

## **PALIMPSESTS AND SYMBOLS: PRINCIPLES OF POETIC COMPOSITION IN JORGE DE LIMA'S INVENÇÃO DE ORFEU**

### **RESUMO**

The purpose of this essay is to resolve an apparent contradiction in the critical reception of the epic poem *Invenção de Orfeu*, by the preeminent Brazilian poet Jorge de Lima (1893 – 1953). The poet, according to his own account, had two principal aims in writing the poem: firstly, to effect a radical regeneration of poetry and poetics in order to renew religious and specifically Catholic values, in modern society, and secondly to modernise the classical and Renaissance epic genre, in its original Aristotelian sense, within the contexts of the twentieth century and the modern era. However, the critical scholarship concerning *Invenção de Orfeu* expresses the opposite view, that the work comprises a compendium of apparently unconnected and disassociated ideas, genres, textual fragments and poetic figures of all kinds, with no discernible sequence, and no thematic core. My aim, therefore, is to demonstrate the status of *Invenção de Orfeu* as a unified entity, with reference to Jorge de Lima's single motive, repeatedly stated for composing his epic: to expound the principal tenets of the Catholic faith and "restore poetry in Christ". I will use theory drawn from recent scholarship on theology and literature to illustrate the compositional structures underpinning the poem: firstly the one "root-metaphor" of the holy Trinity and Jesus Christ as the divine Logos, a concept on which all the verse in *Invenção de Orfeu* is based; secondly, the reintegration of "chains of memory" in order to re-establish a lineage of religious belief in a secularised world. Both of these principles, however, are realised through a poetics whose "invention" comprises a dynamic and multi-dimensional process of re-creation and re-composition of language by the poet. To illustrate, I will examine two particular features of *Invenção de Orfeu*, which, as I argue, transform *Invenção de Orfeu* into a thematic and stylistic unity. Firstly, the intertextuality inherent to the work: the appropriation and adaptation of classical and Renaissance epic texts interwoven in dense and intricate ways with Jorge de Lima's own creation, to create a palimpsestic text. Secondly, the process of symbolisation, that is, the creation of symbols by the poet to generate a network of links, connections and relations within the language of the poem, which serve to render the text as one cohesive and integrated whole.

**Keywords:** Brazil, religion, epic, poetry.

## PALIMPSESTOS E SÍMBOLOS: OS PRINCÍPIOS DE COMPOSIÇÃO NA *INVENÇÃO DE ORFEU* DE JORGE DE LIMA

### Resumo

O objetivo deste ensaio é resolver uma aparente contradição na recepção crítica do poema épico *Invenção de Orfeu*, publicado em 1952 pelo preeminente poeta brasileiro Jorge de Lima (1893 - 1953). O poeta, segundo seu próprio relato, tinha dois objetivos principais ao escrever o poema: primeiro, para efetuar uma regeneração radical da poesia e da poética, a fim de renovar os valores religiosos e especificamente católicos, na sociedade moderna. Segundo, modernizar o gênero épico clássico e renascentista, em seu sentido aristotélico original, dentro dos contextos do século XX e da era moderna. No entanto, as investigações críticas referentes à *Invenção de Orfeu* exprimem um ponto de vista oposto: que a obra consiste num compêndio de ideias, gêneros, fragmentos textuais e figuras poéticas aparentemente desconexas e dissociadas, sem sequência discernível, e sem núcleo temático. Meu objetivo, portanto, é demonstrar o status de *Invenção de Orfeu* como uma entidade unificada, com referência ao motivo único de Jorge de Lima, repetidamente declarado para compor sua epopeia: expor os principais princípios da fé católica e “restaurar a poesia em Cristo”. Incorporarei a teoria extraída de recentes estudos teológicos e literários para ilustrar as estruturas composicionais que sustentam o poema: em primeiro lugar, a “metáfora-raiz” da Santíssima Trindade e de Jesus Cristo como o Logos divino, conceitos nos quais se baseia todo o verso de *Invenção de Orfeu*; em segundo lugar, a reintegração das “cadeias da memória” para restabelecer uma linhagem de crenças religiosas num mundo secularizado. Ambos estes princípios, no entanto, são realizados através de uma poética cuja “invenção” compreende um processo dinâmico e multidimensional de recriação e recomposição da linguagem pelo poeta. Para ilustrar, examinarei duas características particulares de *Invenção de Orfeu*, que a transformam em uma unidade temática e estilística. Em primeiro lugar, a intertextualidade inerente à obra: a apropriação e adaptação de textos épicos clássicos e renascentistas entrelaçados de forma densa e intrincada com a própria criação de Jorge de Lima, para criar um texto palimpséstico. Em segundo lugar, o processo de simbolização, ou seja, a criação de símbolos pelo poeta para gerar uma rede de ligações, conexões e relações dentro da linguagem do poema, que servem para tornar o texto como um todo coeso e integrado.

**Palavras-chave:** Brasil, religião, épico, poesia.

## PLIMPSESTOS Y SÍMBOLOS: LOS PRINCIPIOS DE COMPOSICIÓN EN LA *INVENCIÓN DE ORFEU* DE JORGE DE LIMA

### Resumen

El propósito de este ensayo es resolver una aparente contradicción en la recepción crítica del poema épico *Invenção de Orfeu*, publicado en 1952 por el preeminente poeta brasileño Jorge de Lima (1893 - 1953). El poeta, según su propio relato, tenía dos objetivos principales al escribir el poema: primero, efectuar una regeneración radical de la poesía y la poética, con el fin de renovar los valores religiosos y específicamente católicos en la sociedad moderna. Segundo, modernizar el género épico clásico y renascentista, en su sentido aristotélico original, dentro de los contextos del siglo XX y la era moderna. Sin embargo, las investigaciones críticas sobre la *Invenção de Orfeu* expresan un punto de vista opuesto: que la obra consiste en un compendio de ideas, géneros, fragmentos textuales y figuras poéticas aparentemente desconectadas y dissociadas, sin secuencia discernible y sin núcleo temático. Mi objetivo, por lo tanto, es demostrar el estatus de *Invenção de Orfeu* como una entidad unitaria, con referencia al motivo único de Jorge de Lima, repetidamente manifestado para componer su epopeya: exponer los principios fundamentales de la fe católica y “restaurar la poesía en Cristo”. Incorporaré la teoría extraída de estudios teológicos y literarios recientes para ilustrar las estructuras compositivas que sustentan el poema: primero, la “metáfora raíz” de la Santísima Trinidad y Jesucristo como el Logos divino, conceptos en los que se basa todo el verso. de *Invenção de Orfeu*; en segundo lugar, la reintegración de las “cadenas de la memoria” para restablecer un linaje de creencias religiosas en un mundo secularizado. Ambos principios, sin embargo, se realizan a través de una poética cuya “invención” comprende un proceso dinámico y multidimensional de recreación y recomposición del lenguaje por parte del poeta. Para ilustrar, examinaré dos rasgos particulares de *Invenção de Orfeu*, que transforman el poema en una unidad temática y estilística. Primero, la intertextualidad inherente a la obra: la apropiación y adaptación de textos épicos clásicos y renascentistas entrelazados densa e intrincadamente con la propia creación de Jorge de Lima, para crear un texto palimpséstico. En segundo lugar, el proceso de simbolización, es decir, la creación de símbolos por parte del poeta para generar una red de vínculos, conexiones y relaciones dentro del lenguaje del poema, que sirven para dar cohesión e integración al texto en su conjunto.

**Palabras-clave:** Brasil, religión, epopeya, poesía.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1952, mid-way through the twentieth century, the Brazilian poet Jorge de Lima (1893 – 1953) published his last and greatest work, *Invenção de Orfeu*. The text consisted of one hundred and eighty poems of varying length, divided in ten sections, or “cantos” in the manner of the classical and Renaissance epic genre. Indeed, the work was clearly defined by Jorge de Lima and his contemporaries as a modern epic. According to the poet: “Eu pretendi com este livro, que é um poema só, único, dividido em 10 cantos, fazer a modernização da epopeia” (Buzatto, 1978, p. 44). Yet *Invenção de Orfeu* was the culminating point of Jorge de Lima’s career as poet, novelist, essayist, historian, artist, physician and elected politician, whose work evolved within a continuous process of engagement, not only with principal literary and poetic movements of his age, but also with the national and social concerns of an era between two world wars, a time of great transition and ideological upheaval. Throughout his career, Jorge de Lima maintained “one attitude, and one alone, towards life, art, heaven and earth, life and death, spirit and matter”, as José Fernando Carneiro put it in an early study of the poet’s work. Yet, Carneiro also adds that Jorge de Lima was also a man of “many truths and manifold vocations”, undergoing several “transfigurative phases (...) always a man in search of his own truth” (Carneiro, 1954, p. 8).

These profound contradictions at the heart of Jorge de Lima’s identity and poetic trajectory are fully evident in *Invenção de Orfeu*, a work which comprises the sum total of the poetics developed by Jorge de Lima throughout all his “transfigurative phases”. The length of the work, which totals almost ten thousand lines of verse, and its extensive intertextual engagement with canonical literary works within diverse European, Latin American and Brazilian literary traditions from the last three millennia, have naturally given rise to an equally diverse range of opinions as to what Jorge de Lima intended by the publication of an epic such as *Invenção de Orfeu*, whose principal characteristic is a seemingly inexhaustible process of metamorphosis and diversity, and, on

a first reading, the apparent lack of any apprehensible narrative or thematic sequence. Scholars of *Invenção de Orfeu* have embarked on a quest to find the “unity”, or some overarching principle or theme which informs the content of the epic (Honorato, 2017, p. 217).

My intention in this article is to examine the reasons behind *Invenção de Orfeu*’s status as a unified entity, declared by Jorge de Lima himself, as “um poema só, único”, and the apparent contradictions between the author’s stated intention and the reader’s experience of the epic. My contention is that Jorge de Lima’s motives for composing *Invenção de Orfeu* were as religious, spiritual, and theological as they were poetic, or, in fact, that the multiple poetics contained within the epic are evolved by the poet with one aim: to expound, reveal and explain the doctrinal principles of the Christian faith to which Jorge de Lima adhered. As I hope to explain in the course of this analysis, this aim also accounts for the poet’s decision to adopt the epic genre as a framework and basic structuring principle for the work.

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF JORGE DE LIMA’S THOUGHT: CHRISTIAN AND CATHOLIC DOCTRINAL FAITH

To discern the source of *Invenção de Orfeu*’s fundamental theme and purpose, we must return to the 1930s, a decade in which Jorge de Lima underwent both an ideological and aesthetic crisis of faith. This crisis was based on his increasing disillusionment at the secularisation of the modern era, and his view that nation, world and society at the point of near total disintegration, precisely due to the lack of one unified principle to guide and inform humanity, with no certain or workable knowledge of the ultimate meaning or purpose of life. The volume Jorge de Lima published in 1935, *Tempo e Eternidade*, authored jointly with Murilo Mendes, announced the conversion by both poets to the tenets of orthodox Catholicism as the ideological framework for the content of the volume, a framework which, from this point, underpinned almost all of Jorge de Lima’s poetic production throughout the following

eighteen years (Lima and Mendes, 1935). In 1943, Jorge de Lima further asserted this religious and spiritual vocation as the sole motivation for his poetry: for the same reason, the true source of poetics he developed was not held to derive from the poet's own inspiration or imagination, but from one divine and transcendent principle:

Para mim, a Poesia sempre é uma revelação de Deus, dom, gratuíde, transcendência, vocação. Longe de mim o egoísmo de dizer que sou poeta porque nasci poeta (Lima, 1943, p. 43).

Notwithstanding, Jorge de Lima's commitment to these tenets did not entail a withdrawal from the contemporary world, marked as it was at the time by great ideological turbulence, a situation which the works of his Brazilian peers also confronted in related ways. The publication of *Tempo e Eternidade* in the 1930s was also viewed as a key event within the militant promotion of Catholic dogma and values by both the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the growing lay intelligentsia of which Jorge de Lima and Murilo Mendes were a part, and which found a formal expression in the movement Ação Católica Brasileira, led by the modernist critic Tristão de Ataíde, who converted to Catholicism in 1928. The aims of the association were to:

[i]ntellectualise Catholic environments and to Christianise intellectual environments – to restore the broken bonds between the intellectual world and the spiritual world” (O'Neill, 1978, p. 23).

This statement defines precisely the nature of Jorge de Lima's own poetic vocation and the reasons behind it: *Invenção de Orfeu* was intended as much of an engagement with the social and ideological issues of the mid-twentieth century as much as other works of the epoch. The range and length of the epic must be also understood in the light of the poet's ambitions, which aimed at nothing less than a transformation of the modern world and its values. This was to be achieved through the radical regeneration of poetry and poetics within a religious, and specifically Catholic frame of reference, as a social and collective enterprise to benefit

and redeem all of humanity. Jorge de Lima stated the following towards the end of the 1930s:

A época presente é a época propícia, o clima vital do poeta. O século XIX preparou para os tempos que começaram dois acontecimentos importantes para o poeta, na ordem material – extinção fatal do predomínio burguês, o despojamento do supérfluo, de que o espírito eminentemente revoltado do poeta é o maior antagonismo: na ordem espiritual – o poeta assiste ao reflorescimento litúrgico, fenómeno coletivo e social num outro plano e que veio alargar imensamente a visão mística do poeta (Silveira, 1958, p. 66).

The ambition to bring about a liturgical revival in the modern world, fully realised with *Invenção de Orfeu's* publication in 1952, also accounts for Jorge de Lima's parallel literary aspiration: to achieve the modernisation of the epic genre represented by Virgil's *Aeneid* (29 – 19 BC), Dante's *Divina Commedia* (1320), and Luís Vaz de Camões' *Lusíadas* (1572), together with one founding epic of Brazil, *O Uruguai* by Basílio da Gama (1740-1795), itself partly based on *Os Lusíadas*. Jorge de Lima assumed the public and collective role of those authors for his own purposes, as orator, prophet and explicator of the people's origins and destiny. This role is a function of the didactic and rhetorical aim also shared by Jorge de Lima's epic forebears, whose texts the poet integrates extensively into his own work. This is one method whereby *Invenção de Orfeu* attains the unity necessary to the poet's ambition, which, in common with Dante's *Divina Commedia*, aimed at nothing less than the creation of an epic revealing God's ordering of the world and the anticipation of divine redemption in Christ. Jorge de Lima's parallel aim, the “modernisation” of the epic form, thus consisted in evolving a poetics commensurate with the task of confronting “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (Eliot, 1923, p. 483), and in which all the religious certainties which governed the societies of previous epochs were under threat. It is this complex and arduous endeavour, necessitating the mobilisation of all Jorge de Lima's “many truths and manifold vocations”, which is the subject of this essay.

## FOUNDATIONS OF *INVENÇÃO DE ORFEU*: THE ROOT METAPHOR. HOLY TRINITY AND DIVINE LOGOS

My point of departure, then, is the premise that the manifold poetic dimensions of *Invenção de Orfeu* are developed by the poet for one purpose only: to call humanity out of its materially and verbally constructed world and united within a transcendental domain of faithful response to the divine Word, or Logos. In order to fully comprehend the role of the Logos in the composition of *Invenção de Orfeu*, it is first necessary to present the four central tenets at the core of Christian belief, which I will refer to subsequently as the Christ-event:

1. The world and the cosmos were originally the creation of God. All things originated from one original Word, or Logos.
2. The present condition of humankind is determined by the Fall. Estrangement from eternal life in God was brought about by the transgressions of the first man, Adam, and his wife Eve. Human beings are condemned to exist in a corrupted world, and thus their subjection to mortality and death is also a consequence of the original disobedience to the will of God.
3. After the Fall, Christ was fore-ordained by God in one single world-plan as both the centre of creation and the figure who will reveal God to humanity. Christ appears as the definitive Word of God to humanity and is the embodiment of the Logos, that is, everything communicated to humanity by God.
4. The present age of the world is drawing to a close: all of history is preparing for the second coming of Christ. Through him, the cosmos is returned to its original ordering, and the sin incurred by Adam is made good in Christ.

The Christ-event as defined by the precepts above may be viewed, not as a specific doctrine unique to Christianity, but as a “root-metaphor”, which serves as the foundation of Jorge de Lima’s compositional principles, deployed in diverse configurations throughout the epic.

In his critical study *The Metaphor of Religion and Art*, J. Sage Elwell suggests that both religious faith and artistic expression share a structure which is fundamentally metaphorical in nature: both these domains of knowledge require that presence and disclosure which cannot be expressed solely in realist, empirical terms or in mundane language. (Elwell, 2018, p. 624). The metaphor, a figure denoting one kind of object or idea used in place of another to suggest an analogy between the two, may, then, function as a “non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally ineffable” (Langer, 1957, p. 8). Elwell, drawing on the work of philosophers Loyal Rue and Stephen Pepper, suggests that Christianity is founded on one “root metaphor”, which serves as its conceptual foundation (Elwell, 2018, p. 625). This foundation is the “Christ-event”, that is, the authentic and corporeal crucifixion, death and resurrection of historical Jesus, which corresponds to the root metaphor of Jesus as the Logos incarnate, the fulfilment of the Holy Trinity, the agent of the Resurrection of the Dead, and the final establishment of the Kingdom of God. The Logos is “inseparable from the design that animates it” (Hervieu-Léger, 2006, p. 31): its is a figurative entity in itself, and therefore the language that retrieves it of necessity has to be figurative. The act of reshaping and recomposing that the poet engages in, is to participate in the work of the Logos; and also an act of anticipation of its final return and consummation in Christ.

The same root-metaphor provides *Invenção de Orfeu* with its own foundational core and structural principle. To illustrate the operation of the root-metaphor in the epic, we may take the concept of the Holy Trinity, that is, the three persons created by the Christ-event, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three distinct entities in one divine body. It is made clear throughout *Invenção de Orfeu* that the foundational Holy Trinity is not lost in the temporal world, with all its precarious geographies through which the poet-protagonist of *Invenção de Orfeu* wanders: it is present, even if latent and hidden, in every phenomenon of which the terrestrial sphere is composed. Jorge de Lima explicitly refers to the Trinity in a “repeated proclamation” at

regular intervals throughout the ten cantos of the epic. In Poem XXIII of Canto Primeiro, or Canto I, “Fundação da Ilha”, in which the poet sets out the metaphysical and poetic precepts that will inform the epic, we find:

Cacho de faces nascendo,  
 unidade da Trindade,  
 coral do voz e do mar,  
 repetida anunicação.  
 (...)
   
 geofagia, geofagia,  
 mas nos barcos e nas velas,  
 unidade da Trindade.  
 (Lima, 1967, p. 27)

The Holy Trinity is made manifest to the attentive reader of the poem through the repeated allusions to the three-in-one for the duration of *Invenção de Orfeu*, and, indeed, we can discern these allusions from the first stanza of Canto Primeiro:

Um barão assinalado  
 sem brasão, sem gume e fama  
 cumpre apenas o seu fado:  
 amar, louvar sua dama,  
 Dia e noite navegar,  
 Que é de além e aquém-mar  
 (...)
   
 Barão ébrio, mais barão  
 De manchas condecorado  
 entre o mar, o céu e o chão  
 fala sem ser escutado  
 a peixes, homens e aves,  
 bocas e bicos, com chaves,  
 e ele sem chaves na mão.  
 (Lima, 1967, p. 15)

Whether the poet is heard or not, he has embarked on a journey through a cosmos composed of tripartite principles which structure the poem in multiple ways. In this first Canto, the baron-poet navigates through three spheres, or dimensions, which frame the poet-protagonist’s linguistic endeavours: firstly, the plane of human history within chronological eras, which is the earth, or the terrestrial plane. Secondly, a fathomless ocean, which contains within its depths the fragmented language accumulated from that his-

tory. Thirdly, the sphere of the sky, or the heaven from which emanates the celestial memory of the original Christ-event and its Logos (Silva, 1987, p. 70-71). This pattern recurs throughout, replicating itself from the broad background and setting of the three spheres of earth sea and heaven through to the clusters of three nouns each in the two lines cited above, “o mar, o céu e o chão (...) peixes, homens e aves”. All reflect the “tresdobramento” as Jorge de Lima defines it: the unfolding of the past recollection, the present existence and the future anticipation of the Trinity, the primary creator and generator of the poet’s cosmogony. The process of “tresdobramento” forms a continually recurring single allusion recalling the epic’s primal source, and its progenitor, at any point within a poem. This process is also the most fundamental principle of unity in *Invenção de Orfeu*, and the means by which Jorge de Lima is able to integrate such diverse range of content and style into “um poema só, único” (Sterzi, 2001, p. 289).

## RECOMPOSING THE CHAINS OF MEMORY AND THE EVOCATION OF THE LOGOS

We see, then, that through intricate networks of connection and allusion back to the triple divine entity, the Logos is made present in a way otherwise inexpressible in the language which the poet necessarily has to work with, but which he may recompose and reintegrate to form a renewed text which leads back to the Christ event and the foundation of the divinely ordered cosmos. Yet, in the succeeding stanzas of the opening poem of Canto I, the voyage of the baron-poet continues, oscillating between the spheres of heaven, sea and earth, but still “sem chaves na mão”: in other words, without the keys to give his memories meaning and reveal their true significance to the reader. What are these keys, and how may the poet retrieve them? Jorge de Lima fully clarifies this trope in the last canto of *Invenção de Orfeu*:

Palavras ancestrais, previmos que eram  
 chaves,  
 E fomos nada mais, que puros arrastados.  
 (Lima, 1967, p. 131)

The keys turn out to be the capacity to create the poetry, the “ancestral words”, whose ultimate origins derive from the foundational Christian root-metaphor. Yet a closer examination of the nature of the “ancestral words” and the manner of their retrieval leads us also to the question of what memory signifies in relation to the religious frames of reference and the Christian eschatology which motivated the poet to compose his epic. As Anazildo Vasconcelos da Silva points out, the three dimensions of earth, sea and sky are composed through memory: the memory of human history, the memory of language recovered from the countless signs within the amorphous sea, and the celestial memory of the eternal: these memories define both the nature of poetic representation and the structural planes of *Invenção de Orfeu* (Silva, 1987, p. 71). Nonetheless, the words “memory” or “memories” are used within diverse contexts in *Invenção de Orfeu*. What Jorge de Lima refers to as “memórias” are those human reminiscencies capable of encompassing the multiple and contingent times of history, and the sequences of the supposedly linear threads of chronological time, but still nonetheless doomed to a state of loss and impermanence. “Memória” in the singular, however, refers directly to the direct understanding of the foundational Christ-event and the apprehension of the divine Logos, still active, even if latent, within the same chronological time. Both these processes are fundamental to the process of *poiesis*, the recovery of the “ancestral words” barely redeemable but not entirely lost: they may be evoked, recovered and transfigured through the incessant process of recreation and recomposition by the poet. It is this ceaselessly transformative process which comprises the body of *Invenção de Orfeu*.

The poetics of *Invenção de Orfeu*, then, exemplify the creation of what Danièle Hervieu-Léger terms a “chain of memory” (Hervieu-Léger, 2000, p. 20-21). This chain is re-formed through the renewal of the Logos essential to foundational Christian tradition, and repeated within the rituals of prayer, the Eucharist, and the Mass. The process of continual regeneration through these rituals have now become fragmented in the modern world and

almost irretrievable from the state of amnesia, or forgetfulness which is intrinsic to secular existence. If the Logos is itself a metaphor, then it does not belong to a material reality that can be readily understood, nor is the Logos a sign that directly points to a thing that has substance in the material world. As Danièle Hervieu-Léger states, all we can grasp are expressions and carriers of the original metaphor in fleeting words, signs and texts, or, as the poet himself puts it:

Só vejo referências e sigilos  
que o mais necessário é esclarecer  
em meio aos sedimentos desse breu.  
LIMA, 1967, p. 71)

The poet’s task, then, is the recovery, resurrection and reintegration of these “references and signs” to compose again the chains of memory which lead back to both the foundational events of Christian belief, and the assertion of the true origins of all human language in the Logos, which, as the intermediary between God and the Cosmos, is the true agent of creation. To recompose the chains of memory is also to establish a “shared lineage of belief”, capable of transcending human history and chronological time (Hervieu-Léger, 2006, p. 125). In so doing, the poet reveals the sacramental presence of the Trinity in the world, and the eschatological promise of the Second Coming. Thus the process of *anamnesis*, deriving from the Greek “reminiscence”, the conscious recall and re-enactment of the foundational Logos, is the motivating force behind the multiple poetics developed by Jorge de Lima in the epic. In this way the chain of memory is created, which the poet also conceives in terms of a series of concentric circles, with the eternal moment of the Trinity at their point. The poet clarifies this process in Canto VII, “Biografia”:

Memorial vô de círculos concêntricos  
em movimento de ilha circular;  
a memória dilata-se e consome-se,  
a frase repercute idades, temas,  
tardandorinhas enterradas vivas  
e ainda atravessando as mesmas tardes.  
(Lima, 1967, p. 145)

## THE POET IN HISTORICAL TIME

The above stanza illustrates another fundamental principle which informs the epic: the baron-poet must recall not only his personal history, but the collective history of humanity through time, the “ages, themes, the slow afternoons before dusk”, representing an apparently directionless existence within the chronological sequence of days, years, and centuries. This cycle of historical time is an endlessly repeated process which cannot be transcended without divine intervention, and the source of the conflict which is integral to the shipwreck and perdition of humanity, in its contemporary state of separation and division after the Fall. While the poet remains in his human mode, he wanders through the ocean of history with inchoate and random memories. For the same reason, the poet refers in the plural to all the named events, nations, geographies, and other phenomena ever created by humankind which subsist in this ocean, comprising “infesas geografias”, which in humankind’s unredeemed state, ultimately lead to the depths of perdition, ruin and decay. In Poems IV and V of Canto Primeiro, he states:

Vós sabeis onde estão as latitudes,  
longitudes, limites, tordesilhas  
e as fronteiras fechadas para as ilhas.  
mas além dessas firmes certitudes,

há o túnel que Virgílio descobriu  
e onde o ódio toricola as criaturas,  
suor e pranto correndo num só rio;  
E há as bocas sagitais – corolas duras.  
(Lima, 1967, p. 16 – 17.)

Yet one of the paradoxes integral to this appointed task is that the poet’s *anamnesis* remains dependent on his continued existence in, and engagement with, the chaotic and disconnected world of time with all its decomposed and corroded language: the concept of memory is, in St Augustine’s description, a dynamic process of the continued operation of the past in the now through the process of recall, and so poetry can only evoke the past within the present moment: “... in the eternal nothing passed, but the whole is present; whereas no time is all at once and all that time past, is driven on by time to come and all to come, is created, and flows out of that which is ever

present?” (SAINT AUGUSTINE, 2009, p. 329). The poet is obliged to work within each present point in time, and much of *Invenção de Orfeu*, in particular Canto IV, “As Aparições” and Canto VII, “Audição de Orfeu” is dedicated to the depiction of the poet as mystic, and his personal and arduous endeavour to in order to recall, evoke and reveal the Logos as immanent within the world in which he, as a human, is situated. To create the possibility of divine intervention in time, the poet must internalise the whole of human history as seen experienced from a Christian perspective: the long depiction of the poet’s personal struggle with the collective memory of humanity in all its intertangled, contradictory and turbulent configurations, illustrates the interdependent evolution of the poet’s self in the contexts of all secular and sacred history, in confluence with the dynamic and multifaceted creation of his epic. In Poem XXIII of Canto Primeiro, Jorge de Lima describes another key process in the creation of the epic as “um poema, só, único”:

Pra unidade deste poema,  
Ele vai durante a febre,  
Ele se mescla e se amealha,  
E por vezes se devassa.  
Não lhe peças nenhum lema  
Que sua mágoa é engolida,  
E sua vida vai desconexa,  
Completando o que é teoria,  
Andaime, saibro, argamassa  
(...)  
(Lima, 1967, p. 26)

Thus the task of the poet-mystic cannot be a solitary one: the poet is equally unable to isolate himself from the collective origins of his fellow human beings in the foundational principles of the Christian cosmos, nor absolve himself from the collective destiny of all humankind: perdition or redemption in the Second Coming of the Christ-Principle. The dialectical tension between the poet’s radically subjective struggle for renovation and renewal as an individual believer, and his efforts to effect a revelation within the vast flux of contemporary civilisation, accumulated through layers of human history over millennia, informs much of the composition of *Invenção de Orfeu*: it is a seemingly continuous and discordant process whose ultimate

purpose is to reveal to his fellow humans of the chaotic and directionless nature of their existence, and create a consciousness of the potential for eternal redemption.

The multiple roles of the poet necessarily require a parallel, and explicit, exposition of the multiple facets of poetic creation and the forms these may take: diverse genres within one overarching genre of the epic, manifold poetic figures, tropes and styles. All these are reconstituted by the poet, within a process of dynamic and unfolding movement which is intended lead back to the one source of the Christ-event and the Logos, and forward to the anticipation of the final Redemption.

### THE INTERTEXTUALITY OF *INVENÇÃO DE ORFEU*: THE PALIMPSEST

To examine the specific configurations of *Invenção de Orfeu's* composition, I will now look in closer detail at the intertextuality referred to in my introduction, that is consisting of the appropriation and adaptation of classical and Renaissance epic and lyrical texts, interwoven in dense and intricate ways with Jorge de Lima's own creation. The most evident and visible text, Luis Vaz de Camões' *Os Lusíadas*, is disclosed from the outset, underpinning structure of Jorge de Lima's own *Invenção de Orfeu*, and confirming its status as an epic. *Os Lusíadas*, published in 1572, treats the voyage of the Portuguese discoverer Vasco Da Gama to India via the Cape of Good Hope from 1497 to 1499 (Camões, 1992). According to Hélio J.S. Alves, *Os Lusíadas* functions as a "Camonian metatext" on which the structure and key tropes of *Invenção de Orfeu* depends (Alvez, 1991, p. 5). In addition, references direct and indirect, to Biblical texts from both Old and New Testaments are constant throughout the epic; in Canto IV, *As Apararições*, Lima inserts a long first-person meditation on the importance to his own thought and work of the Italian Renaissance poet Dante Alighieri and his *Divina Commedia*, completed in 1329, which depicts the poet Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven and the soul's journey towards God (Kirkpatrick, 2004). Other classical texts not in the epic genre, such as the bucolic, lyric tradition initiated

by Hesiod, Ovid and Virgil are also present (Cavalcanti, 2012, p. 211 – 213). In addition, texts which refer to Jorge de Lima's own Brazilian tradition, excerpts from Mário de Andrade's 1928 modernist novel *Macunaíma* and a historical work by Afonso Arinos from 1937, *O Índio Brasileiro e a Revolução Francesa* (Arinos, 1937) feature in Lima's depiction of the colonisation of Brazil in Poem XXXI of Canto Primeiro (Lima, 1967, p.35 – 42). Alves also states that "this intertextuality is clearly of central importance for the reading of *Invenção de Orfeu*", an integral part of the poem's textual space and the "geografias irreais" referred to by Jorge de Lima (ALVES, 1991, p. 4).

Critical opinion differs, however, on Jorge de Lima's purpose in such a comprehensive integration of Camões' *Os Lusíadas*, and the principles of poetic composition which inform the exposition and integration of all the remaining textual content from his literary forebears into *Invenção de Orfeu*. Luiz Buzatto's early, and highly influential study, *Montagem in Invenção de Orfeu*, proposes that this composition principle is based on montage, the juxtaposition of heterogeneous textual elements to form the continuous whole of the poem (Buzatto, 1978). Gilberto Mendonça Teles concurred, interpreting the intertextuality of *Invenção de Orfeu* in the sense proposed by Júlia Kristeva, that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). While all literary compositions build on the structures created within numerous precedents, this should be interpreted in the sense meant by the Latin *intertexto*, to intermingle while weaving. Jorge de Lima knowingly designs *Invenção de Orfeu* around this process, signalling his intentions clearly to the reader by citing the term "palimpsest" at various points in the poem. In Canto X, *Missão e Promissão*, which recapitulates the poet's intentions in writing *Invenção de Orfeu*, we find:

Falara: e sua fala palimpséslica  
 Proveio; era abundante, nasceu sabia,  
 Que fazer desses passos, desses vestes,  
 Das canções que possuíram outros lábios?  
 (LIMA, 1967, p. 192).

A palimpsest, in its literal sense, was originally the result of the layering of two pieces of writing on a parchment or some other material on which the original text has been partially erased and then overwritten by a later script. The older text remained latent in the parchment, and traces often reappeared in the newer version. Sarah Dillon, following the essay entitled “The Palimpsest” by the nineteenth-century essayist and critic Thomas de Quincey, describes how the palimpsest is transformed into a text with figurative meaning, acquiring a metaphorical value by the interweaving of unrelated texts and the formation of new relations between each (Dillon, 205, p. 243). Thus the palimpsest has a double function: it preserves the integrity and meaning of the first text, while enabling a new, possibly figurative significance to emerge from its juxtaposition or fusion with the texts that follow: “[I]f the underlying script acquires greater importance in a specific historical configuration, it has to be deciphered through the overwritten script” (Binswanger, et al., 2011, p. 26). Palimpsests, therefore, are inextricable one from one another: and they are never static, but always transformative. The palimpsest is also associated with memory: while it does indeed generate new meanings, it also preserves traces of what existed in the past, readily accessible for the reader to recall the import and connotations of what was originally written.

Let us now examine in what way the palimpsestic principle outlined above is deployed in one particular context in *Invenção de Orfeu*. Canto Primeiro, the first poem of ten, broadly introduces the themes and stylistic precepts which inform Jorge de Lima’s work: As we have already seen, the opening stanza introduces an anonymous baron, who navigates, as does his unnamed fleet of ships, in an indeterminate way through an equally undefined ocean, or oceans, “aquém e além-mar” (Lima, 1967, p. 15):

Um barão assinalado  
sem brasão, sem gume e fama  
amar, louvar sua dama,  
dia e noite navegar,  
Que é de aquém e além-mar  
A ilha que busca e amor que ama.

(...)

Alegrais descobertas  
ou mesmo achadas, lá vão  
e todas as naus alertas  
de vária mastreação,  
mastros que apontam caminhos  
e países de outros vinhos.  
esta é a ébria embarcação.  
(Lima, 1967, p. 15).

The cadences of these and subsequent stanzas evoke Camões’ own proclamatory and sonorous style, and the trope of the sea is one component of the triadic structure of sea, earth, and heaven which broadly structures the arrangement of the sub-poems in *Invenção de Orfeu*. As stated previously, the sea, or ocean, represents the collective unconscious of humanity, comprised of layers of partly degenerate history and language, which the baron-poet of the opening stanzas of the epic must navigate, decipher, and recover. More specifically, this poem, and the succeeding fourteen poems in Canto Primeiro, also evoke a particular point in Camões’ epic, his own Canto 1, in which, after an introduction, invocation and dedication to King Sebastian, Camões presents, *in medias res*, Vasco da Gama’s ships making their way up the east coast of Africa, having already rounded the Cape of Good Hope (CAMÕES, 1992, p. 5). On a broader scale, *Os Lusíadas* is situated within an unequivocal, and significant historical context: a voyage by Vasco da Gama which was the first to link the territories of Europe and Asia with the sea routes of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, also enabling the Portuguese to establish their empire, and for Western colonialism to take firm root in Africa and Latin America, including Brazil. The oceans in which Canto I and much of the remaining cantos of *Os Lusíadas are set*, constitute “not only a poetic but also a historical and social space; the epic testifies to what one critic has recently called ‘the poet’s historico-imaginative engagement with the ocean’” (Klein, 2013, p. 158). Navigating through these supposedly uncharted expanses, the ennobled Portuguese mariners are the exemplars and representatives of the Portuguese national mission to conquer “undiscovered” territories and promote an evangelising Christianity as a justification for doing so,

using the most advanced technological means of the early modern age. It has also been noted that the poetic depiction of this mission also entails the depiction of an essential dualism, or juxtaposition, between the mastery and conquest of the mariners' ships, represented by their prows, who cut through the yielding expanse of the sea:

Já no largo oceano navegavam,  
As inquietas ondas apartando;  
Os ventos brandamente respiravam,  
De maus as velas côncavas inchando;  
Da branca espuma os mares se mostravam  
Cobertos, onde as proas vão cortando  
As marítimas águas consagradas,  
Que do gado de Próteu são cortadas (...)  
(Camões, 1992, p. 5).

Jorge de Lima's poetic response to Camões' epic is to strip the text, not only of all named references to the historical and ideological import of the *Os Lusíadas*, but of all geographical markers defining the territories the Portuguese nation has mapped, together with the syntactical structures which construct all the linear sequences of narrative in the poem. We have already seen that Lima regards all human history created after the Fall as amounting to very little more as ultimately fruitless and directional cycles of turbulence, discord, and cruelty, which have served to suppress and conceal the memory of the originary Christ-event by which the world came to being under progressive layers of conflict and amnesia. The deployment of *Os Lusíadas* in *Invenção de Orfeu*, then, provides one specific example of Jorge de Lima's deconstruction of the sequential, linear and irreversible nature of historical time, and humankind's hubris and arrogance within it, represented by the amorphous, limitless, inchoate sea, devoid of humanly created frontiers and boundaries. In this context, the ocean functions as a repository for the linguistic remnants of Camões' and all his precursors' texts, still retaining their "ressonâncias" and still at the poet's disposal to renew and transfigure. Within Jorge de Lima's own text, references to *Os Lusíadas* in *Invenção de Orfeu* consist of key tropes and images readily recognisable to those familiar with the original poem. These tropes in the first poems of Canto Primeiro are

retrieved and radically reworked by the "baron-poet" of *Invenção de Orfeu*, and more extensively subsequent Cantos. Jorge de Lima's purpose, therefore, is the unrestrained reinvention of Camões' text for this purpose: the deconstruction of the "infensas geografias" Camões and his forebears have created and restoration of these to some echo of their original meaning in sacred poetry.

Reinventamos o mar para essa ilha  
que possui "cabos-não" a ser dobrados  
e terras e brasis com boa aguada  
para as naves que vão para o oriente  
(Lima, 1967, p. 16)

To take the trope of the "prow", presented in the line "Cobertos, onde as proas vão cortando". This metonymical figure, representing the fleet of ships which drive the Portuguese mariners on to their appointed destiny, and, in fact, the sum of the human and technological endeavour which cuts through the uncharted oceans, features in Canto Primeiro as one utterance or vocable which, cast adrift from its original contexts, floats in the poet's amorphous and undefined sea of the detritus of human history and language, "as águas do passado e do future, insônias circulares" (LIMA, 1967, p. 46).

A proa é que é ave,  
soa que soa  
peixe de velas,  
tendendo a vaga  
velas e penas,  
peixe que voa,  
tudo o que é a nave.  
Ave, voa, som.

A proa é que é ave,  
Proa sem quilha  
peixe de velas,  
ave em si e proa,  
velas e penas  
peixe sonoro  
tudo o que é nave  
que em si reboa

A proa é em si  
peixe veleiro  
em si andada.  
Que tudo o deixe

Ave poesia,  
 ser só o que é:  
 ela e mais nada.  
 anterior peixe.  
 (Lima, 1967, p. 17)

Oscar Lermenn's article, "Aspectos do Mito e 'Invenção de Orfeu'" has provided a close reading of this poem which identifies the particular devices by which Jorge de Lima approximates the original prow to the of the sail, bird and ship: integral in itself, "A proa é que é" is the agent of metamorphosis: it still holds within itself the sonority, or "ressonância" repeatedly asserted by Lima as a basic characteristic of language. This sonority is the agent of what Lermenn terms "movência": through linguistic association of similarities or associations of several kinds: whether the phonetic similarity of "proa-peixe", or the semantic and operative association of "proa-vela", or the simile of the fish bearing a resemblance to the ship in that both advance through the sea. Jorge de Lima's approximation creates a chain of association to create "evolutionary images", as Lermenn puts it, all of which effect the metamorphosis into an "ave-poesia": the creation of pure poetry and its capacity for redemption (LERMENN, 1979, p 3- 4). This evolution is also a circular movement, from the prow "furando em vão" across the sea, the bird, and the sail, but it is also a process of ascent and descent: the bird-sail moves upwards into flight, to descend into the sea where the "anterior-peixe" may be discerned. Thus Jorge de Lima reverses the cutting movement of the Camões' prow for its original purpose of domination and conquest. The motif of the prow is reconstructed in such a way as to newly reunite it with the ocean itself, and together with other tropes which evoke spiritual connotations, such as the fish and the bird. In the contemporary world, these phenomena are presently objects for mastery and consumption, but were once, and may still be, sacred symbols interwoven in early Christian iconography, and the Bible. At the conclusion of the poem, the fish has been transformed into a transcendent symbol in its own right, the "anterior peixe", the original *ichthys* which enabled early Christians to identify members of their persecuted community, and an integral component of the New Testament and the Holy

Eucharist. In this way, the poem also brings to light the layering of palimpsestic religious texts preceding both Luís Vaz de Camões and Jorge de Lima, which hold a progressively sacred significance pointing ultimately to the Christ event. In a still more fundamental way, the poem also recalls the Holy Trinity, whereby three objects retain their integrity as individual entities, complete in themselves, but are also a unity which constitutes poetry: "ave, vôo, som".

## THE POETICS OF THE SYMBOL

As the example of the fish demonstrates, a material phenomenon transfigured into the symbol of Christ himself, we can also discern within a process of symbolisation in the texts cited above, whereby the interplay of metaphor and metonymy in these first texts of Canto Primeiro, the prow standing for the ship, the sail which evokes the journey of the fleet, the fish representing the language retrieved from the waters, are converted through assimilation and association into the symbol. The symbol, in this context, can be defined as an object, figure, or some other character that represents a thing other than itself, and which embodies, and generates, the transcendent principles of the original root-metaphor. The symbol assumes a cardinal role in the composition of the epic, and is a key component of the process by which *Invenção de Orfeu* is rendered into a unified work.

For Murilo Mendes, Jorge de Lima's collaborator, the poetics of *Invenção de Orfeu* do not represent an attempt to negate linear or chronological time, but rather the creation of a possibility for the simultaneous penetration between the two domains of time and eternity, a process which also replicates the interpenetration of the mortal human and the eternal divine in the foundational Christ-event (Mendes, 1952, p. 24). The symbol, as a device which coalesces mundane language with its spiritual aspects, holds both together in one moment containing past, present and future: the "still point of the turning world" as T.S Eliot put it (Eliot, 1970, p. 16). The constant, and transformative, process of symbolisation throughout *Invenção de Orfeu* is fundamental to the

apprehension and comprehension of the Christ-event. Indeed, the Holy Trinity, also functions as a symbol in itself, taking the form of the triangle, with three lines connecting the three points as complete entities in themselves, but which also comprise a unity: three in one. The role of the Trinity as symbol is also evoked within the wider framework of the poem's triadic structures, and the latent "tresdobramento" which brings forth the poetic process, described by the poet in the following stanza:

Entre a memória térrea e o sonho existe  
esse triângulo de sombra liberada  
com três íris fechadas ente muros.  
(Lima, 1967, p. 145)

Symbols are integral to Christian doctrine and practice as "tokens of recognition and reunion" (Kuczok, 2000, p. 238). They assume a multiplicity of forms: as signs and writing, as numbers and shapes; they are drawn from nature, plants, animals or parts of the body and other natural phenomena, or they may be personifications such as the shepherd or the fisherman. Symbols may be analogical, as in the resemblance of the lamb to Christian charity and forgiveness, or, as in the Holy Trinity, based on a structural resemblance between the two entities. But in all cases, some form of correspondence between the symbolic object and the spiritual concept it refers to is present. Religious discourse of any kind is therefore reliant on the experience of the natural and humanly created world in order to make experience of the divine apprehensible to common perception. This is also the case in *Invenção de Orfeu*. In Canto X, "Missão e Promissão", Jorge de Lima clarifies the central role of the symbol and what it represents and what it will reveal:

Os símbolos dilatam-se nas mãos;  
prosseguem logo as línguas ontem mudas;  
e são despertas searas, diapasões  
e os dedos repousadas sobre os tules.

As madeiras sonoras respondiam  
os apelos desertos e arenosos.  
a divina constância renascia  
de dentro das escalas silenciosas.  
(Lima, 1967, p. 192)

## THE POETICS OF THE FLOWER

Let us take a specific example of symbolisation in the poem to illustrate the complex and intricate interplay between the figurative "ancestral words" of divine discourse and mundane, secular language with which the poet has to work. Jorge de Lima's process of symbol creation depends on what George Larkoff and Mark Johnson, term "symbolic metonymies", which are critical links between mundane language and "the coherent metaphorical systems that characterise religions and cultures", which directly emanate from the foundational root metaphor (Larkoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 40). This process of creating these links is progressively developed in three contrasting passages from *Invenção de Orfeu*, each constructed around the symbolic metonymy of the flower. The flower and its related images of the rose, the sunflower and the lily, is one of a number of figures, such as the rock, a wing or wings, or a garden, which recur repeatedly and in multiple configurations throughout the entire text of the epic. As Oscar Lermenn states, these tropes are particular structural elements used consistently by the poet, which function as a starting point for the creation of the symbol, its transformative capacities and its expansion through and within language (Lermenn, 1979, p. 5). They are signifiers which convey multiple meanings and associations for humans in the temporal world, and are easily apprehensible. The flower, and in particular the rose and the lily, is associated, directly and indirectly, in copious ways with Christian ritual and discourse, including that of the Christ-event itself. Jorge de Lima's poetic design "depicting something that is literally absent and, through the manner of its presentation, something that is absent, or perhaps latent, in that which is being presented" (Elwell, 2018, p. 624), capable of being, yet invisible and inactive, or hidden and undeveloped. The figures also convey echoes of a former, or maybe even still present, spiritual and mystical significance. The first excerpt is encountered towards the conclusion of Canto Primeiro in Poem XIV, which consists of a long reflection on the possible sources of poetry, and the conceivable ways of its composition:

(...)  
 Mas a memória emprenha e o verso nasce  
 como rosas sem pétalas, mas rosas,  
 mas rosas sempre lágrimas e absintos,  
 mesmo vociferantes contra os ventos.  
 (Lima, 1967, p. 63)

In this passage, the poet's recall of the root metaphor, renders a word pregnant with its figurative potential: it generates the simile of the rose without petals, which evolves into a pure form: complete and integral in itself. The tears and wormwood, while not semantically connected to the flower, nonetheless are always linked to it through the near-infinite connections that any human memory can make, and thus the rose acquires ever more "ressonâncias", capable of withstanding the arbitrary winds of time.

The second excerpt, taken from Poem II of Canto III, "Poemas Relativos", is addressed directly to the reader, inviting comprehension and participation in what is being created or generated:

Queres ler o que  
 Subitamente olhas:  
 Tão só se entrelê  
 nem lês nem desfolhas;  
 E o resto em ti está?  
 Folha, flor, tiveste-as.

Flor no ar sem umbela  
 E nem as tocaste:  
 Nem tua lapela;  
 folha ou flor. Tu – haste,  
 Flor que sem nós há.  
 Elas reais, mas réstias.  
 (Lima, 1967, p. 72)

The poet asks the reader to discern what cannot be explicitly read, with an understanding which still remains dormant within memory. The process of creating the symbol, and its apprehension from the flower, still in its pure and unadulterated form, is an unpredictable process, which may occur "suddenly", in any moment of time. The double meaning of the words "haste" which may be a staff, or the stem of a plant or tree, or "réstia", a string of vegetables, or a ray of light, again holding

a more sacred connotation, may have some semantic or associative connections with the flower, or they may not. The poet is reconnecting in diverse ways signs which have taken on random and arbitrary meanings within a world of flux and through the contours of chronological time. Through the agency of the poet's composition and recomposition, the core symbol of the flower engenders the proliferation of related figures of speech, or, more specifically, a chain of metonymies, where one word is used to replace another with which it is linked, yet not a part of the word or idea it represents. The poet maps and connects: by projecting each metonymy onto another figure to which it was not formerly connected, new associations are created between each. This is apparent in the lines "nem lês nem desfolhas/Folha, flor, tiveste-as". The immediate meaning of "folha" is a natural leaf, of course, but immediately calls to mind the leaf of a book, together the noun's further mutation within another active verb, "desfolhas". The assonance of "folha" and "flor", is also implicated in the recovery of memory, in that the allusive and associated patterns of sound and word function as a mnemonic process enabling further recall, which is also comprehension. The poetic process is, effectively "an interlacing of shattered memories, memories that have also been worked upon and invented and constantly reshaped in response to the demands of a present which is increasingly subject to the pressures of change" (Hervey-Léger, 2006, p. 143).

Thus the reader is invited to participate in what is a process of re-connection between linguistic elements formerly fragmented, or alienated one from another by semantic distance. The space between "referring and deferring" that the metaphorical nature of both religion and poetry involves, communicating a "metaphor of presence" evoking something that is otherwise latent and hidden: the one root metaphor from which all else springs.

The third excerpt exemplifies the theme of Poem X in Canto 10, Missão e Promissão, composed of twenty poems. This final Canto in Jorge de Lima's epic confirms the circular structure of *Invenção de Orfeu* by echoing the themes and structure of the first poems in

Canto Primeiro. As the title of Canto X suggests, the poems seem to promise, or at least anticipate, a final resolution, of the metamorphosis and transfiguration which comprise the main content of *Invenção de Orfeu*, and represent an almost complete integration of the root-metaphor of the originary Christ-event with the linguistic figures that the poet has used to reinvent the world in his epic. This is partly because Canto X is based on texts contained in the final book of the Holy Bible, the Revelation of St John the Divine (Holy Bible, 1954, p. 244 – 245), which reaffirms and predicts the final intervention of Christ in the world, the vanquishing of evil, and the redemption of humanity and the world. The intricate structure of progressive revelations in St John has itself been compared to a mystic rose, and so the flower trope appears in a more complete form in Poem X of the Canto:

Não a vaga palavra, corrutela  
vã, corrompida folha degradedada  
de raiz deformada, abaixo dela,  
e de vermes, além, sobre a ramada;

mas, a que é a propria flor arrebatada  
pela fúria dos ventos: mas aquela  
cujo pólen procura a chama iriada,  
flor de fogo a queimar-se como vela:  
(...)  
esta é a flor das flores mais ardida,  
esta veio do início para o eterno,  
para a árvore da vida que há em mim.  
(Lima, 1967, p. 194)

The trope of the flower, now at the point of anticipation of the final redemption of the world, is more clearly separated from the corrupted and degraded language of the Fall, depicted in the first stanza, and soon to be erased at the point of the Apocalypse and the advent of the Second Coming of Christ. The flower, now almost fully implicit in the now imminent consummation of the Logos, is one with the iridescent flames it generates. The trope has now been united with the “flower of flowers”, that is, the originary metaphor of the one Logos from whence it came. Yet the flower of flowers is also associated to the tree of life, now a fully developed concept within the consciousness of the soon to be

redeemed poet, who, through the dynamic and multifaceted creation of his epic, has now himself become a transfigured sign through which the recommencement of eternal life may be revealed.

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