

Madeira: the poetry of Herberto Helder

It is both a privilege and a daunting prospect to speak of Herberto Helder's poetry. When, in 1977, I started research for my doctorate, the critical field was wide open and sparsely populated. Secondary reading, none of it in English, was constituted by a handful of published articles and essays, some newspaper features and reviews, and one doctoral dissertation.¹ I was fortunate to have a meeting with Herberto Helder that year. If some of my naive questions were met with a smile and a shrug, he was forthcoming about certain themes and developments in his work. He proved to be kindness itself in the following months and years, giving written responses to my enquiries and sending a copy of every new volume of poetry and prose.

In the decades since, critical output has increased enormously (and in step with the unanimous acceptance of his high status in contemporary Portuguese literature), with masters and doctoral dissertations, journal articles and conference papers, still mainly in the Portuguese-speaking world, or in universities with a strong Portuguese presence in countries such as France, Spain and Italy.² Notoriously difficult to translate into English, his poetry has had scant exposure in Britain,³ but more is now being tackled by some brave souls in the United States and here in Ireland with hopes of its wider dissemination.

¹ The pioneering thesis in question was Maria Lúcia Dal Farra's *A Alquimia da Linguagem: leitura da cosmogonia poética de Herberto Helder* (University of São Paulo, 1979), later published by Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1986. Her insights greatly helped to form my own reading of Herberto Helder's work.

² Witness the bibliography compiled by João Ribeirete and Margarida Reis, 'Herberto Helder: Bibliografia Activa/Bibliografia Passiva', *Textos e Pretextos*, 1 (Inverno, 2002), 25-35.

³ Inevitably in specialist publications reaching a small readership, for example, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, 13/14 (1972); and *Contemporary Portuguese Poetry*, ed. by Helder Macedo and E.M. de Melo e Castro (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1978).

When Herberto Helder reached the age of seventy, there was a rash of publicity in Portuguese newspapers and on websites, even a picture or two. Whether this was welcomed by him is another matter. Although far from being a recluse, he remains an extremely private and modest figure, not given to publicity, interviews or literary gatherings. Unconvinced of the fairness of literary prizes, he has turned down all those that have been awarded to him, including the Prémio Pessoa (1994). Nominations have not been exclusively for Portuguese awards. For example, his name was put forward for the European Literary Prize in 1991. The announcement in April 2007 that the Portuguese PEN Club was supporting his nomination for the Nobel Prize for Literature, together with that of another poet, António Ramos Rosa, put Herberto Helder under a strong spotlight. Of course, every time that his name is mentioned, so is Funchal on the island of Madeira, where he was born on 23 November 1930 and had his schooling up to the age of sixteen. As he has written: ‘Ao princípio era uma ilha. Em seguida o conhecimento de tudo: infância e adolescência. Depois venho por sobre as águas sem me afundar. Chego a Lisboa.’⁴

His position of respect in Portuguese letters was signalled in 1958 with the publication in a *folheto* of ‘O Amor em Visita’, a lyrical poem of some two hundred and twenty lines of free verse. It was consolidated in 1961 with the publication of *A Colher na Boca*, a substantial volume of poems written between 1953 and 1960 (which is cited regularly by fellow writers on their lists of favourite and influential books).

⁴ *Photomaton & Vox* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1979), p. 27.

The 1960s and early 1970s were extremely productive, with a volume of poetry being published almost every year: after *A Colher na Boca* came *Poemacto*, *Lugar*, *Electronicolórica*, *Húmus*, *Retrato em Movimento*, *O Bebedor Nocturno* (a collection of translations, or *versões*) and *Vocação Animal*. The first of his collected works titled *Poesia Toda* (though later to be designated ‘antologia’) was published in two volumes in 1973. Another busy phase started in 1977, so that a new one-volume edition of *Poesia Toda* in 1981 incorporated the books *Cobra* and *O Corpo o Luxo a Obra*, six poems from a mainly prose collection titled *Photomaton & Vox*, and *Flash*. Further individual volumes, *A Cabeça entre as Mãos*, *Última Ciência*, together with a selection of translations, *As Magias*, and a new section titled *Os Selos*, were in turn added to the massive 1990 edition of *Poesia Toda* whilst earlier books of poetry were trimmed down or omitted. In 1994, Herberto Helder published *Do Mundo*, comprising additional poems related to *Os Selos* and a drastic revisiting and rewriting of material from *Retrato em Movimento*, a volume that had first appeared in 1967, was included in the 1973 and 1981 collected works, but excluded from the edition of 1990. The 1996 edition of *Poesia Toda* incorporated *Do Mundo* in its entirety. In 2001, he published a severely pruned collection of his poems, *Ou o poema contínuo – sùmula*. This was trumped by the appearance in 2004 of a large volume with this title, no longer the ‘sùmula’ but another collected works. *Ou o poema contínuo* is thus the fifth edition or version of Herberto Helder’s collected poems. It is the current but not necessarily the final record of substantially most of his poetry. At each publication the reader will find amendments, slight or significant, to a number of poems, or the omission of poems or groups

of poems.⁵ However, I think it is true to say that a poem normally goes through just one revision. Once changed, that version seems to remain.

Apart from the aforementioned *O Bebedor Nocturno*, Herberto Helder has published three more books of translations and adaptations from a variety of poetic and quasi-poetic sources, ranging from the proverbs, spells and meditations of tribal societies, to texts by writers such as Mallarmé, D.H. Lawrence, Artaud, Cocteau and Michaux. He has published three prose collections: *Os Passos em Volta* (first published in 1963, but augmented and subsequently revised from 1970 onwards); *Apresentação do Rosto* (1968 – seized by the censor on publication, only about a hundred copies escaping – one of which is now in my possession); and *Photomaton & Vox* (1979), a mixture of autobiographical and metapoetic texts (many recycled from *Apresentação do Rosto*), interspersed with poems. He also has a considerable output of critical and journalistic pieces, has contributed prefaces to others' poetry, and has edited several anthologies and literary magazines.

Apart from brief visits to Madeira, he has been permanently resident in Portugal since the mid-1970s. One will search in vain for explicit references to his birthplace in his poetry (though his prose work is another matter) despite its being intensely self-referential. His voice is not that of the community, the folk. Nor is it the voice of Portugal the country, let alone Madeira. Unlike José Saramago, he does not speak out on matters related to Portuguese social, historical or political issues. It is almost irrelevant that the language is Portuguese, so much are the subject matter and cultural references common to twentieth- and twenty-first-

⁵ Compare what the poet wrote, in a prefatory note to the 1973 *Poesia Toda*, vol. 1: 'Introduziram-se neles [os textos] algumas alterações de composição, e outras ainda na organização dos conjuntos, havendo a indicar terem mesmo determinados desses conjuntos sido absorvidos por outros. Esta edição pretende-se completa e definitiva.' [p. 5].

century Western Europe. By inclination, his sympathies are Romantic with a strong dose of symbolist, surrealist and experimental technique. The labels ‘Orphic’ and ‘satanic’ have both been applied to him. Ever restless and enquiring, he has drunk from the introspective yet linguistically extrovert and innovatory Camilo Pessanha and Mário de Sá-Carneiro. However, if one cannot speak of him as a poet of the islands, certainly not in the sense that Vitorino Nemésio or João de Melo are so designated, one can discern an islandness that is not insularity. More particularly, as I hope to show, the notion and structure of the archipelago lie somewhere behind the poems and the poet.

As just indicated, it is in his prose work that we find clues to his biography, especially *Apresentação do Rosto*, although it would be a mistake to take the episodes literally. This is a book that to all intents and purposes has no existence, given its publishing fortune. Here, the island is a backdrop to experiences of bereavement, sexual discovery and puberty, in a largely female household with scarcely a paternal presence. These are evoked elliptically but memorably by phrases such as, ‘Minhas primas voltam das aulas e riem loucamente, a cabeça para trás, e depois ficam muito sérias.’ or, ‘E era o barulho do mar, e a salsagem picava as narinas.’⁶ The geography of the archipelago also went deep, as seen in a long piece beginning, ‘É uma ilha em forma de cão sentado’ (pp. 205-17). It was later transferred to *Photomaton & Vox* with several lexical and syntactical changes as well as to paragraph structure and punctuation. The text dissects the island and islanders of Porto Santo, an arid, isolated place where the men do the bare minimum to keep themselves and their families

⁶ *Apresentação do Rosto* (Lisbon: Editora Ulisseia, 1968), pp. 46 and 75.

alive, and when famine strikes, it is the women who protest and seek help from the authorities. It is a poetic recreation of a place, of men staring vacantly out to sea, women working to keep their families together, of children entertained by little except the lizards that they torture and kill. A place of desolation, where life has no meaning.

In his first volume of poetry, *A Colher na Boca*, Herberto Helder set a pattern which has been followed through his career: the grouping of poems, usually about five to ten of them, under titles such as ‘O Poema’, ‘Ciclo’, ‘Fonte’, ‘Elegia Múltipla’, ‘Lugar’. These are not intended to be cycles but poems composed individually and later organized into sets.⁷ Whatever we may understand by a ‘cycle’, there is the notion of a common theme and a sense of returning to the starting point. The six poems of ‘Fonte’ are linked through their focus on the feminine as *fons et origo*, and more specifically, though obliquely, through the poet’s relationship with the mother. Elsewhere, I have written of the relationship in these early poems as characterized, or grounded, in a mythic view of the feminine, as source both of life and of language to the child.⁸ In the seven poems of ‘Elegia Múltipla’, the main focus is on death and resurrection. In ‘As Musas Cegas’, the link between the eight poems (not nine, as might be expected), is perhaps more abstract: that of inspiration.

These sets of poems are analogous to archipelagos in that they are separate entities within a group identity and geographical location. So, despite explicit references to ‘islands’ being rare in Herberto Helder’s poetry – and there is only one group with ‘arquipélago’ in its title, the resistant and fragmented poems of ‘Os Brancos Arquipélagos’ – something of the

⁷ See note 4.

⁸ *The Feminine in the Poetry of Herberto Helder* (London: Tamesis Books, 1991).

island notion persists in the organization of his work. I have drawn attention above to the poet's constant amending of his writings, and would now like to appropriate this for the islands and insularities theme of this colloquium. By incorporating new material in each new anthology, whilst deleting a poem, group of poems or even a whole book, Herberto Helder carries out a continuous reassessment of his output. This is in accordance with one of the major impulses behind his poetry: self-knowledge and enquiry through fluidity and change. As he wrote in 1978: 'A transmutação é o fundamento geral e universal do mundo. Alcança as coisas, os animais e o homem com o seu corpo e a sua linguagem. Trabalhar na transmutação, na transformação, na metamorfose, é obra própria nossa.'⁹ The evolution, addition and disappearance of poems and complete groups are analogous to geographical and geological change, such as that when an atoll is thrown up by cataclysmic underwater activity. On a superficial level, this protean process serves to distance him from the reader, who must constantly readjust his familiarity with the new landscape.

More revealing in relation to the poet himself – whose inextricable physical relationship with language lies at the heart of his work – is the epigraph to his prose poem 'Comunicação Académica (written in 1962), published in the 1973 volume of *Poesia Toda*. This is attributed to Charles Fort (whom I assume is the magus-like figure who wrote on all kinds of strange phenomena) but I have not located its source. The epigraph was dropped from the 1990 *Poesia Toda* onwards, but it remains pertinent: 'A minha posição é esta: todas as coisas que parecem possuir uma identidade individual são apenas ilhas, projecções de um

⁹ *O Corpo o Luxo a Obra* (Lisbon: Edição & etc., 1978), [p. 21]. This 'afterword' was reproduced in *Photomaton & Vox* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1979), p. 158.

continente submarino, e não possuem contornos reais.’¹⁰ It invites us to look at the poems as these ‘things’: they are islands, projections of an underwater continent, the identity of which is blurred, overlapping. The ‘contornos’ of the poems change but their anchoring does not, the appearance of separateness being merely superficial. As an islander, he is aware that water joins rather than divides. A brief phrase from ‘Fonte II’ hints at this: ‘as águas / estão ligadas entre si’, whilst from ‘As Musas Cegas V’ comes the unifying embrace of language:

Esta linguagem é colocada e extrema e cobre, com suas
lâmpadas, todas as coisas.
As coisas que são uma só, no plural dos nomes.¹¹

Given his oft-repeated identification of self, body and poem, this *ars poetica* may be extended to the human being. On the surface ‘uma ilha’, a man from the island of Madeira, but in reality part of a ‘continente submarino’ which is more than mainland Portugal. The poetic instrument, Portuguese, is a manifestation of one of those ‘projecções’ but what it signifies is universal.

The persona of the isolated individual, writing in his lonely room – which is implicit in so much of his poetry and explicit in the prose texts of *Os Passos em Volta* – is counterbalanced by this instruction in the epigraph to engage with others. This tension between approximation and distancing was noted by Ruy Belo in his essay on the publication of the volume *Lugar* (1962):

¹⁰ *Poesia Toda*, II (Lisbon: Plátano Editora, 1973), [p. 8].

¹¹ *Poesia Toda*, I (Lisbon: Plátano Editora, 1973), pp. 61 and 103.

Embora sempre parta da vida e no momento da arte até, como vimos, se preocupe por fornecer sistemas de acesso às suas metáforas ou aos seus símbolos, Herberto Helder sempre acaba por se distanciar irremediavelmente da experiência. Um dos meios por que deliberadamente o consegue é a sujeição da emoção esparsa a um princípio de indeterminação evidente na construção dos seus versos.¹²

In terms of the civilizational context from which he embarks on his depersonalizing journey, there is a wide range of reference points and themes. These include myth, religion and magic; nature, animals; houses, the domestic environment and the city; transport and machines; books and newspapers; workshop and studio; alcohol and drugs; crime and violence; acting, the theatre, music, the plastic arts and cinema; astrology and modern astronomy; space, time and the cosmos; photography and cartography; disease, medicine, anatomy and surgery; geology, botany and zoology. In terms of life experiences related to the poetic subject, there are: childhood, the death of the mother, erotic episodes, poverty and terror, mental instability, solitude, hallucinations, birth, the most naked exposure of the physical and mental self. All serve the overall purpose of self-discovery, yet this is in turn transformed into the impersonal, general or universal. (This is especially the case with the major theme of eroticism. Love and sexuality are directed not at a woman, but Woman – nameless, depersonalized, representative.)

In the spirit of this colloquium on islands, insularities and the wider world, and applying the rhetorical figure of synecdoche, I would now like to single out a few representative islands from their archipelagos.

¹² Ruy Belo, 'Poesia e Arte Poética em Herberto Helder', in *Na Senda da Poesia* (Lisbon: União Gráfica, 1969), p. 245.

The early poem ‘O Amor em Visita’ gives little hint of the metaphoric and syntactic experimentation to come, but even in the first stanza (given here with a translation by John Kinsella), there is a refusal of the banal:

Dai-me uma jovem mulher com sua harpa de sombra
e seu arbusto de sangue. Com ela
encantarei a noite.
Dai-me uma folha viva de erva, uma mulher.
Seus ombros beijarei, a pedra pequena
do sorriso de um momento.
Mulher quase incriada, mas com a gravidade
de dois seios, com o peso lúbrico e triste
da boca. Seus ombros beijarei. [...]

Give me a young woman with her harp of shadow
and her shrubbery of blood, with her
I shall enchant the night.
Give me a living blade of grass, a woman.
I shall kiss her shoulders, the small stone
of her momentary smile
Woman almost uncreated, but with the gravity
of two breasts, with the sad and sensual weight
of her mouth. I shall kiss her shoulders.¹³

From the group ‘Teoria Sentada’, comprised of six poems,¹⁴ I have chosen the second one as a textbook illustration of Herberto Helder’s movement from concrete to abstract, the exploration of language and naming, the interpenetration of literal and figurative, the analogy between learning and love, and the theme of silence:

¹³ *Poesia Toda* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1990), p. 18. I am grateful to John Kinsella for allowing me to read out this unpublished extract at the colloquium.

¹⁴ Published in *Lugar* (Lisbon: Guimarães Editores, 1962).

Alguém parte uma laranja em silêncio, à entrada
de noites fabulosas.
Mergulha os polegares até onde a laranja
pensa velozmente, e se desenvolve, e aniquila, e depois
renasce. Alguém descasca uma pêra, come
um bago de uva, devota-se
aos frutos. E eu faço uma canção arguta
para entender. [...]

Porque o amor também recolhe as cascas
e o mover dos dedos
e a suspensão da boca sobre o gosto
confuso. [...]
Aniquilar os frutos para saber, contra
a paixão do gosto, que a terra trabalha a sua
solidão – é devotar-se,
esgotar a amada, para ver como o amor
trabalha na sua loucura.

Uma canção de agora dirá que as noites
esmagam
o coração. Dirá que o amor aproxima
a eternidade, [...]
Porque é com nomes que alguém sabe
onde estar um corpo
por uma ideia, onde um pensamento
faz a vez da língua.
— É com as vozes que o silêncio ganha.¹⁵

Departing from the homely image of peeling an orange or other fruit, the poet transfers to it the cognitive process. The dissection of an orange becomes the equivalent to metaphysical dissection. The song is written in order to learn, a visceral exploration of the emotions. How love works is equivalent to how the universe works (the round orange fluttering back into one's mind as a global image). Working against the pleasurable sense of taste, knowledge

¹⁵ *Poesia Toda* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1990), pp. 149-50.

emerges from destruction and reveals the rhythms of the planet, its darkness. But in turn, naming and language are overtaken, or rather superseded, by pure thought and silence.

During the 1960s, most particularly in *A Máquina Lírica* and *A Máquina de Emaranhar Paisagens*, Herberto Helder experimented with repetition and permutation to produce incantatory verse, akin to magic spells, freeing words from reality, signifier from signified. He also produced poems of stammering, hesitant, elliptical syntax. This extract is from ‘Para o leitor ler de/vagar’:

Sou fechado
como uma pedra pedríssima. Perdidíssima
da boca transacta. Fechado
Como uma. Pedra sem orelhas. Pedra uma
reduzida a. Pedra.
Pedra sem válvulas. Com a cor reduzida
a. Um dia de louvor. Proferida lenta.
Escutada lenta.¹⁶

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the poetry became increasingly fragmented, troubled and syntactically pared-down. An extreme example of this is ‘Os Brancos Arquipélagos’ (1970). Its ten blocks appear to overlap through *enjambement* but this is not so. Each section ends in mid-thought without a full stop, but in such a way that the reader is invited to carry over that sentence into the next section.

This is the end of the first block and beginning of the second:

¹⁶ *Poesia Toda* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1981), pp. 152-53.

e então exalta-se o mel algures quieto,
linhas arquejam, costura-se o ar, atormentado

*

toda, a doçura trepida, toda ameaçada,
um sítio relampejante, roupa atacada pela febre,¹⁷

A spurious interdependence between the sections is indicated. But there is no connection, the broken sentence really does convey a refusal to carry on the same thought. One can see the isolation of the blocks, yet the link is through common imagery: light, explosion, fire, the text and the spaces between it. The creative effort on an isolated, frenetic individual, whose mind and body are engaged in a painful reckoning of the self – what can only be called a mystical experience (avowedly drug-induced), pure thought, a procession of images both painful and beautiful – all this suggests an analogy with an archipelago: connections yet isolation.

Following a period of silence, Herberto Helder returned in 1977 to sumptuous metaphors, dizzy-making in the accumulation of images, conveying an obsessive awareness of the body as material for poetry. Attempts to ‘explain’ these poems are themselves fated to end in incoherence, but one may note the images related to alchemy and the reconciliation of opposites; also, the use of the body as a febrile, painful conveyer of sound or the word; or the apocalyptic visions that have the mind-bending quality of hallucinogenic drugs. This is an extract from the book, *Flash* (1980):

¹⁷ *Poesia Toda* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1990), p. 311. The publishing history of this group of ten poems typifies the changing contents of Herberto Helder’s collected works. Published in *Poesia Toda*, 2 (Plátano, 1973), the last two ‘blocos’ had previously appeared in a catalogue for an exhibition by the painter Maria Paulo in February 1971, and the last of those two reproduced in the *Diário de Lisboa*, 12 May 1972. They were subsequently included in the single volume *Poesia Toda* (Assírio e Alvim, 1981 and 1990). None of the ten made it into the pruned anthology, *Ou o poema contínuo – sùmula* (Assírio e Alvim, 2001), but were back in the 2004 ‘full’ edition, *Ou o poema contínuo* (Assírio e Alvim), where the amendments made for the 1990 volume are maintained.

Em quartos abalados trabalho na massa tremenda
dos poemas.
Que me olham de tão perto que eu ardo.
Um dia hei-de ficar todo límpido,
ou calcinado nervo a nervo. [...] ¹⁸

The last poem that I put forward comes from *Última Ciência* (1988), when the physical body of the poetic ‘I’ is increasingly assaulted and exposed to pain and chaos, whilst the syntax and external form are severely controlled. In imminent contact with reality, there is a reticence, a withdrawal from familiarity inspired by terror. At the same time, he appears to be declaring a prohibition that he is bound to disobey. Knowledge and naming, separation and contact, are brought together as the poet approaches his task with a wariness born of previous pain:

Não toques nos objectos imediatos.
A harmonia queima.
Por mais leve que seja um bule ou uma chávena,
são loucos todos os objectos.
Uma jarra com um crisântemo transparente
tem um tremor oculto.
É terrível no escuro.
Mesmo o seu nome, só a medo o podes dizer.
A boca fica em chaga. ¹⁹

Although the final line of this book (‘Uma frase, uma ferida, uma vida selada’) reiterates the sacrificial nature of the poet’s task, this is not the end of the journey. For the

¹⁸ *Poesia Toda* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1990), p. 423.

¹⁹ *Poesia Toda* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1990), p. 533.

poems of *Do Mundo*, he returns to *Retrato em Movimento* in a salvage operation, reworking fragments, creating afresh from scattered hints or motifs. Unrecognisable yet somehow familiar, the poems of the later book reflect back their models, a process that I find epitomised in the line ‘Um espelho em frente de um espelho’.²⁰ This resurrecting of an earlier creative phase is not a closed exercise but, as the facing mirrors indicate, an ever-open one. If any conclusion is possible, mine would be that the poet is still on a mission, the nature of which connects to the Charles Fort epigraph cited above. His ontological purpose, which is also his *ars poetica*, lies beneath the surface, linking the poet to humanity at large. The islander from Madeira has become a truly universal figure.

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²⁰ *Do Mundo* (Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1994), p. 74.

List of publications to date:

- No. 1. *The American Dream in Spanish Poetry: Some Early Twentieth-Century Visions of the United States*, Dr Terence McMullan, Queen's University Belfast, February 2000.**
- No. 2. *Autobiography and Intertextuality in Carajicomedia by Juan Goytisolo*, Dr Stanley Black, University of Ulster, November 2000.**
- No. 3. *Radical Propensities and Juxtapositions: Defamiliarization and Difficulty in Borges and Beckett*, Dr Ciarán Cosgrove, Trinity College Dublin, February 2002.**
- No. 4. *Voices From Lusophone Borderlands: The Angolan Identities Of António Agostinho Neto, Jorge Arrimar And José Eduardo Agualusa*, Dr David Brookshaw, University of Bristol, March 2002.**
- No. 5. *National Identity – a Revisitation of the Portuguese Debate*, Professor Onésimo Teotónio Almeida, Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. October 2002.**
- No. 6. *Translation for the Stage: Product and Process*, Professor David Johnston, Queen's University of Belfast, November 2002.**
- No. 7. *Sujeto femenino en contextos de modernidad tardía*, Professor Francisca López, Bates College, USA, March 2003.**
- No. 8. *Antonio Machado And The Royal Art: Fact And Fiction*, Dr Philip Johnston, University College Dublin, October 2003.**
- No. 9. *The Censors' Confusion: (Mis)Interpretations of the Works of Alfonso Sastre*, Dr Catherine O'Leary, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, February 2004.**
- No. 10. *East Timorese Poems of the Revolution and Beyond: The Poetry of Francisco Borja da Costa and Celso de Oliveira*, Mr Anthony Soares, Queen's University Belfast, March 2004.**
- No. 11. *Borders, batos locos and barrios: Space as Signifier in Chicano Film*, Dr Catherine Leen, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, November 2004.**
- No. 12. *Camões, Portuguese War Propaganda, and the Dream of a Safe Colonial Empire, 1914-1918*, Dr Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, March 2005.**
- No. 13. *Remembering the Spanish Civil War: Cinematic Motifs and the Narrative Recuperation of the Past in Dulce Chacón's La voz dormida, Javier Cercas' Soldados de Salamina, and Manuel Rivas' O lapis do carpinteiro*, Dr Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, University College Dublin, April 2005.**
- No. 14. *Size Matters: The Satiric Body in Saramago's Memorial do Convento*, Dr Mark Sabine, University of Nottingham, UK, April 2006.**
- No. 15. *Spirituality and Society: Aspects of Religion in Early Twentieth-century Spanish Fiction*, Professor John Macklin, University of Strathclyde, February 2007.**
- No. 16. *Madeira: the poetry of Herberto Helder*, Dr Juliet Perkins, Kings College London, UK, February 2007.**
- No. 17. *La isla inventada*, Mr Juan Carlos de Sancho, Islas Canarias, España, March 2007.**
- No. 18. *La inmensa minoría: Poesía y activismo por la paz en Colombia*, Professor Enrique Yepes, Bowdoin College, Maine, USA, May 2008.**