, and of a community waiting to be recognised as a conceptual location of experiences.

“À nossa!” ends years later, with one of the friends returning to visit the island and repeating the ritual of going back to the meeting place, recognising that “os sonhos têm um tempo que às vezes é igual à lonjura da vida” (Costa, 1998, p. 70). This line picks up the idea given by last sentence of the previous (fifth) story; whilst memory endures, people move on with their lives. In a sense, the reader sees a return to a familiar idea in the collection; life needs to move on and not dwell in the past. As the friend that returns to the meeting place “[e]m silêncio, percorre o mar com o olhar magoado,” the suggestion is that pain can provide a learning experience, and that pain needs to be embraced through the act of remembering (Costa, 1998, p. 70). The suggestion of joining, or stitching, things so as to gradually create something meaningful is evoked once more, providing a productive move forward.⁹

The eighth story, “Suor frio,” also explores how to deal with the pain caused by emigration by combining opposites. In this penultimate story, emigration emerges as a series of concentric journeys, of cycles, and of remembering who is important along the way. The protagonist, Raul, suffers from insomnia and gets up from his bed preoccupied with how he had, once again, shouted at his children earlier that day. Like Duarte and António, Raul ponders about his life after emigrating. Like Duarte, Raul directs his pain towards his wife and children. However, Raul’s situation is slightly different, in that, prior to emigrating, one of his friends had warned both about what to expect:

- Vocês vão iniciar uma viagem que nunca mais conhecerá o termo. Não há praia, porto, varadouro onde um emigrante possa descansar. O melhor que fazem é tirar o maior proveito e algum sabor dos desconsolos desta aventura. [...] Cuidado, porque isto vai doer. Mas têm uma força danada, caneco!... Vão vencer, mesmo com as canelas a arder de pontapés levados por todos os lados menos por um...
- Qual é?
- ... que é onde estarão os vossos filhos e alguns amigos. (Costa, 1998, pp. 84–85)

Once more, the idea is that the destabilising reality of the emigration setting will be endurable through the stable influence of family and close friends, who act as a communal support network of stabilising voices, and forces. Raul is described as always remembering his friend’s words, suggesting that the crisis of the story is part of a cycle. As the emotional cycle of each crisis is completed, so too begins another cycle, in this case, a cycle where the support network of Raul’s family and friends is re-established. Emigration, thus, emerges as an adventure where the endurance of the islander will be tested, presenting a familiar concentricity to other stories in *Mar e tudo*. The presence of friends and family, then, makes this experience endurable. Through them, there is a support network made up of individual people at different stages of the emigration journey that share a commonality of experience; this shapes the Azorean American community as a recurring location of meaning.

⁹ The poem that precedes the second story, analysed earlier for the multi-layered intertextual reference to the *Sapateia*, is worth noting here. *Sapar* is an Azorean term that means to work, and its combination with *teia*, or web, gives the impression of something that is woven and combined to make something bigger from many components (Brookshaw 2006: 14).

Conclusion

Seeing *Mar e tudo* as an example of a short story cycle enables the reader to appreciate the structural and thematic links within the stories, such as the self-reflexive style of the narration which invites the reader to participate in the imagining of the narrative, or its treatment of the underlying sense of place embodied, for instance, in the emigrant's evolving relationship with the island of origins. Here, it is interesting to read José Francisco Costa's reflexions on *Mar e tudo*:

Considero os meus contos, (estou a parafrasear Sena) como romances (que nunca escreverei) em suspensão; são, por assim dizer, o registo de momentos de contemplação de personagens que me visitaram. Só que minhas estórias limitam-se a um tempo e espaço que eu recrio mas que não posso e não quero multiplicar. [...] Cada conto é como um flash de uma vivência. (Almeida, 2008, p. 40)

It makes sense to see *Mar e tudo* as an exploration of time and space, and of the individual stories as flashes of a life, or lives which provide instances of the drama of the immigrant experience within US society of, to repeat Nagel's (2001) words at the beginning of this essay, the "process of making one out of many" identified as one of the features of the American short story cycle (p. 258). Taken as a whole, the stories that compose *Mar e tudo* point to the communal nature of storytelling, and of writing, which shape the Azorean American community for the reader, but the movement in the collection is more akin to that of a helix, rather than a circle, in that the stories within *Mar e tudo* are not exact repetitions; they are concentric ideas around a central point that examines the experience of the Azorean American community.¹⁰ As such, it makes sense to see *Mar e tudo* as an example of ethnic semiosis in American literature that William Boelhower (1984) describes as being "ultimately organized on the basis of a topological system that generates an open series of such binary isotopies as old world/new world [...] presence/absence, origins/traces, dwelling/nomadism, house/road, orientation/disorientation" (p. 13), which is and is not ethnic specificity in the wider assimilatory American multicultural discourse. The Azorean American community is the general location through which the landmarks of memory that shape individual emigration experiences are explored in all the stories in *Mar e tudo*. Here, Fagundes's (2003) observation regarding "Segundo *Shiff*" could well be applied to the collection as a whole, when he comments that the "integração ou adaptação total aos valores da cultura adoptiva, com um correspondente abandono dos valores da cultura mãe, presumindo que isto fosse possível, é implicitamente rejeitado. [...] O oposto da integração no melting pot seria a ghettoização geográfica e cultural do emigrante, que o conto implicitamente também rejeita" (p. 21).

Seeing *Mar e tudo* as an example of an American short story cycle, regardless of the language it is written in, calls attention to its nature as interconnected stories that are also part of a wider literary universe that seeks to achieve an understanding of the US as a nation. *Mar e tudo* also contributes to this understanding of the whole by showing heritage is as important as adaptation. As such, *Mar e tudo* is a contribution to the specificity of the Azorean American experience shown through the creative act, and part of a wider project of understanding the US as a nation made up by individual ethnic stories which combine towards a commonality of experience. The Portuguese American community is shaped by this combination of experiences. This commonality of experience creates a space in which

¹⁰ I wish to thank Igor Cussack for this observation regarding the helix, and also for his helpful suggestions on how to improve this essay prior to submission. I also want to thank the three student cohorts who discussed and wrote essays on *Mar e tudo*, as they helped me nuance my understanding of the text. It goes without saying that any mistakes or inaccuracies are entirely my own responsibility.

the creative act can emerge, where the telling of individual stories is possible, and where the emigration experience can move beyond its negative association with loss.

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