

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SITIO DISTINTO AND ARTE DE SER PORTUGUÊS: TWO PERFORMANCES ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF NATION

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The decade of the 70s in Portugal and Galicia was a moment of profound change, marked by the attempt to build a modern, democratic and free society. The end of the dictatorial systems (1974 in Portugal and 1975 in Spain) that had oppressed the citizens of these nations for years raised questions of Galician and Portuguese identities in order to adapt to the new times. Whilst the internal structures of the old regimes underwent changes, strategies for opening up to a globalised culture and the beginnings of technological development were launched, Globalisation, which occurred in both the economic and information fields, opted for the standardisation of different societies based on multiculturalism, among other elements. However, in many cases, it resulted in a form of cultural imperialism in which a reaffirmation of one's own culture was required. Also decisive was the entry of Spain and Portugal into the EEC in the year 1986. From this European entity came start-up aid and structural funds that favoured the development of the most economically backward areas, from which both Galicia and Portugal benefited. However, entry into this body was only lukewarmly welcomed, due to criticism of measures that affected Galicia, such as the restrictions on the fishing sector or the imposition of milk quotas in order to compete in price and quality with the great powers of Europe (Díaz 2009, 30-31).

The context of post-revolution Portugal in its transition to democracy is, in the words of António José Telo, “um espécie de momento mágico, onde a queda súbita do que parecia ‘sólido’ e ‘eterno’, a novidade do que é normalmente entendido como uma rara ‘janela de oportunidade’ e o amadorismo de muitos dos principais intervenientes, origina mentalidades e comportamentos únicos e difíceis de entender para quem não levar em

conta este ‘clima especial’” (Telo 1998, 276). The immediate post-revolutionary moment was highly effusive and open to all the new possibilities that democracy brought with it, but it soon also brought a sense of disagreement, even the dissent of those who had the highest hopes for the revolution: artists, intellectuals and other cultural agents (2015, 79). It was also a period full of social and political upheaval and it created a sense of discontent and disappointment because not all expectations were met. The economic sphere was experiencing a deep crisis, which was motivated both by an unstable governmental situation, and by the effects of what was happening abroad (1998, 308). For Telo (1998, 278) during the aforementioned period it is very difficult to distinguish between what is foreign policy and what is internal, since there is an almost inseparable relationship between external events and Portugal’s own. For this reason, the author concludes that the Portuguese revolution is affected by all the fundamental change happening in Western Europe. One of the main questions was the role of Portugal in the world, motivated, in part, by the new relations that the country had to establish with the states that formed from its former colonies (1998, 311-313). One of the agents who gave voice to all these changes and who, in a way, was also the protagonist of what was happening in Portuguese society was RTP, the Portuguese radio and television company. Its creation dates back to the year 1956, in the midst of Salazarism and its evolution was simultaneous with the socio-political events of Portuguese society (we must remember that until 1992 there were no private TV channels in Portugal). Thus, with the advent of democracy, television experienced this same spirit of renewal and experimentation, giving way to a wider and more diverse programming, with new spaces of a ground-breaking nature.

In the Galician case, the passing of the Statute of Autonomy in 1981 was essential, since it was intended to be “ante todo, un instrumento para a transformación económica, social, cultural e incluso política da nosa Terra. Debía permitir unha maior valorización do noso, da nosa identidade e dos valores e potencialidades para a súa proxección positiva en beneficio dos galegos” (Díaz 2009, 11). On top of this, it was necessary to create all the required organisms for political management of the territory: Xunta (executive authority), Parliament (legislative), Court (judicial) and a whole network of Autonomous Administration with competences in health, education, culture, economy, agriculture, fishing and environment, among others. There had also been claims about the need to protect Galicia’s own language and culture, which led to the Linguistic Normalization Act of 1983. Among the main changes that this self-government produced in the social sphere, we can highlight a dislocation of the population from villages

to the cities, which led to a regression in the primary sector and a development of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy, while altering the landscape and intervening in the daily habits of the Galicians (2009, 13). Consequently, the importance of public space, now shared by many more people who, coming from different parts of the countryside, were now concentrated on the same street, increased. Urban space, whilst in the process of expansion and creation, became the ideal place for the experimentation with recovered freedom and some cities, such as Vigo, gave way to cultural movements like La Movida. In the words of Alberto Valverde, in the face of the predetermined structure of the dictatorship, they started going in search of the rare, the eccentric, the divergent (Valverde 2013, 67). In addition to this, there was a desire to begin work on providing Galicia with the infrastructure that it had lacked, which included the railway network, an improvement of road communications and a communications network that ranged from telephone coverage to the creation of the territory's own television channel. In the 1970s, the Galician language reappeared as a vehicle of communication, especially on public radio and, in 1985, the Galician Television Company (CRTVG) was launched, “un dos buques insignia de réxime autonómico e un fito absolutamente relevante para o inicio da normalización do idioma galego” (García Palmeiro 2009, 381).

The artistic world was not on the side-lines of all these changes in the Galician and Portuguese territories, so the different political and social events of the time also had an impact on the creators of the moment. Three fundamental factors affect a renewal in the field of the arts. The first has to do with the impact that the post-modernism that triumphed in North America and Europe had on artists from the 1970s, especially when Portuguese and Galician culture opened up to the most ground-breaking Western trends, as Sandra Guerrero Dias says (2015, 75-76). This postmodernism is characterized, in Ihab Hassan's opinion (1982, 12), by the metaphor of silence, which continues to be a sign of stress in art, culture and everyday reality. This silence implies an alienation from society, a break with the artistic tradition, a rejection of the common language, and the presence of an open, in-process channel rather than a closed object of art (1982, 12-16), which would have a great influence on the way art is conceived. Another decisive factor was the rediscovery and importance of the forms and values shown by the avant-garde of the early twentieth century, which had had little impact on the Galician literary system and had received a cold reception among Portuguese critics (Baltrusch 2011, 237 and Hatherly 1977, 57-58). This allowed for artistic diversification and continuity with some of its forms of provocation and subversion. In the

Galician case, as Baltrusch (2011, 237) points out, from 1975 there was a break with the traditional artistic canon and the normative discourse was changed by means of provocation and experimentation, with the occurrence of new poetic groups such as Ronseltz, Rompente, Cravo Fundo, Dolmen, Loia or Alén. In the Portuguese case, it is worth noting the emergence of the trend of experimental poetry, the fruits of which were already found in 1964 in a magazine directed by Antonio Aragão and Herberto Helder, which undoubtedly continued the innovative spirit of the first avant-garde. Specifically, as one of the voices of the PO.EX¹, Ana Hatherly (1977, 57), has stated a vision of Edoardo Sanguineti that fits well in the context of the late twentieth century: the contesting character and the questioning of social structures, for as she herself argues, the avant-garde is not commercial, it does not create art according to a principle of good sense, and it creates controversy within the cultural structures themselves (Hatherly 1977, 59). Finally, because we are in a political and artistic context that Sandra Guerrero Dias, through Barthes, calls *grau zero da experiência estética* (Dias 2015, 71), this is a time of change, of uncertainty and of the failure of certain artistic projects that widen the possibilities within art and allow the promotion of practices such as performance or experimental poetry (2015, 76-78).

The definition of performance is complex and is constantly being reformulated. The only consensus so far is the understanding of it as a constant debate, within which one tries to find the most precise definition possible. As Carlson discusses in his critical introduction (2005, 17), we can understand the idea of performance in three different senses, two broader ones that do not refer solely to the field of art and another intended only for stage practices. From broader to more concrete, we would have a meaning regarding the behaviour, for example, of a chemist; secondly, the demonstration of a culturally codified and recognized pattern of social conduct (much studied by anthropology and sociology) and, finally, a presentation of skills related to contemporary performing art. This is what is generally known as performance art and differs from traditional theatre in that it is not in the playing of a role previously rehearsed by a professional actor or actress, but in a representation, usually critical and interventionist in character, where the body and life's experiences are placed at the centre (2005, 18). Thus, performance becomes, in many cases, a criticism of an

¹ Acronym created by E. Melo and Castro for the exhibition of the National Gallery of Modern Art in Lisbon, reused in 1981 for the title of the book PO.EX: *Textos teóricos e documentos da poesia experimental portuguesa*, organised by E. M. de Melo e Castro and Ana Hatherly.

institutionalised culture system and a form of opposition to certain artistic standards, often through the use of humour and parody.

Performance art has become especially relevant since the 1970s and was first studied by Roselee Goldberg, although we can find precedents in medieval times in the figure of troubadours. The performance of the 1970s is also closely linked to the idea of conceptual art, the concept of the ready-made, the importance of the everyday world in art and the representation of the artist proposed by Marcel Duchamp (Carlson 2015, 138). For this kind of art, the experience of time, space and material is more important than the representation in the form of objects, so the body becomes the best means of expression. Video and new technologies could alter this experience of the body in time and space (Goldberg 1979, 153), so performing arts will make use of these advances in the communications field. Another feature of performance art is that it displaces the art from traditional spaces to take it to public ones, so that the places that once represented repression are now a symbol of freedom and a meeting point for citizens. In addition, it is necessary to emphasise that not only do they change the traditional place of scenic representation, but they also reflect on it. Therefore, for Carlson it is normal that performance enjoys great popularity at present, since contemporary art is deeply critical and reflective concerning the role it plays.

The cases of *Arte de ser português* and *Sítio Distinto*

Two examples that best demonstrate this moment of change and reflection on the situation of the “self” in the political and artistic spheres are the television programmes *Arte de ser português* and *Sítio Distinto*. The first was created by the poet and performer Alberto Pimenta for RTP1 in 1978 and consisted of ten episodes of approximately 25 minutes each, which dialogue with the Portuguese context of that time. The second, *Sítio Distinto*, is a set of thirteen one-hour programmes screened between 1990 and 1991 on Galician Public Television and created by the artist Antón Reixa. For Baltrusch, “The series was a real nonconformist, postmodern, avant-garde jewel, in many ways ahead of its time” (2011, 245). Pimenta and Reixa embody this social and artistic change in the 1970s. Both are poets, producers of prose texts, audio-visual material and pioneering artists in performing acts within the Galician and Portuguese context. In the case of Alberto Pimenta, the *Homo Sapiens* happening at the Lisbon Zoo in 1978 is particularly noteworthy. For his part, Antón Reixa became acquainted with the Rompente poetic group, avant-garde in style and with whom he carried out the first Galician poetic performances at several night bars in

Vigo which, at that time, was starting to show evidence of the cultural movement later known as La movida. In both cases, the two artists relied on the collaboration of friends who either suggested some ideas (such as those that Xosé Cid Cabido and Margarita Ledo Andi6n made in *Sitio Distinto*) or intervened in some episodes (like the figure of Rui Zink in the *Arte de ser portugu6s*).

If we take into account, on one hand, the performative work that these two creators had made previously and, on the other, the meaning of performance as described above, we can classify *Sitio Distinto* and *Arte de ser portugu6s* as two performative acts in television. The two programmes are created by two multidisciplinary artists with experience in the world of performance, produced in the public space (the Portuguese and Galician public television stations) where they reflect (they regard television as a public space of the nation and, by extension, as one's own national identity) and because they see art in relation to day-to-day activities. Specifically, they think of art in relation to the daily activities of a Portuguese and Galician person, constantly encouraging reflection on what this means. What is continuously called into question is reflection on certain topics, traditions or customs that constitute national identity. Therefore, we can say that *Arte de ser portugu6s* and *Sitio Distinto* are two performative acts about the concept of nation².

Alberto Pimenta himself considered his television programme to be “um conjunto de performances em movimento” or “performances encenadas em televis6o” (Liberato Evangelista 2018, 354). The performing acts can be considered to start from the very introduction to the programme. The first image we find is a typewriter in which letters appear which, in a typographic game, end up showing the message that this is a programme that “apresenta a RTP” and is “criado por Alberto Pimenta”. However, the arrangement of the letters is discontinuous, and in addition to the playful aspect and the characters that are arranged differently in each line, this typographic game produces an impact on the viewer, awakens them from their lethargy and encourages them to take part and complete the writing that appears to be jumbled up. For L6cia Liberato this is a “*palavra-corpo performizada*” (2018, 355) as it alters the text and breaks the representation of statements as if it was a body subject to the passage of time (2018, 356-357). Thus, the typical linear narrative typical of a television programme is deconstructed

² The idea of making a performance about the concept of nation was already explored by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in *Performing the State: The Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, 1939/40*, where she understands that the New York world exhibition was, at heart, a performative act that encourage thinking about the concept of state.

in order to set out a new programme model that requires an active and collaborative audience. This introduction also changes depending on the context. Depending on the episode, the message changes and alters the type of recommended viewer. This way, in the first programme, a warning states: “O programa que se segue destina-se a pessoas medianamente inteligentes e de gosto mediano. As pessoas altamente inteligentes e de muito bom gosto são aconselhadas a desligar o aparelho” (Pimenta 1978a, 0 min 1 sec), although in the fifth episode the warning changes: “O programa que se segue destina-se desta vez a pessoas cultas e finas. As outras também podem ver, mas são capazes de não achar interessante. Já alguma vez isso lhes sucedeu: não acharem interessante um programa?” (Pimenta 1978e, 0 min). Therefore, in addition to humour, the programme also introduces a series of highly influential visual innovations to the field of fine art.

The ten episodes of *Arte de ser português*, in many cases, seem to be a careful and critical look at the way Portuguese society worked in the late twentieth century, thus focusing on various aspects of daily life in Portugal. For this reason, it seems to question and perform the functioning and reconfiguration of the Portuguese state and its identity. This is not the only time that Alberto Pimenta questions Portuguese identity, as it is a topic to which he would return in the text “Teste cultural de portuguesismo”, contained in the book *Metamorfozes do vídeo*. The text is presented as a survey that intends to discover each person’s knowledge of Portugal: “V. é bom português? A partir de hoje, não precisa de continuar na dúvida. Basta-lhe fazer o ‘Teste de Portuguesismo’ especialmente elaborado por Alberto Pimenta, segundo os mais modernos métodos de análise ao comportamento inconsciente do cidadão” (1990, np). The result of this questionnaire allows citizens to be classified according to their degree of Portugueseness in “excelente, médio, susceptível de aperfeiçoamento, deficiente e incurável” (1990, np), reducing being Portuguese to a simple title obtained through an examination. Criticism therefore begins with the very concept of nationality in modern states, which understands that being a good Portuguese citizen is the memorisation of anecdotal and hyperpatriotic data on which the state is based. Consider, for example, the kind of exams that foreigners who want to obtain nationality have to undergo. Here it is the Portuguese themselves who have to prove that they deserve that classification. The denunciation of the modern conception of Portugueseness increases as we move forward with the survey, which continually calls into question the pillars on which national discourse is based. Thus, for example, the first block of questions directs its critique to a whole narrative based on the conquests made by Portugal in the past and which have served as a source of pride for the construction of the modern state. Pimenta, instead of asking about

Portuguese conquests, asks the following question: “Em que ano foi descoberto Portugal? Por quem?” Clearly questioning that if Portugal had really been the “discoverer” of other lands, someone would have had to discover their territory in the first place. The second block, by contrast, draws attention to a number of completely anecdotal factors, which are often used as a form of national pride. To be a good Portuguese citizen, it is important to know “em que ano a convite de quem é que o Rato Mickey visitou Portugal pela 1ª vez?”, or to find out if it is true that “É um português que detém o record do mundo da pesca à anchova”.

Sitio Distinto goes one step further. It consists of a set of interviews, sketches, musical performances and a *pétanque* contest called “A tutti churrasco” in which a cow donated by the regional government Xunta de Galicia is drawn to raise awareness among Galicians in order to persuade them to vaccinate cattle. But instead of just making a caricature and recreating a series of daily scenes that allow us to reflect on Galician identity, the programme creates the imaginary nation of *Sitio Distinto*, a colony of the Kingdom of Galicia “conceived as the repressed underside of Galician nationalism” (Toro 2002, 252). This, in the words of Reixa himself, “non nace, faise” (Reixa 1990a, 2 min 03 sec). The way to do it is precisely through a presentation that could lead into what we define as performance which parodies and plays with all the pillars on which a state is based: an anthem (a song from *Os Resentidos*), a passport, a territory (the television set), a leader (Reixa himself), a means of transport (PercebesBenz) and a historical story (narrated by the figure of Abdul Solveira, created by Cid Cabido). Reixa appropriates the various official elements of any nation and makes a performative act from what it means to be from this new Republic of *Sitio Distinto*. The performance increases during the programme, when a passport of *Sitio Distinto* is given to all musicians and interviewers who visit the programme or when videos of real consuls from other nearby countries are played, where Reixa is congratulated for the formation of the new State of *Sitio Distinto*. In this way, Reixa’s programme not only deconstructs the Galician nation, but builds another and makes it performative. It is relevant to note that Reixa puts a lot of emphasis on the gestures and movements he makes with his body in each of these speeches, even trying to reflect on his own body movement. Thus, in his first speech as a caliph of the Republic of *Sitio Distinto*, he asserts that, as the politician he is now, he has to say things that mean nothing but that are accompanied by certain gestures (such as raising your hand, using your index finger to reaffirm) to seem important and imposing. Thus, we are facing a presentation in which the use of the body is essential, one of the aforementioned characteristics of the performance.

This is the same use of the body shown by Abdul Solveira, an Afro-Galician dressed as a bagpiper responsible for telling the messy history of *Sitio Distinto* and who dramatises in many cases what he says, especially the phrase “Estamos en guerra, pero hai que reflexionar” the motto of this the new Television Republic, which Abdul Solveira represents by pointing towards the camera with his index finger, then lowering his arms in a gesture that appeals for the calm of the entire population.

Each programme begins with a poetic-performative speech from Reixa, who names himself caliph or leader of the Republic of *Sitio Distinto*. Thus, in the inaugural address of this programme-nation, Reixa states: “sempre estiven convencido de que ser galego non é suficiente, hai que ser de *Sitio Distinto!*” (Reixa 1990a, 4 min 50 sec). Being Galician is not enough because, in fact, the concept of Galician up to that time was that of an incomplete identity, anchored in the past and which excluded a large part of the population that did not fit these parameters. At another point in the programme, Galicia is described as follows: “Galicia é unha illa rodeada de cegos por todas brailles, menos por un sitio que sei eu, a República de *Sitio Distinto!*” (Reixa 1990a, 17 min 59 sec). Galicians can only achieve clarity within the new television republic. In this way *Sitio Distinto* presents itself as a utopia of what it means to be Galician, as a pluralistic and fair way of understanding *galeguidade* (the feeling of being Galician). The idea of modern Galicia bursts in, far removed from traditional nationalist discourse, which is overly localist and conservative regarding cultural innovations. For Alberte Valverde, *Sitio distinto* represents a form of Galician cultural counter-space, that is to say, “o que non ocupa a cerna nos programme as de referencia informativa” (2015, 252). However, the programme works, at times, as a canonical medium that serves to make known some elements of Galician cultural life, such as artists unknown to the mass public of television (2015, 252). Among the guests are leading figures such as Albert Plá or Gila (programme 2), canonical artists in Galician language, such as Os da Roda, along with groundbreaking groups like Os Diplomáticos de Monte Alto, Os Arjalludos or the agrarian rock of the Berrontes, who sing in Asturian.

Following is an analysis of various elements of these two performances, which lead us to the self-reflection of the Galician and Portuguese nations of the time. Thus, certain habits, traditions and ways of living that are automated and on which these two forms of art try to be one form of intervention, are questioned.

Performance as a subversion of the literary canon

As stated above, one of the features of performance is to question imposed artistic standards among which we find the idea of a canon. *Arte de ser português* dialogues with the literary tradition already from its own title. *Arte de ser português* is a book by Teixeira de Pascoaes (1915) which has a pedagogical objective, since it seeks to describe a set of characteristics that define Portugal and its inhabitants with the aim of raising good citizens. Alberto Pimenta, in his television project, also tries to describe a set of characteristics that would define Portuguese people. However, what changes is the tone and the objective, since rather than educating Pimenta wants to satirise and deconstruct certain national customs. But there is also another meaning that changes between the title of the book and Pimenta's programme; while for Teixeira de Pascoaes the art of being Portuguese was a reference to an ideal to pursue, for Pimenta, the meaning is different. Portuguese "artists" are not the ones who manage to be a good example, rather all those who manage to survive being Portuguese:

[...] por dentro, os portugueses gostam de ser fiéis aos princípios, gostam de continuar, continuar a ser aquilo que eram, a ser português, essa é a tal arte. Ser português é ser capaz de ser fiel a si mesmo, nada de experiências. Esse é um dos grandes lemas. E a matéria da arte, a matéria da arte, a relação dos portugueses com a arte parece-me que é, sobretudo, uma relação de vida, a própria vida é que é uma arte, viver sem ser dum modo miserável, viver satisfatoriamente é uma arte. (Pimenta 1978a, 11 min 54 sec).

Therefore, the Portuguese are those who persist in doing what they always did, the Portuguese behave as they believe a Portuguese person should behave, but without any critical spirit. They only repeat what they think they must do to be Portuguese and that is why Pimenta wants to raise certain questions so that they reflect on their identity. This idea is similar to his response to resistance in poetry. When in 2012 a number of Portuguese, Spanish and Brazilian authors were asked about whether poetry was a form of resistance, in what contexts and what the object of resistance was, Pimenta replied as follows:

Talvez sejam, de facto, essas as duas maneiras possíveis de resistir; parar, deixar de olhar para o que está à vista, ou então olhar, ver, e não aceitar. Não resistir será então persistir no caminho, o qual, como é próprio dos caminhos, foi já traçado anteriormente por quem traça os caminhos e as respetivas pontes (neste caso, pontífices). Resistir é não seguir esse caminho, optando ou por virar-lhe as costas, ou por enfrentá-lo. E, tratando-se de poesia, é no contorno da palavra que tudo se passa (Pimenta 2012, np).

This is a very similar answer to what he does in *Arte de ser português*. But we also have in the text some direct criticism of the Portuguese literary and canonical system. One of the funniest is when, in the fourth episode, Alberto Pimenta interviews Luis Reis, supposedly one of the great Portuguese poets. He is characterized as a headless man. When Pimenta asks him about the audience, he responds ironically “O público não tem cabeça” (1978d, 14 min 2 sec), without realising he does not have one either.

For its part, *Sítio Distinto* also dialogues with all the modern Galician canon, especially with its founding figure, the writer Rosalía de Castro. The inaugural speech of the programme-nation begins and ends with a parody of her poem “Cando penso que te fuches”. The poem speaks of existential pain, of an anguish (the black shadow) that haunts her everywhere. This was later analysed by authors like Ramón Piñeiro as a feeling or a way of feeling typical of Galician people. The first verse of the poem says: “Cando penso que te fuches,/ negra sombra que m’asombras,/ ó pé dos meus cabezales/ tornas facéndome mofa”(2002, 53). Reixa dialogues with those texts at the beginning and end of his inaugural address to the nation of Sítio Distinto to ironise this national feeling of the Galician people. The inhabitants of Sítio Distinto no longer live in existential anguish: “Hoxe, churrascadas as negras sombras da historia, nace a República de Sítio Distinto” (Reixa 1990a, 1 min 40 sec). Therefore, in order to create this new Republic, this new way of being Galician, it is necessary to burn the black shadows of history, to break with the Galician literary canonical past and to move away from that national feeling. Also, at the end of the speech, there is another dialogue with this poem: “Galicia, cando penso que te fuches, alégrome. Cando penso que te fuches, penso que moito mellor estamos na República de Sítio Distinto” (Reixa 1990a, 4 min 50 sec). Thus, for Reixa, that which goes away is Galicia. The Galician nation is that “black shadow” that “astonishes” all those who want to become part of the new way of conceiving the Galician identity: the Republic of Sítio Distinto. Another dialogue with Rosalía appears in the third episode, which focuses on photography and Galician emigration. Specifically, during the section “Historia desordenada de Sítio Distinto”, narrated by the character of Abdul Solveira: “Abdul Solveira di que Galicia é un imperio e a República de Sítio Distinto a súa colonia do subconsciente. ‘Un paso adiante e outro atrás, Galicia’. Abdul Solveira di que os galegos cando van, van coma rosas e os negros cando vén, ven todo rosa na República de Sítio Distinto” (Reixa 1990c, 9 min 50 sec). This excerpt leads us directly to think of the poem “Castellanos de Castilla” (*Cantares gallegos*), where Rosalía de Castro assures that the Galicians “cando van, van coma rosas/ cando vén, ven coma negros”. In the author’s text, the use of “negro” has a pejorative connotation,

almost as if it were a reduction of the Galicians. On the contrary, in the words of Abdul Solveira, the discourse is updated and now the Afrodescendants also migrate to *Sitio Distinto* and feel welcomed in a new territory where multiculturalism is also taken into account and where the word “negro” no longer has a connotation of negativity or inferiority.

Performance in relation to the everyday world

Arte de ser português and *Sitio Distinto* also bring attention to the social and political context, with special emphasis on the everyday activities of Portuguese and Galician people. For this reason, most of the interviewees or protagonists of the programmes are anonymous, yet interesting, characters because they are the ones who really make up the Galician and Portuguese nations. It is common that several scenes in *Arte de ser português* are composed as a contemplation of anonymous people doing some daily activity, such as going to the beach or staying home. What interests Alberto Pimenta is the way they relate to each other, the roles they establish or the way the Portuguese react. This is the case in the ninth episode, in which we see the different roles that are established within a family, like the mother who says she has no free time but actually spends the day overprotecting her child or the carefree man who does not get involved in parenting and spends the day at the bar. In the case of Antón Reixa’s programme, it is noteworthy that most of the interviews are not carried out with great music stars or famous people of Galician or other cultures, but that they aim to get to know common people such as a cockle picker, an animal castrator or a farmer.

But the daily life of Galician and Portuguese citizens is also determined by the political situation of the moment, which has already been described in the previous pages. *Arte de ser português* is very much an analysis of Portugal and its political problems at that moment, as well as of all the discourses that prevailed at the time. An example is the third episode, dedicated to the theme of Christmas, in which there is a Christmas contest that the Lenita drinks company organized for its employees. There, one of the managers of the business, decides to give a speech to his workers that revolves around the words “together” and “in the family” and that, although the protagonist states that this is made with “courage” and emotion”, it is empty of content and only acquires meaning when it begins to be an apology for business production and for telling the story of the firm. The most humorous and illustrative moment occurs when the manager passes the word to one of the employees who does not even finish the first sentence, as he interrupts to continue to show slides on Lenita’s business growth.

Another example of empty discourse that prevails in today's society is the fourth episode, in which an interview is conducted with a politician who has just formed a party: O Partido do Progresso Conservador (PPC) whose slogan is “nenhum retrocesso sem progresso, nenhum progresso sem retrocesso” (Pimenta 1978d, 7 min 30 sec). Through this paradox, Pimenta satirically reflects on the post-revolution political environment, in which a huge number of political parties emerged. This PPC can serve as a parody of the Portuguese situation that, between progress and setback, ends up staying in the same place, as if it were a question of Penelope weaving and unweaving; an idea that had already been dealt within the poem of the book *Tomai isto é o meu porco*, which starts by saying, “não, eu não teço e desteco como Circe// não, tu teces e desteces como Penélope” (1990, 14). It reaches a point where the politician has so little to say that the sound of the programme is lost, showing in an obvious way the emptiness of the discourse. A little later, in the same episode, the politician reads a speech made up only of adverbs and pronouns that do not lead to an explicit referent, so it is again turned to emptiness.

The programme also reflects on the entry of the Portuguese world into extreme capitalism, globalisation and crisis (both economic and identity). An example of this is the advert for the Lenita drink that appears in the first episode and continues throughout the series. Therefore, the idea of capitalism bursting in during an artistic production is a symbol of Portuguese society at that moment, something that the author will develop later in the book *IV de ouros* (1992) by placing a shopping catalogue in which ice creams have the same value as artworks. With regards to globalisation, the second episode stands out, since a large section is devoted to food and it is possible to see how customs are changed due to the influence of international products: sparkling wine coexists with champagne, the traditional products alongside imported cans and it is claimed that everything foreign is always better (1978b, 9 min 16 sec), an introduced idea that is still present in the Portuguese imaginary.

In *Sítio Distinto*, the traditional Galician symbols would be in continuous struggle with symbols of a capitalist, global and postmodern world, while the high register speech would dialogue with the popular discourse. Perhaps one of the most obvious examples is the figure of the bagpiper, the traditional representation of a Galician. The idea stems from a song by Antón Reixa's rock group Os Resentidos, entitled *Galicia, sítio distinto* (1989) and in which a deconstruction of certain national stereotypes had already taken place. In fact, we can say that, somehow, the lyrics and especially the music video of this song planted the seeds of what would later be the TV show. During this video clip, which can best be understood as an

artistic video, we see several people wearing the traditional bagpiper costume. Particularly noteworthy is the way in which Reixa wears not a male costume, but the female version of the dancer costume, which represents a whole subversion and even an approach towards the queer world³. Also shown in the video is a woman wearing an outfit similar to the act of reading a book in braille, which leads us to think that she is one of these blind people of the Galician nation who cannot see that the real nation is *Sitio Distinto*. The sound of the bagpipe and the *muiñeira* dance are mixed with sunglasses, plastic hammers and even traffic signals. All these elements will reappear in the Television Republic of *Sitio Distinto*: numerous African people wearing the typical bagpiper costume and the sound of the *muiñeira* next to the noise of fairground bumper cars. The mixture occurs at various levels: visual, auditory and even discursive. In the words of Xelís de Toro:

[...] different discourses (politics, mass-media, traditional) are mixed, so too different sounds and instruments are combined to create something that is new [...] Reixa displays his quoting and mixing, attracting attention to the new globalized, hybridized Galicia but also to the process of constructing it. Reixa's *sitios distintos* is not a place we can go to in order to be reassured of our identity; it is a place undergoing change and transformation (Toro 2002, 253).

That mix of races and ethnicities that are part of the Television Republic of *Sitio Distinto* can be a way of showing a new kind of open, plural Galicia oriented towards multiculturalism. Thus, in the first episode 39 black people participate, which is already an attempt to show a new, modernised Galician discourse in which, a *samba e as pandeiradas, Brasil e Galicia son dúas formas de entender a mesma variación popular*" (Reixa 1990a, 32min 18 min). When the performances are in other languages, subtitles appear in Galician summarising the content of the song or highlighting some of its key phrases, so that Galician also becomes a universal and global language, capable of carrying the message of different peoples.

But if there is one reflection that is relevant regarding globalisation and the role of foreign policy in Galicia, it is what happens in the second episode, devoted entirely to reflecting on the slaughter of the Galician pig

³ The queer had numerous manifestations during the cultural movement of *La movida*. One of the most visual examples can be found in Almodóvar's films, in which the representation of gay or transgender people is very common. Brad Epps considers these types of figures to work "on a formal level pointing to problems of stillness and mobility, placement and displacement, continuity and discontinuity, framing and figuration" (Epps 2003, 99).

as one of the most ingrained traditions in Galician culture and questions its legitimacy: whether we are facing a case of animal torture or an ancestral rite that we must preserve. The question arises regarding the entry of Spain into the EEC, which prohibits the killing of pigs at home and forces this to happen in professional slaughterhouses. Through the programme, then, various characters related in one way or another to the ritual give their opinion on the new regulations. Thus, a pig slaughter expert says that if this tradition is modernised and professionalised, many people will stop breeding pigs because they will not want to pay to kill them. An animal caregiver questions the violence of slaughter but says that all of nature is based on the cycle of death. Next, Reixa also interviews an animal castrator and two comic bullfighters, therefore comparing these two traditions, the bullfighting and the slaughtering of the pig, in which one is made for eating and the other as a form of enjoyment. He also invites a lacto-vegetarian yogi (something new in Galicia in the 1990s) who probably first introduced the concept of vegetarianism to many Galicians and the idea that many degenerative diseases are influenced by a diet rich in meat. There is a lot of reflection on animals, about the difference between domestic animals and animals such as pigs, which are bred to be killed, and thus a sacred ritual in Galician culture is questioned in a popular medium such as television. The conflict presented is resolved by a legislative decree that is imposed by caliph Reixa. This decree vindicates the pig as a pet, who would share the life of the home, the household chores, the hours in front of the TV. This decree seeks to abolish the cannibalistic rite of slaughter and replace it with a new one, which consists in the forced coexistence between the pig person and the human person, “the release of the pig” (“a solta do porco”), a pagan ritual that involves humans with their faces covered fighting with pigs. “Depois da solta do porco nada vai ser igual na cultura porcina [...] porque ‘a cada porco lle chega o seu San Martiño’” (Reixa 1990b, 58 min).

The role of the public

One of the performance issues that most artists and literary critics have reflected on is the role of the public. One example is that of futurists, who focused on finding new ways to treat the public, but not to please them, rather to disturb and confront them and their expectations (Carlson 2010, 123). This fight against a traditional and passive audience was continued by other artists, such as Kaprow, father of the happening, who brought an art tour to life, so that the public were surprised by the mirror effect of seeing how art appropriated his actions from everyday life (2010, 134). Turning to the theoretical field, the reflections of Umberto Eco or Goffman stand out,

placing the focus of the performance on its reception and the role that a person plays within society.

Alberto Pimenta and Antón Reixa were also not oblivious to this reflection of the role of the spectator and both declared the need to go in search of a new, more active, type of receiver, capable of reacting to artistic stimuli, willing to be part of the aesthetic experience that was being offered to them. Along with the other members of the Rompente poetic group, Antón Reixa advocated, the abolition of the public in favour of the people, that is, for the disappearance of the passive and uncritical receiver:

(Toda arte necesita liberarse dunha elite educada, chamada “público”, que pronto deixará de existir, de maneira que a arte quedará totalmente soa, para morrer, a non ser que atope o camiño cara o “pobo”, é dicir, cara ós homes. Desta maneira a arte considerárase de novo servidora dunha comunidade que non tería cultura, senón que quizais sería cultura...) (Rompente 1998, 88).

For his part, Alberto Pimenta considers that his poems are only finished when they are received by other people. He says this in relation to his famous *Homo Sapiens* happening:

um homem estar dentro da jaula e como... agora acrescentando a isso o que uma série de gente anônima que vai ao jardim zoológico ver animais diz perante esta circunstância... temos a dialética perfeita da criação e da recepção... algo de inesperado... algo que quer ter um sentido e que ele adquire nesse momento... no momento em que há uma certa recepção... uma certa expressão dessa recepção... então o poético é essa totalidade... e só poderia ser naquela circunstância até em certo ponto real que se chama jardim zoológico... ou seja, isto feito numa galeria não tinha absolutamente nada de poético... tinha de artístico sim...que é uma coisa diferente... era um ato de artista... construir uma jaula numa galeria e meter-se lá dentro da jaula... é uma forma artística... uma forma de criação de arte... de estética artística... mas não era poético ainda... não era... não dava a reação que este deu. isto teria de ser... só é o que é.... sendo de fato numa jaula de jardim zoológico real... (Rech 2013, sp).

There are several ways in which people on the other side of the screen are involved in building both *Sítio Distinto* and *Arte de ser português*. In the most obvious way, the Galician people take part in the staging of *Sítio Distinto*, since, during the development of the show, they are eating, drinking and being spectators of everything that happens on stage. Prior to the advert break, a programme contributor invites people to write to a P.O. Box to show their interest in participating in the programme and he states

that, if they come as an audience member, they will receive as a gift the passport of Sitio Distinto. Thus, probably without knowing it, these people are participating in the performance, contributing to the Television Republic of Sitio Distinto also having its own inhabitants. In addition to the public present on the set, the programme is interactive and opens the possibility for people to take part in the “A tutti churrasco” event, in which they can win a cow through a *pétanque* game. Thus, the audience also helps to change the future of the programme. The idea appears to be that all the people can help build their own Republic of Sitio Distinto.

In the case of *Arte de ser português*, Pimenta frequently draws attention to fictional viewers with whom he dialogues. This becomes especially obvious and conspicuous in the second episode, in which the introduction already draws attention to the fact that the audience also have responsibilities and the ability to intervene and change the course of situations and they should not put all this responsibility on others. Thus, the introductory note to this episode reads:

AVISO.
 CONFORME FOI DITO DA ULTIMA
 VEZ, É VOCÊ MESMO—E NÃO O
 VIZINHO DO LADO—QUE
 FIGURA NO PROGRAMA QUE
 SE SEGUE. E POR ISSO QUE O
 VIZINHO DO LADO ATÉ NEM ESTÁ
 VENDENDO O PROGRAMA E VOCE
 ESTA. TOME PORTANTO ATENÇÃO
 PORQUE LHE DIZ RESPEITO.
 OBRIGADO

(Pimenta 1978b, 0 min)

A little later, in that same episode, Pimenta talks about the excesses of the Portuguese and their lack of solidarity with others, when he discovers that one of the viewers is sleeping. Then he turns to him through the screen and says: “Aquele senhor! Sim! Aquele senhor que está a dormir, claro! O senhor acha que isto não diz respeito a si? Acha que é respeito aos outros, não é? Como é de costume!” (1978b, 18 min 30 sec). The viewer claims that he has the right to sleep in his house in front of the television and therefore decides to turn off the device as a way of reacting to being called out directly by Alberto Pimenta. He connects the radio, which is promoting culinary products and dream homes, which turns out to be a much more engaging programming for the viewer who is no longer sleepy, but is excited by the offers he hears and, above all, with the model of life that the media is selling to him. This receiver would be that passive person, who understands the

media only as entertainment and, therefore, wants programmes that sell him dreams and not those that demand responsibility, the kind of receiver from whom Alberto Pimenta tries to escape.

Dislocation and reflection on the space itself

One of the characteristics of the performance is to reflect on the process of artistic creation itself and the space in which the creation happens. In the case of *Sitio Distinto*, it should be noted that Galician television, whose official name is CRTVG, is popularly known among the Galicians as *telegaita* (*telegaita*), because of the number of demonstrations of this instrument that it includes and because the bagpipe is a crucial element of Galician folklore. Reixa plays with this idea by altering the traditional bagpipe figure and by including a new model of bagpipers as foreign people use this costume during the programme broadcasts. If CRTVG continues to be the *telegaita*, it should, at least, refer to a new type of bagpipe playing.

Another element that subverts the typical idea of the television programme, and about which we reflect, is the staging. The set is characterised by a mixture of elements: a set that recreates a warlike world and in which the main actions of the programme take place, tables with food where the audience was having a barbecue and drinking, as if it was a traditional Galician rural festival and, as a means of transport between the different areas, some bumper cars that gave us the idea of being just a fairground, known as “Percebes Benz”. Finally, there is also a subversion through the figures of the collaborators of the programme, known as “As incansables de Cangas”, created by the Galician writer Margarita Ledo Andión. As Alberte Valverde (2015, 252) reports, this is the feminist response to the figure of female television assistants—which was very common in the programmes of the 90s—as we see a representation of a real woman, much closer to Galician reality. The name may also be an homage to the idea of the Galician woman worker who, while her husband was emigrating, had to work at home and in the countryside, as well as taking care of the children.

For its part, *Arte de ser português* makes us think about the process of artistic creation from the outset. There are continuous interruptions that question the different elements that help to build a televisual space. Firstly, the programme is organised as a collage of different scenes of Portuguese life and mixed in different television formats: interviews, reports, documentaries, scenes recorded in a television studio and moments when it seems that we are watching a reality show. The speech of the characters is frequently interrupted by external noises (such as the sound of the plane that

appears when Pimenta is talking, 1978a, 10 min 11 sec) or technical problems (we do not know what the PPC political leader is saying because his voice descends into silence 1978c, 10 min 51 sec). We also see how the same shot is repeated several times because the interviewer forgets and mixes up what she has to say (1978c, 50 min 2 sec).

We also have in *Arte de ser português* a meta-reflection work on the process of creation of the programme itself, especially in terms of its function and the type of receiver to which it is normally addressed. This happens both through those initial announcements, which tell us who the programme is for, as well as through continually confronting different passive viewers. Finally, we can give an example of what happens in the fourth episode, when the presenter decides to start reading the letters sent to her by the viewers and only selects those that say positive things about the show. It will be Alberto Pimenta who draws the attention to the fact that she is making up the situation: “A *Arte de ser português* é isto que aqui está também. Você teve medo disto? Você não leu isto! Você não leu aquilo: ‘a *Arte de ser português*, tantos a fazer a gravação para ouvirmos tanta m...’ Você não quis ler, não foi?” (1978d, 5 min, 5 sec). In this way, it shows the way in which so many programmes build their space and how *Arte de ser português* tries to move away from this model.

Conclusion: television performance

In an interesting study, Lúcia Liberato Evangelista wonders if it is not a contradiction that Alberto Pimenta has created and starred in a television series (a mainstream icon) when he has a negative opinion of television (2018, 353). For her the answer is that “é justamente em vista da elaboração de contrassensos que o trabalho de Alberto Pimenta se dirige. Os textos de Pimenta agem por via da sabotagem e da desconstrução do senso-comum, no questionamento das evidências de tudo o que se tornou consensuado” (2018, 354) and, then, “ao ir ao encontro dos mecanismos televisivos e mediáticos, Pimenta consegue adentrar uma esfera onde público e privado se condensam e se refletem” (2018, 354).

Without disagreeing with the response offered by the researcher, we can still supplement it with some further observations. To do this, it is necessary to look back at an event that took place on French television in 1996. An already well-known Pierre Bourdieu decides to give some talks about television using the medium itself. The scholar begins by saying:

Pienso, en efecto, que la televisión [...] pone en muy serio peligro las diferentes esferas de la producción cultural: arte, literatura, ciencia, filosofía, derecho; pienso incluso, al contrario de lo que piensan y lo que dicen, sin

duda con la mayor buena fe, los periodistas más conscientes de sus responsabilidades, que pone en un peligro no menor la vida política y la democracia (Bourdieu 1997, 8- 9).

However, despite his fervent opposition to the current television system, Bourdieu also does not consider taking the position of many intellectuals who refuse to pay attention to this medium. (1997, 15). For the intellectual, reflection is necessary so that what could become an instrument of direct democracy does not end up becoming symbolic oppression (1997, 10-11). He considers that appearing on television should be a duty, as long as an exit strategy is agreed and for that reason it is necessary to raise some questions:

La televisión es un instrumento que, teóricamente, ofrece la posibilidad de llegar a todo el mundo. Lo que plantea una serie de cuestiones previas: ¿está lo que quiero decir al alcance de todo el mundo? ¿Estoy dispuesto a hacer lo necesario para que mi discurso, por su forma, pueda ser escuchado por todo el mundo? Se puede ir incluso más lejos: ¿debería ser escuchado por todo el mundo? (1997, 18).

Therefore, he considers that his function on television with these talks, agreed upon under his conditions, is an act of “intervention” (Bourdieu 1997, 9), as it offers the possibility of using an instrument to which everybody has access in order to show the dangers that same medium can have if we do not become aware of those dangers. At its core, it is a way of giving voice to those who do not have it using the very instrument that oppresses them. Jacques Rancière, in his reflection *Sobre políticas estéticas*, considers art to be a political actor precisely because of this ability to reconfigure the roles of dominant and dominated, giving an active role to those who were mere figures in the political scene:

La política sobreviene cuando aquellos que “no tienen” tiempo se toman ese tiempo necesario para erigirse en habitantes de un espacio común y para demostrar que su boca emite perfectamente lenguaje que habla de cosas comunes y no solamente un grito que denota sufrimiento. Esta distribución y esta redistribución de lugares y de identidades, esta partición y esta repartición de espacios y de tiempos, de lo visible y de lo invisible, del ruido y del lenguaje constituyen eso que yo llamo la división de lo sensible. La política consiste en reconfigurar la división de lo sensible, en introducir sujetos y objetos nuevos, en hacer visible aquello que no lo era, en escuchar como a seres dotados de la palabra a aquellos que no eran considerados más que animales ruidosos. (Rancière 2005, 18-19).

Apart from that, the two programmes are laced with an irony that is, at heart, a form of self-awareness, of self-reflection and which Alberto Pimenta defines as follows:

eu tenho uma constante ironia... essa constante ironia é uma ironia -- como todas as ironias – do autoconhecimento... o autoconhecimento leva à ironia... o desconhecimento é que leva à segurança e a certeza... a dúvida leva à ironia... a incerteza leva à ironia... e essa ironia está presente em quase tudo... quase tudo leva à ela... tanto por vezes com melancolia por vezes com alegria... e todo o resto de maneira que isso não resolve normalmente nada... a única coisa que resolve para entender é (que) entender e entender terá que ser uma totalidade... e essa totalidade é feita dessas e doutras coisas... mas sobretudo... doutras (Pimenta 2013, sp)

So irony is a form of self-reflection on what is being done and on the very space in which we are developing our artistic action. Irony is what allows us to reflect on ourselves as Galician and Portuguese and to ironise our traditions, our territory and a public space shared by all, so that this leads us to reflection, self-knowledge and the possibility of improvement.

Throughout this work, we try to show how television programmes *Sítio Distinto* and *Arte de ser português* can be understood as a performative act of the Galician and Portuguese nations and how they try to intervene in social and political reality through reflection on what their national identity means. Television puts these two programmes in the public space where artistic interventions are made and, if well used, can be an empowering and non-silencing instrument in society. Projects such as *Sítio Distinto* or *Arte de ser português* also help to deconstruct the traditional conception of the television space, asking for a more active viewer, able to reflect on what their own national identity means. In the words of Alberto Pimenta to “olhar, ver e não aceitar” (2012, np).

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