

The Self and the Double in Contemporary Portuguese Children's Literature: The Epistolary Writing in *Diário Cruzado of João and Joana*

Teresa Mendes, Luis Cardoso

Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre, Centre for Comparative Studies, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

ABSTRACT

Recent research has shown that in Portugal, in the context of literature for young people, women are preferentially engaged in the writing of epistolary novels, publishing works that present innovative characteristics concerning the usual paradigm. We discuss the conditioning status of certain interlocutors; the unfeasibility (total or partial) of the principle of discursive alternation; the approach to diary writing by the insistent recourse to introspective and monological discourse and the attribution of a double functionality - communicative and expressive - to letters, among other procedures commonly declined in particular in works such as *Diário Cruzado de João e Joana*, by Ana Maria Magalhães and Isabel Alçada, which we will analyze.

KEYWORDS: *Literature for Children, Portuguese Literature, Ana Magalhães & Isabel Alçada*

How to cite this paper: Teresa Mendes | Luis Cardoso "The Self and the Double in Contemporary Portuguese Children's Literature: The Epistolary Writing in *Diário Cruzado of João and Joana*" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-4 | Issue-3, April 2020, pp.1036-1043, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd30770.pdf



Copyright © 2020 by author(s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



INTRODUCTION

Such pictorial and verbal options act as strategies for The epistolary genre, as Elizabeth Campbell (1995) and Mary Trouille (1991), among others, acquired, in the last decades, innovative outlines concerning the literary conventions on which traditional epistolary is founded, despite texts published since the 1980s in different parts of the world, as the author of "Re-Visions, Re-Flections, Re-Creations: Epistolarity in Novels by Contemporary Women" underlines (Campbell, 1995, pp. 332-333), confirm the seventeenth and eighteenth-century tendency of female authorship that remains until today.

Indeed, Campbell analyzes, in her text, several works written by women in the late twentieth century precisely to demonstrate that these writers played a decisive role in changing the paradigm, "playing with epistolary conventions to produce revolutionary texts in a postmodernist sense." (Campbell, 1995, p. 332). In fact, according to the author, the epistolary novels written by women in particular since the eighties give rise to a revolt against the dominant (male) culture, incorporating in the narrative fabric not only the subjectivity and the emotionality of the female voice, increasingly diluted and disseminated in the plural voices that literarily represent it, but also the critical view of women about the world and contemporary society.

Campbell points out that such postmodern novels, although affiliated with the epistolary matrix, open the way to new forms of writing, deconstructing or subverting the traditional principles on which epistolary is founded, namely those of discursive reversibility and alternation, of fragmentation, from the point adopted and the effective exchange of letters between two or more interlocutors. Summarizing the results of her investigation, the author realizes:

We see (...) women moved to discover themselves either by writing to another consciousness within themselves or by writing to "no one". (...) In the novels, I discuss we do not see one complete letter, in two of them we see no letters at all. Yet letters are omnipresent and powerful. (Campbell, 1995, p. 339)

Now, although literary critics like Blythe Forcey foresee "the end of epistolary" (Forcey, 1991, p. 241) due to the transgression of the traditional models that an increasing number of novelists have been making, we believe that it is precisely this tendency that it gives the contemporary epistolary novel greater dynamism and vitality, allowing for an auspicious future in the revitalization of the genre. This is, moreover, the perspective defended also by the author of "Re-Visions, Re-Flections, Re-Creations: Epistolarity in Novels by Contemporary Women":

The increased amount of critical attention given the epistolary novel in the last twenty years, more than it received in the previous hundred years, indicates a growing interest in the genre and also a social and critical climate in which it can flourish. Since its conventions lend themselves so well to experimentation with form, time, point of view, as well as to the expression of individual vision, I think we will see an increase in the use of the genre, both in traditional form and its modernist form, for some time to come (...). (Campbell, 1995, pp. 346-347)

In fact, and similarly to what recent research has been demonstrating, also in Portugal, within the scope of finding secular literature for young people, it is preferably women who engage in writing epistolary novels, publishing works that, in certain aspects, distance themselves of conventional modalities of the kind. We refer, in general lines, to the conditioning status of certain interlocutors; the unfeasibility (total or partial) of the principle of discursive alternation; the approach to diary writing by the insistent recourse to introspective and monological discourse and the attribution of a double functionality - communicative and expressive - to letters, among other procedures commonly declined in particular in works such as *Diário Secreto de Camila* and *Diário Cruzado de João e Joana*, both by Ana Maria Magalhães and Isabel Alçada. In this article, our analysis will focus, however, on this last work, essentially because it is the one in which epistolary is established as the most productive novelistic strategy and because it allows us to effectively see how the characters overcome the physical distance that separates them, communicating each other by mediating the letter.

Continuing the intimate writing project opened in 1999, with *Diário Secreto de Camila*, the authors of the unavoidable series *Uma Aventura*, an unparalleled editorial success in the panorama of written production for young people in Portugal, retake and expand the options genological then adopted, publishing, in the following year, another Diary, although invested with very peculiar formal features that allow it to be configured as a hybrid narrative, oscillating between daily fiction and its true condition as an epistolary novel.

In fact, although both "diaries" allow for a (self) reflection on existential and behavioral issues that concern Portuguese young people at the end of the 20th century, represented intratextually in *Camila*, *João* and *Joana*, it is at the formal level that they distance themselves, not only for the gender options that are effectively taken by the authors, but also for the rhetorical-stylistic approach to themes and narrative-discursive situations that is made in both: less achieved in terms of technical-literary procedures in the first case, more consistent and innovative (also in relation to gender conventions) in *Diário Cruzado de João e Joana*, namely through the use of the *mise en abyme* procedure, with the account of the parallel narrative of secondary characters within *João's* letters, the attribution of a title to some of these letters and the omission of places and dates in the upper corner left of them.

Although such strategies give the work a certain genological hybridism, the *Diário Cruzado* is effectively presented in the form of an epistolary novel, based on the conventional principles of discursive-functional alternation and interlocution in absentia, although these procedures are not always strictly fulfilled by the two actors in the communicative process. Anyway, and even before entering the narrative fabric, the reader realizes that it is in fact an epistolary novel, although invested with formal peculiarities that are very specific.

In reality, the paratextual indication provided by the title - *Diário Cruzado* -, with a very productive semantic ambivalence, allows the receptive instance to anticipate how textual architecture is configured: if, on the one hand, the diary refers to the intimate character of the speech, written in a first-person in a confessional tone, on the other hand, the attribute that qualifies it - crossed - presupposes the existence of a discursive exchange between two interlocutors involved in a dynamic writing process. The prepositional phrase (by *João* and *Joana*) exactly confirms the epistolary nature of the narrative, explaining the names of the two protagonists involved in this process.

This means that if, at the level of content, the letters, especially those in which the descriptive/narrative tendency is minimized, can be perceived as diary fragments of a self that is thus revealed by the speech, translating "the predominantly intimate, confessional and sentimental register that dominates it precisely in the letters in which it expresses itself, with all the inherent intersubjective implications" (Reis & Pires, 1990, p. 353), in terms of form, some of the contractual marks of the letter (nomination of the recipient, final farewell formulas followed by signature, interlocution and discursive alternation) are unmistakably clarifying the epistolary on which the work is founded.

CONTEMPORARY EPISTOLARY TEXTS AS FOREGROUND FOR A WOMEN'S MIRROR

The most obvious sign of this foundational epistolary is the effective exchange of letters between the two protagonists, instituting, among others, pragmatically relevant gender issues (male / female).

In fact, the female perspective appears more focused on aspects related to the character's inner world and his family experiences, while the male, more decentralized, is mainly concerned with the surrounding factuality. Depending on the perspective adopted, both the content and the form of the letters written and sent vary, so if *Joana's* letters do not have the dimension or the glow of those of her friend *João* due to the state of unrest that dominates her and her need of reserve and containment of words, on the contrary those of *João* are striking for extension, regularity, fluency and objectivity in reporting facts outside themselves, which may explain the descriptive / narrative tendency that dominates them.

In addition, this correspondence between two interlocutors united by a relationship of genuine friendship gives the work certain distinctive features in relation to the traditional model of the epistolary novel. In fact, the protagonism is assumed by a female and a male

character, which, while not new in the history of epistolary novelism, somewhat contradicts the gender conventions, since the characters, although physically and geographically distant, meet linked by a deep relationship of friendship and not by motivations of a sentimental order, as happened, for example, in the seventeenth and seventeenth-century epistolary novel. For this reason, the letters exchanged are not letters of love (at least not of love for the other), but rather records that give an account of the paths of discovery (literal and symbolic) that both are building throughout the narrative.

In addition, the characters function as specular figures, who, in the face of the other, of their Double metonymically revealed by writing, revise themselves, which in fact can be immediately deduced by the names of the characters - João and Joana. The letters thus assume their metaphorical and symbolic function of mirrors in which the characters are observed, facilitating the process of autognosis of the subjects involved in the epistolary exchange, and in particular of Joana. In the case of the female character, even, the reading of João's letters will imply a significant change in attitude towards herself and towards others because the friend / confidante, holder of a rationality that momentarily escapes Joana, reevaluates the facts presented by her friend (the supposed romance between the father and a Brazilian girl) in an objective and detached way, as if the voice of his conscience was: "Get away and try to get away. As much as you and your parents are united, remember that they have independent lives and each one is responsible for their own" (DCJJ, 139). If so, this strategy seems to underline Elizabeth Campbell's words in this regard:

While the use of the mirror is not new in fiction, contemporary epistolary texts foreground the letter as a mirror as a women seek a reflection of themselves in both their texts/letters and those of their correspondents and as many of them attempt to change their lives to reflect the mirror image. (Campbell, 1995, p. 336)

In this way, generally obeying the principle of discursive alternation, which implies the obvious functional reversibility between senders and recipients of letters, the assiduous correspondence between the two interlocutors enhances the establishment of intense distance communication, which is instituted as a way of compensating for the absence of the other, although this principle is not always strictly observed in the work, as I mentioned above.

However, if in this context the letter assumes itself as a privileged vehicle for narrowing distances, therein lies its primordial communicative power and its first functionality, at other times however it is understood as an insufficient means to present the other, as can be seen from the words de João: "If you were with me, I think we would keep talking until the sun came up" (DCJJ, 25). Now, regarding the paradox of power/lack of power of the letter in the context of communication marked by the physical distance of the interlocutors, Janet Altman underlined, in his work *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*:

[The one who writes] is conscious of the interrelation of presence and absence and how his very medium of communication reflects both the absence and the presence of his addressee. At one moment he may proclaim the power of the letter to make the distance addressee present and at the next lament the absence [of the addressee] and the letter's powerlessness to replace the spoken or physical presence. (Altman, 1982, p. 14)

The letter does not substitute in this way the face-to-face communication, which, for the male character of the *Diário*, could drag on through the night, "until the sun rises". The image is very productive from a symbolic point of view, indicating not only the endless character of the dialogue that, in a hypothetical (and desired) face-to-face situation, the two interlocutors were supposed to maintain but also the possibility of reaching a stadium in this way. knowledge, symbolically represented by the sunrise.

Even so, through the mediation of the letter, the two friends somewhat overcome the physical distance that separates them, being written language an (economic) way of making the other present, through the metonymic process, and of, rather than the dissatisfied spirit de João translates, prolonging a conversation temporarily interrupted, as Joana emphasizes: "I love reading your reports, while I read it as if we were talking, I even have the illusion of hearing your voice" (DCJJ, 39). This means that the reading of the letters is felt differently by the two interlocutors: if for Joana, her friend's letters give her the illusion of hearing her voice, on the contrary, those sent by Joana, because they are contained, infrequent and reduced size, as the male character often regrets in the letters he returns, seems insufficient to clarify what remains to be said, as can be deduced from João's words: "What is going on? (...) You like writing as much as I do and just send me tiny letters. (...) I feel and know something: you are in trouble." (DCJJ, 66).

In this context, and because the complicity between the two interlocutors allows them to access the interiority of the other even outside the said, it is due to the loquacity of silence, embodied in the dimension and temporal spacing between the letters as well as in the friend's elliptical speech, which João interprets Joana's state of mind and her little predisposition to communicate. It is mainly what is not expressed by the language that is established here as pragmatically more relevant to make known to the other the interiority and circumstantiality of the subject who issues the letters. For this reason, even though he does not reveal what is happening, João claims to know and feel that his friend is currently experiencing a problematic situation, encouraging her to say what she insists on hiding.

This relationship of affection and complicity between the two interlocutors gains, in fact, a particular expression in the formulas of greeting, especially in the letters that João addresses to Joana (Dear Joana; My dearest, most dear of all friends; Janico), and adopted farewell for both (A firm hug; an infinite hug; an already comforting hug; a strong and very, very friendly hug), although throughout the narrative other expressions of mutual affection are

equally visible: "I am your closest friend, closest than a brother (...)" [João] (DCJJ, 67), "(...) I wanted to be with you, to be the one to comfort you" [João] (DCJJ, 151) or "(...) you are my only escape (...)" [Joana] (DCJJ, 72).

Also, the tone of confidentiality lent to the discourse, another one of the protocols of its kind, as consensually underline authors like Janet Altman (1982, p. 47), Elizabeth Campbell (1995, p. 336) or Patricia Pardinás-Barnes (2001, p. 166), reflects the affective closeness between the two subjects, which the words of both shows: "I make a parenthesis here to tell you what I might not say to anyone else (...)" [João] (DCJJ, 48); "(...) Please, never tell anyone about this, it's a top-secret" [Joana] (DCJJ, 70). Now, as Janet Altman states, it is trust in the other that drives the gesture of confiding in the subject: "To make confidence, the epistolary characters so often do, one must have confidence in the confidant" (Altman, 1982, p. 48).

This trust and complicity even allow João to describe in detail the excitement that the sudden vision of a female body in his eyes "perfect" triggered in his heart, in recent past, and that is still felt at the time of writing the letter, which seems significant not only because the language of the male protagonist is not usual in literature for young people in our country, but also because this exalted speech is addressed, in a confessional tone, to a female character, which is an indicator of this relationship of absolute trust and pure friendship between the two interlocutors:

I turned back, and in the middle of the chaise lounges that were spread out on the grass, a simply perfect girl appeared. She had a white bikini, «translucent» and minimal. The breast was leftover from the top, the cheeks of the tail were left over from the bottom, all very well wavy, hard and golden. (...) My whole being went into disarray. I believe that even the brain circumvolutions must have stretched, I had my brains flat and fluttering to the rhythm of the dancing steps. (DCJJ, 34 - 35)

The sidelined look of the male subject thus focuses on certain representations of the female body - the breast, the tail -, which are the object of a discursively evaluative appreciation embodied in the triple adjective. Corporality, therefore, takes the form of desire for the observant subject, thus circumscribing the girl's identity to the body she possesses. The object of João's unexpected perplexity is subjected to an enlightening process of uncertainty in the speech of the male character, who refers to him only as "a simply perfect girl".

The subject's state of extreme disturbance is manifested in his hyperbolic speech through lexical and semantic options marked by the colloquial register, particularly visible in the expression "smooth brains". However, the exaltation results not only from the observation of the other's static body, but also from the movements he performs, making João "throb at the rhythm of the dancing steps", and also from the body contact that unexpectedly happens between them: "She is very friendly, went around the table to kiss the visitors, also kissed me, speeding up the blood circulation so much that

instead of a venous system it seemed to me that there were two (...)" (DCJJ, 35). Again, the character's discourse appears dominated by the hyperbolic register, this time syntactically materialized in the use of complete prayer and, in the stylistic plane, in the use of image and comparison: "instead of a venous system it seemed to me that there were two".

Now, the richness of the descriptive detail signals the total at ease that the subject has with his interlocutor, being (apparently) irrelevant, at least for João, the fact that he is a girl. For the reader, however, this is a clear indication of the paradigm shift in terms of gender conceptions and also in terms of interpersonal relationships between young people united by a relationship of genuine (and disinterested) friendship. For this reason, and despite tenderly calling João "cannibal" following his inflamed speech, Joana's gaze is a benevolent one of admiration and esteem, a look that goes beyond the circumstantiality of the facts that have occurred and reported, focusing on personal characteristics from a friend:

It wasn't just that Filipa's account that you got a time bomb. You are a time bomb. You are always on the edge, you know how to take advantage of things, life is a party on your terrace on a full moon night. Or a novel that only includes the main characters. (DCJJ, 39)

Starting from her deep knowledge of her friend, Joana's compliments, felt as sincere by her friend, elevate her interlocutor's self-esteem, which, in the following letters, highlights the effect that such words, facilitating the process of self-diagnosis, produced on her person: "I was overwhelmed by your compliments to me" (DCJJ, 41), "(...) I fell from the clouds! You said that I know how to take advantage of things, that I know how to enjoy life, and it's true" (DCJJ, 67).

To that extent, the letter appears, in *Diário Cruzado de João e Joana*, as a doubly privileged discursive space: to externalize the subject's intimacy and, above all, to reveal to the other what no one else has access to, except for the reader. Now, the reader's access to the interiority of textual subjects involved in a dynamic writing process involves him in this halo of secrecy that the characters intend to keep only between themselves - but this is precisely one of the reading protocols that the epistolary novel (such as the dialysis) postulates. The foundational confidentiality of the texts allows for the establishment of a probable emphatic communication between characters and eventual empirical readers of the epistolary novel (or novel).

The reading of an epistolary novel is, therefore, felt like a moment of strange closeness between the subject who reveals himself there and the other who reads it. The sharing of a secret, which is believed to have not been told to anyone else, makes this sender/receiver relationship (fictional entities or not) unique. The institution of a confidant reader emerges as a characteristic of the epistolary novel for presupposing the penetration into a sacred discursive space and (almost) prohibited access. The reader thus acquires the status of confidant, penetrating the intimacy of textual subjects who assume

themselves discursively as mirror figures: "Ah! Joana, Joana, how nice to have someone to whom I can tell everything, but even everything, as if talking to me. You are my "other me!" (DCJJ, 37-38).

In psychoanalytic terms, the epistolary relationship between João and Joana could somehow represent the symbolic transfer, in a Freudian sense, between patient and analyst, since the two interlocutors find in their Double another self to whom to confide their most intimate secrets and unspeakable and, at the same time, the possibility of, by reading the letters received in the meantime, "hearing" their voice. It is a work in which the confrontation of each subject with himself and with the other is embodied.

This "dialogue" appears, therefore, wrapped in a halo of secrecy that makes it impossible for others to access the letters of both. It is the two protagonists who cultivate this need to keep in the privacy sphere the secrets and outbursts that only the other intend to reveal, as is evident in the words of one ("I ask you not to mention anything I told you (... I want to close the envelope before they return [Mafalda and the sisters] from the beach. I am cautiously intending to post it myself" (DCJJ, 210)) and the other (" (...) open messages are at risk to be read by third parties" (DCJJ, 79) or "This letter is just for you. If you are surrounded by people, keep it and postpone reading" (DCJJ, 211)). The letters are thus perceived by the two interlocutors as a thesaurus that must be kept and kept in the intimate and inviolable space of the privacy of both (away, therefore, from the eyes of intruders) because they reveal the interiority of those who write them - and, this, the subjects want to preserve it only for themselves (and for their Double).

The letters correspond, therefore, to the personal imperative of making known to the other - to the Double in which the narcissistic self projects itself and speculatively reviews itself - the interiority of subjects of writing moved by an imperative need to report, as quickly as possible, the everyday occurrences ("I have to write to you today (...) if I don't tell you everything to the point of exhaustion, including the tiniest details, I'll sprout" (DCJJ, 9)) or your outburst: "I need to vent, I'm going right to the subject" (DCJJ, 131).

It is this urgency to (say) that allows João, for example, more expansive than his interlocutor, to find discursive strategies for unfolding and expanding, highlighting at this level the inclusion of dispersed fragments, sometimes in the form of post scriptum, at the end of some letters, fragments that, prolonging the virtual interaction with the friend, also give an account of the subject's intermittent state and his inability, to sum up in the act of writing.

Besides, the interruption and postponement of writing, gestures repeatedly made explicit by the subject within the texts, reflect the need to prolong the deferred communication with the other, installing, however, between the fragments a space of silence that suggests the momentary need of the subject focusing (again) on himself: "I take a break here (...) I feel like going to the river to take a dip (...). On the way back, I'll continue" (DCJJ, 75).

Now, it is precisely this intermittency of the subject under construction, materialized in the discontinuity of writing and the very fragmentary character of the letters, along with other protocols of the kind, which allows, in this *Diário Cruzado*, an approach to diary writing, despite being a work in which there is, in fact, an effective correspondence between the subjects (more assiduous in the case of the male character). This *sui generis* "Diary" does not lose sight of its epistolary condition, because the letters, the true support of the narrative, implicitly impose on the other response, without which a priori the image of the other changes and corrupts.

This response (or non-response) tends to originate, in the work under analysis, the writing and sending of a new letter, thus reversing the frequent roles in this process, which tend to be marked by reciprocity and functional reversibility between senders and recipients. The inevitability of the response is, moreover, one of the conventions of the kind that Janet Altman considers crucial in the traditional epistolary novel, assuming it in the following terms: "In the other form of dialogue does the speaker await a reply so breathlessly; in no other type of verbal exchange does the mere fact of receiving or not receiving a response carry such meaning" (Altman, 1982, p. 121)

Altman's perspective presupposes, however, that the letter primarily has a communicative function and that the writer does so in the expectation (and undertakes efforts in this regard) to obtain a response as soon as possible from his interlocutor. This answer is, therefore, for Janet Altman, a *sine qua non*-condition in an epistolary (traditional) novel. But if, on the one hand, it is the response of the other, when read, that makes the narrative evolve - insofar as it allows the recipient, now transformed into an emitter, the writing and subsequent sending of a new letter - on the other, if the interlocutor, for some reason, does not respond, the communication process can be (momentarily) interrupted (and compromised).

In any case, non-response, a strategy often declined in contemporary epistolary novels, as Campbell (1995, p. 336) argues, is also a way of getting a certain message to the other, so that silence is covered once more of great semantic productivity and communicative power in this epistolary relationship kept at a distance, perhaps saying more than words.

In fact, and although the communication between the self and you are almost always guided by the effective exchange of letters between two or more interlocutors in a traditional epistolary novel (or novel), as Altman's studies have shown, further investigations in the domain of novelistic epistolary, such as that developed by Elizabeth Campbell (1995), prove that postmodern epistolary novels do not always obey the principle of discursive alternation on which traditional epistolary is founded and that, consequently, the response of the other does not always appear as inevitable or indispensable for the evolution of the narrative. As Campbell points out, some letters are not even sent because the writer does it as if he were writing only for himself:

(...) many letters are written but never sent or are sent though the writer does not expect a reply. No matter. Once the letters are begun, the writers seem to be speaking to themselves, and, though the reader is ever-present, the writer becomes immersed in discovery of herself. (Campbell, 1995, p. 336)

In this way, and in addition to the communicative function that underlies it, the letter also assumes an expressive and rhetorical function, insofar as the subject, when writing for another, sometimes even embodied in the figure of his Double, removes the mask, exposing its interiority and its subjectivity on the textual surface as if it were a self-contemplative exercise. Michel Foucault's words, in "L'écriture de soi", seem to point precisely in this direction:

Écrire, c'est donc «se montrer», se faire voir, faire apparaître son propre visage auprès de l'autre. Et par là, il faut comprendre que la lettre est à la fois un regard qu'on porte sur le destinataire (par la missive qu'il reçoit, il se sent regardé) et une manière de se donner à son regard par ce qu'on lui dit de soi-même. (Foucault, 1983, p. 17)

In this way, and in addition to the communicative function that underlies it, the letter also assumes an expressive and rhetorical function, insofar as the subject, when writing for another, sometimes even embodied in the figure of his Double, removes the mask, exposing its interiority and its subjectivity on the textual surface as if it were a self-contemplative exercise. Michel Foucault's words, in "L'écriture de soi", seem to point precisely in this direction:

To that extent, it can be said that, also at this level, the novel tends to move away from the enunciative protocols of the epistolary narrative, despite the principle of functional reversibility between sender and recipient being present at different times, namely in the initial part of the work - in the first eight letters - and in the final part - in the last fifteen. The remaining letters - only four - are written by João, unfolding the subject in plural discursive strategies to entertain and distract his friend Joana (DCJJ, 81, 106), who, as he says, "(...) walks a lot down and don't tell me why" (DCJJ, 106). Nevertheless, and although they are not very numerous, these letters are in general much longer than the others, occupying a considerable space within the narrative. Also, they are almost always subdivided into several fragments, in a clear approach to diary writing, and the aforementioned post scriptum is obsessively included.

Another peculiarity of these letters is the fact that they sometimes take the form of a story, incorporating into the epistolary narrative, through the *mise en abyme* procedure, life stories of secondary characters that Joana does not know, but that she is supposed to get to know by a reading of the friend's text, as he announces, again addressing his interlocutor through the third person: "(...) I made this record for my friend Joana. Reading will participate in the general expectation without having been here. Advantages of writing" (DCJJ, 114-115). This advantage is, moreover, recognized at various times by Joana ("(...) you were right in the way of presenting the

experiences of that busy day, as I have the feeling that I saw everything that happened" (DCJJ, 26)).

Furthermore, some of the letters do not have only one individual recipient, as with the two in which João addresses Joana and her cousins, in the same way, that another one is written collectively by the four girls for the same recipient - João. It is also an innovative strategy concerning the traditional epistolary novel, giving the narrative, essentially dialogic, an unconventional polyphonic dimension.

Anyway, and although the subjects do not always get an immediate answer from the other, both manifest in the speech an imperative need to read the letters of their interlocutor, although for different reasons. If Joana, preferring to forget about herself and her problems ("(...) talking about you and your surroundings, I forget about myself and what upsets me" (DCJJ, 72)), asks your empathic interlocutor to write you a lot ("(...) write me very fat letters (...)") (DCJJ, 68); "(...) again I ask you: write, write a lot, talk about everything, talk don't talk about me" (DCJJ, 72)) and often (" I should be very angry because you haven't written to me every day" (DCJJ, 39)), because reading the letters, exercising a therapeutic function, let's go to another (DCJJ, 69), João, on the contrary, asks his friend to write to him because he cares about her and wants to help her.

The male character, feeling that Joana needs you ("The post office went on strike! It is admitted that when you need my letters so badly to avoid a boring date that I don't know what they are?" (DCJJ, 79), and concerned about the silence and / or the reduced size of her friend's letters (DCJJ, 67)), she insists on the request for an urgent response, resorting to a discourse, although affectionate, increasingly assertive and imperative, a speech that has the implicit desire to trigger in the other the impulse to say:

Write to me! (DCJJ, 66); Get rid of not responding quickly and openly. I am your best friend (...) I can make demands. I'm waiting, do you hear? (DCJJ, 67); I want to know what's going on with you. Or rather, I demand! The ball is in your side, kick or get a yellow card. I'm waiting here. (DCJJ, 129-130; "be exhaustive". (DCJJ, 152)

The paroxysm of restlessness that dominates the protagonist of *Diário Cruzado* in the face of the unexpected silence of the other leads him to inventory a series of communicative hypotheses of interlocution. Thus, showing his total availability to listen to his strangely silent friend, João says: "If you prefer to tell directly, and you are smooth, I will call you and if I need to spend my entire allowance to hear you. If it is easier for you to tell problems in writing, try to buy paper and a pen or ask your mother for the laptop". (DCJJ, 129)

The internet, the telephone or the fax are established, in the work, as an alternative (and faster) means of narrowing the distance between the self and the other, as it seems evident in the following textual examples: "(...) I was full I missed writing and went to call" (DCJJ, 66) and "(...) I fax this sheet to you" (DCJJ, 79). However,

communication in this way does not always facilitate the individual process of saying. Recalling precisely the communicative inefficiency that derives from the fact that they are both "in the presence" (of the voice) of the other, João, lucidly distancing himself from what happened moments before, notes:

I just hung up the phone, and although we talked for almost half an hour, I think everything was left unsaid (...) Perhaps the obstacle, what prevented us from establishing true communication, was a shame (...). If we were together it was easier, face to face the person knows how far he can go, but at this distance, we are clogged. That's why I came running to write to you. (DCJJ, 137)

In this context, writing establishes itself as the most effective (although less rapid) form of communication at a distance, because, orally, as João points out, we are clogged: "There are words that reach the mouth and come back inside (...). Writing becomes easier (...)" (DCJJ, 175). Indeed, in the presence of the other, it is not always easy to express the inner word, even if the relationship between the speaker and the listener is supported by bonds of friendship and deep empathy, as is the case. Writing, on the contrary, due to its deferred character, facilitates the process of saying, because the subject who writes does not have to face the evaluative gaze of the other.

Thus, one of the advantages of writing, assumed by João and Joana inside the letters, lies precisely in the fact that the subject can say through the letter what he cannot say in the presence of its addressee, either because he feels embarrassed in some way ("(...) I want to ask you a question that is easier for me to ask in writing" [Joana] (DCJJ, 29)), either because that way you don't have to listen to the other person's refusals: "I also know that in a telephone conversation you had said, "no, no and no". In writing, I do not hear these negatives and I can ask you to continue reading, to think and check whether I am right or not" [John] (DCJJ, 138 - 139).

The word that is registered on the paper thus acquires a binding status because the one who receives it cannot prevent it from being spoken in the same way that he cannot stop reading it, for personal reasons. In this way, if, on the one hand, the writer can say what the other did not want to hear, on the other, whoever reads it can interrupt the reading and resume it whenever he wants while appropriating what was transmitted to him intimately, by your interlocutor.

CONCLUSION

The reading of the letters is, therefore, an inevitable gesture in an epistolary novel in which there is, in a more or less regular and systematic way, a discursive alternation between two or more interlocutors. Perhaps that is why, in this *Diário Cruzado*, the subject who writes feels the need to stage the distance (re) encounter that this reading potentiates between the two friends: "Now read my story and pack it, I bet that this time you hear my voice at distance, the paper will work as if it were a radio" (DCJJ, 47). Thus, to ensure a truly significant epistolary exchange, the reading of the letters is as important as the

drafting process that originates them, as can be seen from the following words by the author of *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*: "Because the notion of reciprocity is such a crucial one in an epistolary narrative, the moment of reception of letters is as important and as self-consciously portrayed as the act of writing". (Altman, 1982, p. 121)

In fact, in the same way, that the reading scene is valued and mimicked inside the letters, in a clear meta-textual strategy, whether through the voice of an emitting subject who imposes on the other particular attention in the way of receiving "sit down, relax, get ready (...). Fill yourself with patience and listen. Or rather, read." (DCJJ, 9)) or that of your interlocutor, by expressing in the speech the pleasure that (re) reading of the letters received in the meantime provided him ("I loved your letter (...) I've read it and reread it several times (26) or "I've been delirious with your letter" (DCJJ, 169)), as the textual use of verbs to worship and delirious evidence, the act of writing also appears mimicked in the speech of the two interlocutors, who, in this way, provide the other with the spatial and/or temporal coordinates that allow him to «visualize» the writing scene: "(...) I am writing installed on the balcony da Cerejeira Brava" (DCJJ, 66), "I'm writing to you on the train" (DCJJ, 140) or "(...) I look to pick up the pen, it is already dark (...)" (DCJJ, 43).

The reference to precise locations, such as the balcony of Cerejeira Brava and the train, or to specific times of the day not only allows the recipient indirect access to the physical context surrounding his interlocutor but also indicates the imperative need for him to address him, regardless the chosen time or place. To that extent, both the card reader and, at another level, the work reader perceive that writing works, for the subject, in the absence of the other, as a privileged space of convergence and revelation because only the other, his distant specular self, the subject can say what, as he affirms, "(...) he might not tell anyone else" (DCJJ, 48).

It is, therefore, through the writing and reading of the letters that the subjects walk along with the narrative towards a greater knowledge of themselves and the other, of another at the same time similar and distinct. At this level, João's last words, summarizing in a few lines the vision of the past and the projection into the future, have a particular symbolism and subtle pedagogical intentionality that, I believe, goes beyond the textual universe: the reference to precise locations, such as the balcony of Cerejeira Brava and the train, or to specific times of the day not only allows the recipient indirect access to the physical context surrounding his interlocutor but also indicates the imperative need for him to address him, regardless the chosen time or place. To that extent, both the card reader and, at another level, the work reader perceive that writing works, for the subject, in the absence of the other, as a privileged space of convergence and revelation because only the other, his distant specular self, the subject can say what, as he affirms, "(...) he might not tell anyone else" (DCJJ, 48).

It is, therefore, through the writing and reading of the letters that the subjects walk along with the narrative

towards a greater knowledge of themselves and the other, of another at the same time similar and distinct.

It is, moreover, this permanent dialectical game between the explicitness of saying and the eloquence of what is silenced (or which is only suggested) that, in the literature for young people, gives the potential youth reader of the works the possibility to exercise their interpretive competence and extract meanings plurals of the narrative fabric, both at a latent and manifest level, in a global strategy that aims at the literary formation of the young reader.

In reality, and always through the mediation of literary language, contemporary literature of potential youth reception is established as a place for reflection on the issue of growth (and on the existential, affective and relational issues that arise from it), giving voice to subjects textualities that, manifesting the concerns of their time and the generation to which they belong, do so assuming their human condition as oscillating and dramatic beings, sometimes painfully misunderstood, it is true, but following individual paths that, as a general rule, lead them to a greater acceptance of yourself and others.

REFERENCES

- [1] Altman, J. (1982). *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- [2] Azevedo, O. (2003). *As Metamorfoses do Corpo e a Problematização da Identidade*. Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- [3] Chevalier, J. & Gheerbrant, A. (1994). *Dicionário dos Símbolos*. Lisboa: Editorial Teorema.
- [4] Campbell, E. (1995). Re-visions, Re-reflections, Re-creations: epistolarity in novels by contemporary women. *Twentieth Century Literature*. Vol. 41. Nº 3, pp. 332 – 348. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441856>. [03/09/2019].
- [5] Foucault, M. (1983). *L'écriture de soi*. Corps Écrit. Nº 5. S/L: PUF.
- [6] Forcey, B. (1991). Charlotte Temple and the end of epistolarity. *American Literature*. Vol. 63. Nº 2, pp. 225-241. disponível em <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2927163>. [01/09/2019].
- [7] Pardina-Barnes, P. (2001). Letters from Harvard Enrique Anderson Imbert (1919–2000) and Rosario Rexach (1912-): a generational account of an epistolary friendship". *Hispania*. Vol. 84. Nº 2., pp. 157 – 180. Disponível em <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3657720>, [03/11/2019].
- [8] Reis, C. & Lopes, A. (1990). *Dicionário de Narratologia*. Coimbra: Almedina.
- [9] Trouille, M. (1991). Writing the female voices: essays on epistolary fiction, by Elizabeth C. Goldsmith. *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. Vol. 25. Nº 1, pp. 106 – 110. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2739192>. [13/10/2019].

