

CHAPTER THREE

WRITING AS MILLENARY REDEMPTION IN *VOZES DO DESERTO* BY NÉLIDA PIÑON

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“Good stories, [Hearne] suggests, have the flexibility ‘to accommodate a shift in social values’.” (Crew 2002, 83)

At the end of the first decade of the new millennium, when most communication is made on and through the internet, one might follow Hearne and ask if “good stories” still have the “flexibility to accommodate a shift in social values”, particularly with regard to contemporary Brazilian reality and the position of women in this reality. Subsequently, one might wonder about the role Brazilian literature written by women has played and still plays in this shift. In other words, what possible changes have the last ten years brought to the position of women and in particular to women’s literature in Brazil?

In a first attempt to obtain an answer, I would like to begin by referring to two texts that, written eight years apart, might help us get an idea on the subject. The former, “The Importance of Being Female”, published in 2000 in *Brazzil* by the writer Nilza Amaral, leaves no doubt about the amount of work still to do in order to achieve equality between women and men (writers). In her text, Amaral begins by giving examples of both social and cultural discrimination against women throughout history,¹ and of women writers (such as Patrícia Galvão, Rachel de Queiroz, Clarice Lispector, Lygia Fagundes Telles, and Nélida Piñon, among others) who have fought for a path of their own in the social and literary world. Later on, she is quite clear that “There is a lot of research trying to explain how and why women write. But there is still a long way to go. Literary criticism has not recognised the right place of women in literature yet” (Amaral 2000).

Eight years later, in a review of some of the work of the writers Sonia Coutinho, Marina Colasanti, Adélia Prado, Lya Luft, and Nélida Piñon, the critic Luciana Namorato still recognises an urge to achieve social equality expressed in the subjects they approach. As she says:

Characterised by both silence and verbal abundance, a fierce denial and an avid embrace of traditional female literary forms (fairy tales, prayers, diaries, letters), the literature written by women in twenty-first century Brazil oscillates between a celebratory and a pessimistic tone about issues such as sexuality and maternity, religion and mysticism, life in big cities, women's professional careers, education and financial independence, marriage and domestic life. (...) contemporary Brazilian women writers continue to push for a more egalitarian society in which the "feminine" can be rewritten on a daily basis. (Namorato 2008, 45)

With almost a decade separating their words, both Amaral and Namorato seem to be clear about the need for emancipation for women in Brazilian society,² regardless of the considerable efforts taken by female writers to change it.³

There is no doubt that Nélida Piñon is one of the writers who has played a crucial role in this change. She is one of the names included in the 1970s and 80s "boom" of Brazilian women writers, when "many Brazilian women poets and fiction writers expressed an ambiguity and discomfort concerning the female body and female identity that reflected well the reality lived by many middle-class women in Brazil at the time" (Ferreira-Pinto 2004, 161). The Brazilian writer has been faithful to her questioning of women's historical, social and cultural position throughout the years.

Piñon's novel *Vozes do Deserto* (2004) is a good example of this questioning. While revisiting the traditional and millenary tale *The Thousand and One Nights*, she rewrites it in order to give Scherezade, the female narrator of the traditional stories, a central place in the story, and consequently grant her autonomy and agency, rescuing her from a millenary cultural and social forgetfulness.

As I will demonstrate, *Vozes do Deserto* goes beyond the simple narration of traditional tales to offer the reader a revisionist version along gender lines of the canonical literary texts by which Piñon proposes the questioning of traditional social and cultural values regarding the position of women in Western culture. By establishing a metafictional dialogue from the perspective of the twenty-first century with the ninth-century *The Thousand and One Nights*, Piñon aims at the redemption of female

subjectivity and identity from cultural oblivion and cultural erasure that have determined the image of women across the ages.

Empowering Perspective

One of the most well known and respected names of contemporary Brazilian literature, Nélida Piñon's work clearly transmits her social and cultural engagement with Brazilian reality and most particularly with the place women have in it. The first female president of the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (The Brazilian Academy of Arts) for which she was elected in 1996 and 1997, she began her work with the publication in 1961 of her novel *Guia-Mapa de Gabriel Arcanjo* (*The Guidebook of Gabriel Arcanjo*) that reflects on Christian doctrine and its multiple interpretations. It is, however mainly from the 1970s onwards, that her work achieves full maturity with the publication respectively in 1972 and 1977 of the novels *A Casa da Paixão* (*The House of Passion*) for which she received the Mário de Andrade-prize and *A Força do Destino* (*The force of Destiny*).⁴ In these novels, Piñon initiates a discourse in which she moves her attention to and preoccupation with the inner world of women and the place they occupy in daily reality. It is therefore not surprising that critics compare her to Brazilian women writers such as Clarice Lispector, Lya Luft, Helena Parente Cunha, and Márica Denser who have initiated what Helena Parente Cunha characterises as “a explosão da fala feminina” (the explosion of the feminine language) (Cunha 1999, 16).

In *Vozes do Deserto*, Nélida Piñon continues her “feminine language” by returning to *The Thousand and One Nights* with which she establishes her transgressive intertextual dialogue. The well known, traditional story tells about two brothers who are kings and whose respective wives are sentenced to death because they betrayed them with black slaves. Not entirely satisfied with this sentence, one of the brothers, King Shahriyar, decides to aggravate his punishment and extend it to all female inhabitants of his kingdom. Consequently, every night he chooses a virgin to sleep with, whom he sentences to death at dawn. When after some time almost all virgins in the kingdom have died, Shahrazad (as she is called in the original text), the Vizier's eldest daughter, decides to marry the king. Apparently suicidal and incomprehensible, her decision and sacrifice have but one aim: to stop the king's cruel killings. To achieve this she thinks of a stratagem. At the end of the night, she will beg the king to call her sister so that they can see each other for the last time. Before leaving, her sister will ask Shahrazad to tell one of her tales, a talent for which she is famous. With this, Shahrazad hopes to please the king and, consequently, postpone

her death until, at least, the end of the tale. The stratagem works and Shahrazad continues telling her stories night after night for 1001 nights, until the king, who has fathered her three children, pardons her and allows her to live with him in peace thereafter.

In spite of being the cause and the pretext of the stories, the traditional Shahrazad occupies a very modest place both as narrator and as character in *The Thousand and One Nights* (Anon. 1961), since she remains dependent on the omniscient and dominant traditional narrator. Imprisoned in a *mîse en abyme* that deprives her of any possible agency as character, it is not her but her male heroes that play the most important roles in her stories, such as Sinbad and Ali Baba. Even her pardon at the end of the story does not bring much change to her situation of dependency. If, after all the years she is allowed to stay alive, this is only because of the caliph's benevolence and magnanimity.⁵ Despite (or maybe because of) her existence as the caliph's wife, she remains limited and imprisoned in the most common narrative plot ending available to women under the patriarchal order: heterosexual marriage.⁶

A consequence of the "position of omniscience and authority" that narrators of traditional tales possess, Shahrazad's absence as narrator is a good example of the erasure gender undergoes in these tales (Jackson in Crew 2002, 78). It confronts us with behaviours, discourses, and cultural and social codes that transmit animosity towards female characters. This "position of omniscience and authority" that traditional narrators possess relegates women to inferior positions within the plot, causing them to lose their autonomy as subjects, and deprives them of part of their identity. A very brief survey of some of the most well known fairy tales shows us that heroines such as Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and others, are completely devoid of a voice of their own in the narration, dominated as they are by their plot. Furthermore, as characters, they equally fall prey to cultural codes and principles that reduce them to mere participants in their own events and mere justification for male heroism.

In *Vozes do deserto*, Nélida Piñon opts to give her main character a much more central place than the one given to her millenary consort in the traditional text. Even though we can also speak of an omniscient narrator in the Brazilian novel, his narrative authority is questioned and even deconstructed by the female protagonist's focalisation that gives her the presence and agency essential to the novel. Therefore, and even if Scherezade does not seem to have a real power as narrating subject, this apparent "lack" is neutralised by her dominating focalisation of events and characters by which she seduces us readers. In solidarity with Scherezade, we consequently take her side. We are aware of her courage when she

faces the caliph's hegemonic power and of her possible death, and acknowledge her strong presence and agency, as the following quotation illustrates: "Scherezade não teme a morte. Não acredita que o poder do mundo, representado pelo Califa, a quem o pai serve, decreta por meio de sua morte o extermínio da sua imaginação" (Piñon 2007, 7). ["Scheherazade has no fear of death. She does not believe that worldly power, as represented by the Caliph, whom her father serves, decrees by her death the extinguishing of her imagination" (Piñon 2009, 3)]. As it occurs in the present tense and reveals Scherezade's perspective, this kind of narration therefore enables an evident closeness and identification between reader and protagonist that may apply what Andrea Wylie defines as an "immediate-engaging" narrative in which protagonists are the focalisers and the agents of their own narration (Wylie 1999, cited in Crew 2002, 78). As such, and even though *Vozes do deserto* is not narrated in the first person, Scherezade shares with Wylie's protagonists not only the dominant focalisation, but also the grammatical and narrative strategy the critic writes about: the use of "a timeframe that can be defined as continuous-present rather than time-past" [that] "enables readers to identify with the subjective thoughts and feelings of [the] characters" (ibid., 78-79). Finally, Scherezade's empowered focalisation that transmits her feelings, anxieties, and hopes, also transmits a female subjectivity, agency, and visibility that correspond to what Roberta Trites defines as the power of agency in feminist texts. As Trites says: "the protagonist is more aware of her own agency, more aware of her ability to assert her own personality and to enact her own decisions, at the end of the novel then she has been at the beginning" (Trites 1997, cited in Crew 2002, 79). Indeed, through this agency, Scherezade becomes what we could call a feminist bildungsroman protagonist, reaching out to and redeeming her traditional consort from inexistence and oblivion.

The power inherent in this female agency and transmitted through focalisation is not limited to Scherezade, but extends to the other female characters that share with her both the despair of their imprisonment and the hope of their freedom: her sister Dinazarda and the slave Jasmine. As to the former, and similar to what happens in the traditional text, Dinazarda's complicity with her sister constitutes one of the unquestionable facts of the story. However, in Piñon's text, this complicity includes a quite new (and even controversial) aspect: the urge for independence that, as it unveils an agency unknown in the traditional text, depicts her as her sister's potential rival. We can see an example of this urge in her efforts to gain increasingly more power in the administration of the caliph's palace and consequently a higher hierarchical position.⁷

Jasmine, in turn, completely inexistent in the traditional version, now plays a significant role as both autonomous subject and active actor in Scherezade's liberation. At the service of the two sisters, Jasmine initially occupies a socially inferior position when compared to them. Yet, her position of inferiority or even subalternity quickly changes into one of (relative) equality since she shares with them the same situation of imprisonment. Furthermore, as she is the one able to go to the market in order to gather the narrative material Scherezade will use in her night repertoire to the caliph, Jasmine confirms not only her own agency as independent subject, but also her empowerment as actor in the plot, as she (indirectly) helps to delay Scherezade's death. Finally, since the market is equally the place where she fully realises her ethnic origins, Jasmine's realisation of her agency becomes also the realisation of her own ethnic self, as her focalisation in the following quotation clearly shows:

As vozes do povo de Scherezade perseguem Jasmine. (...) por força da imaginação da princesa, volta a ouvir os brados das cabras, dos beduínos, nômades como ela. Vê-se de novo na tenda familiar, cujos detalhes recompõe na memória. (...) Mas, embora familiarizada com a vida palaciana, sobressaía-se na escrava o orgulho de haver pertencido no passado a uma realidade oposta àquela, cujas regras foram ditadas pelo sopro da escassez e da esperança. (Piñon 2007, 78-81)

[The voices of Scheherazade's people pursue Jasmine. (...) through the force of the princess's imagination she once again hears the bleating of goats, the Bedouins, nomads like her. She sees herself back in the family tent, whose details she recomposes in memory. (...) But, although she is familiar with palace life, what stands out in the slave is pride at having belonged in the past to an opposite reality, whose rules were dictated by the breath of scarcity and hope. (Piñon 2009, 71-74)]

Through focalisation, Piñon lays bare another aspect of female subjectivity and agency that is totally absent in *The Thousand and One Nights*: female desire. Devoid of any sensuality or pleasure during the mechanical sexual exercise with the caliph, it is through her stories and characters that Scherezade transmits her passion and desire.⁸ Yet, even though it is practically absent in *Vozes do deserto*'s protagonist, female desire is certainly present in Dinazarda and Jasmine. Witnesses of the compulsory sexual act between Scherezade and the caliph, it is as if they feel what the former cannot and will not allow herself to feel,⁹ in a gesture of independence and even rebellion towards the caliph and his oppressive power. In their reflection of sensuality and lust, we can see the expression

of a free and transgressive female desire that does not comply with any kind of patriarchal moral rules.

Finally, and perhaps in an unexpected way, it is not in Sherezade but in the caliph's adulterous wife, that female desire assumes a visible and defiant expression. Focalised by the caliph who repeatedly recalls the adulterous scene in a cruel but also paradoxically voluptuous masochism, his wife's sexual act appears as something grotesque and abnormal that seems to justify and inflame his deep hatred for everything that concerns female identity:

Nestas horas, a sombra implacável da esposa, em flagrante desrespeito à imponência do trono, avança em sua direcção, degraus acima, lambe-o com o veneno da saliva, morde-o com uma boca que exhibe dentes, língua. A apontar-lhe, com gesto voraz, a própria vulva, o lugar da crise e da traição, o depósito ígneo do seu sexo, do qual afloram lava, lama, secreções. Justo onde ela o açoitara, golpeando-o com a arma do desvairado desejo. Neste esconderijo, escuro e úmido, a Sultana experimentara gozos que o descomunal africano lhe trouxera como consigna da sua origem remota. (Piñon 2007, 148)

[At such times, the implacable shade of his wife, in flagrant disrespect for the power of the throne, advances toward him, climbing the steps, licking him with the venom of her saliva, biting him with a mouth baring teeth and tongue. She points with a voracious gesture to her own vulva, the site of crisis and betrayal, the fiery depository of her sex, from which pour lava, mud, and secretions—exactly where she had lashed him, beating him with the weapon of delirious desire. In this dark and damp retreat, the Sultana had experienced orgasms that the outsized African had brought her from his remote origin. (Piñon 2009, 141)]

By describing the scene from the caliph's perspective and therefore exposing the hatred implicit in it, Piñon denounces the misogyny and the racism inherent in this perspective, as two aspects of the patriarchal dominant order that has served as cultural and ideological context to *The Thousand and One Nights* stories. Yet, eventually reconciled with his past of betrayed husband through Scherezade's words and tales, the caliph also turns into one of Piñon's male characters who reveal themselves receptive enough to learn with their female counter actors, as Naomi Hoki Moniz reminds us about *A Casa da Paixão* (Moniz 1984, cited in Dixon 2002, 205). With his despotic power exposed and denounced, he becomes merely a shadow of himself, the deconstructed replica of his traditional and misogynous consort, contributing to the undermining of *The Thousand and One Nights* misogynist ideology.

Genealogy

The stories recollected by Jasmine at the market and at the bazaar take Scherezade back to her childhood, when her nursemaid Fátima took her outside the palace to see and experience life outside her overprotected world, and to listen to stories that, though reflecting an unfamiliar and unexplored reality, contributed to shape her realisation of her identity. Through Jasmine's recollected stories, Scherezade (re)discovers not only her past (and present) but also the female anonymous authors whom she had never heard of but to whom she now owes her salvation:

A arte que ela exercia à beira da cama deve parte da sua fabulação à vida do mercado de Bagdá e aos relatos concebidos nos serralhos dos palácios árabes, onde as favoritas registraram em palavras simbólicas, vedadas aos amos, suas frustrações. E que, ao se transmitirem de mãe a filha, estabeleceram parâmetros básicos entre suas sucessoras no harém do Califa. Muitas dessas histórias, tristes e repetitivas a despeito de se originarem de uma imolação individual, forneciam peso a um universo que, bem explorado, tornara Scherezade dona de ilimitado repertório. (Piñon 2007, 76)

[The art that she exercises at the bedside owes part of its fiction to the life of the Baghdad marketplace and to the accounts conceived in the seraglios of Arab palaces, where the favourites recorded their frustrations in symbolic words, hidden from their masters—words that, transmitted from mother to daughter, established basic parameters among their successors in the caliph's harem. Many of these stories, sad and repetitive despite originating from an individual sacrifice, lent weight to a universe that, well exploited, had afforded Scheherazade an unlimited repertoire. (Piñon 2009, 69)]

To her, to narrate means, therefore, to share memory in the sense given by Sue Campbell, “how we learn to remember, how we come to reconceive our pasts in memory, how we come to form a sense of self, and one of the primary ways in which we come to know others and form relationships with them” (Campbell 2008, 42). Most particularly, it means to acknowledge and participate in the creation and reproduction of a feminine collective memory inherent in the transmission of those stories.

Scherezade's role in the creation and reproduction of this feminine collective memory and genealogy contrasts deeply with the erasure (the traditional) Shahrazad is object of, as narrator and character, in the cultural memory that comprises *The Thousand and One Nights*. This erasure or effacement might apply what Paul Connerton denominates a “repressive

erasure”, a kind of forgetting that “appears in its most brutal form, of course, in the history of totalitarian regime” (Connerton 2008, 60).¹⁰ In the particular case of Shahrazad, this erasure takes place no less brutally, even though somehow more sophisticatedly. Throughout the years, the protagonist of *The Thousand and One Nights* has become the well known symbol of wit and shrewdness of the millenary (Arabic and) Western cultural legacy and order. Yet, these “qualities” are but the result of the mythmaking constructed by the same cultural patriarchal and misogynistic order that has moulded Shahrazad into the embodiment of universal submissiveness and has refused her any kind of autonomy.

In her intertextual dialogue with the traditional text by which she grants her protagonist a key role, allowing her to regain her agency, Nélida Piñon corrects, fills, and even revokes this repressive and erasing gap. Furthermore, by reusing texts that play a fundamental role in the Western culture and imaginary, she “attacks” the past from the present, to borrow Alexander Kluge’s expression (2008, 67).¹¹ Through the intertextual reference to classic heroes and texts, like the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* or the chronicles of King Arthur,¹² Piñon repossesses canonical texts of Western culture that she incorporates in Scherezade’s stories, reducing them to “common” characters and “common” texts. By doing so, she proceeds to what Alicia Ostriker in her critical study of the work of American women poets in the 1970s and 1980s, calls “revisionist mythmaking”. According to Ostriker:

Whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible. (1982, 72)

Finally, Piñon emphasises and salvages “that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilise and convey that society’s self-image” (Assmann 1995, 132, cited in Kansteiner 2002, 182), that, implicit to collective memory, opens a new space for the cultural and social reaffirmation of the female subject embodied in Scherezade. As such, she manages (even if partially) to challenge and subvert the masculine authorial supremacy in the collective imaginary and replace it by the feminine alternative represented by the forgotten female characters in that imaginary (“Andrômeda e de Hécuba, mulheres golpeadas pela dor” (Piñon 2007, 129) [“Andromeda and Hecuba, women battered by pain”

(Piñon 2009, 120)] who regain by this a presence in that imaginary. *Vozes do deserto* becomes therefore the site where Piñon addresses collective memory as a changeable process, in the sense given by Ann Rigney: “a matter of...continuously performing, in process, involving both recollection and forgetting in the light of changing patterns of relevance and shifting social frameworks” (2008, 94).

Conclusion

In her essay “O eros da fala, o Mito da Criação e a Identidade do Feminino em *Vozes do Deserto* de Nélida Piñon” [The Eros of Language, the Myth of Creation, and Female Identity in Nélida Piñon’s *Voices of the Desert*], Maria Alice Aguiar correctly emphasises the role discourse plays in the construction of female identity in *Vozes do deserto*. According to her, “Ao reavivar a voz de Scherazade—o mais notório símbolo da arte de envolver pelo ato de contar histórias—, a autora corrobora a afirmativa de que o discurso sobre a mulher constrói a mulher, inscreve o ser mulher no Tempo e no Espaço e valoriza a força da narrativa” (Aguiar 2005) [By reviving Scherazade’s voice—the most notorious symbol of the art of engaging by words—the author corroborates the knowledge that discourse on women constructs women, and inscribes women in Time and Space, valuing the power of the narrative]. Following her, I would add that such inscription takes place through the transgression of social and cultural values within a millenary patriarchal order. By (re)inscribing women in *Vozes do Deserto* as active agents of their plot and of their destinies, Nélida Piñon redeems them from a misogynistic, silenced, and silencing past, granting them an empowered present through which they build up their presence in an exemplary future. Despite all that is yet to achieve in the new millennium with regard to women and their literary, social, cultural and sexual position, we can say that Nélida Piñon’s *Vozes do Deserto* has undoubtedly settled (at least a part of) a millenary cultural debt. Good stories still “have the flexibility “to accommodate a shift in social values”, which gives women hope for the second decade of the new millennium.

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Notes

¹ Just to name a few examples: “The first legislation concerning the social role of women dates from 1827 assuring them only complementary study. Although men were [sic] allowed to go to school since 1840 women weren’t given the same right before 1876. In the middle of the 19th century, women were still set apart from the cultural life even from their family members’ lives. Their father decided about marriage and if they refused the chosen husbands they were sent to a convent to be nuns. (...) Visiting Brazil between April 1865 and July 1866, Swiss physician and naturalist Jean Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) wrote about women’s education in Brazil: ‘There is no woman that conjecturing about the subject is unaware of a life of oppression and restraint’” (Amaral 2000).

² We can find a good example of this urge for emancipation in Maria Luiza Heilborn’s article “Entre as tramas da sexualidade brasileira. In the fabric of Brazilian sexuality” that demystifies the idea of Brazilian openness regarding sexuality and gender roles. (Heilborn 2006, 43-59)

³ According to Cristina Ferreira-Pinto: “In the last decades of the twentieth century, female poets, fiction writers, and playwrights have produced the most important counterideological discourse in Brazilian literature, as they have strived to create an authentic language and fresh images suitable for the expression of new voices and a changing reality. ... Brazilian women writers, either seen as a group or individually, have developed a feminist critique of the Brazilian “master narrative”, particularly as it concerns the representation of the female body, sexuality, and desire” (Ferreira-Pinto 2004, 3).

⁴ For more information see, among others, Mendes (2006).

⁵ Such benevolence and magnanimity are clear in the following quotation from the epilogue: “Shahrazad ranged the little ones before the King and, again *kissing the ground before him*, said: ‘Behold these three whom Allah has granted to us. For their sake *I implore you to spare my life.*’ (...) The King embraced his three sons, and his eyes filled with tears as he answered: ‘I swear by Allah, Shahrazad, that you were already pardoned before the coming of these children. I loved you because I found you chaste and tender, wise and eloquent.’ (...) When they [the great ones of the city] had all assembled in the great hall of the place, Shahriyar *proclaimed his decision to spare the life of his bride.*” (Anon 1961, 239-240) (emphasis mine).

⁶ This ending is not only typical of traditional tales. As Rachel Du Plessis reminds us in her chapter “Endings and Contradictions”, this is also the case in the novels written in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Imprisoned between marriage and death as the only possible endings for the stories they narrated and acted in, women were deprived of narrative agency and independence. This situation knew a (partial) transformation only in the twentieth century when protagonists were allowed an existence and destiny of their own that was not necessarily related to marriage (DuPlessis 1985, 1-19).

⁷ The following quotations are a good example of this quasi rivalry: “Ou falasse da diligência com que Dinazarda, por iniciativa própria, introduzira significativas mudanças na rotina da corte. Algumas das melhoras visando a beneficiar os escravos. (...) Inconformada com o papel que desempenhava ao lado de Scherezade, Dinazarda estabeleceu para si mesma escalas progressivas, com o intuito de realçar sua vocação de comando. Tanto que ao esbarrar à entrada dos jardins reais com algum cortesão, fazia aflorar na conversa questões delicadas, só para luzir o seu conhecimento” (Piñon 2007, 212-213) [“the diligence of Dinazarda, who of her own initiative had introduced significant changes into the routine of the court. Some of the improvements were designed to benefit the slaves. (...) Unresigned to the role she played at Scheherazade’s side, Dinazarda had established for herself progressive steps, with the idea of accentuating her gift for command. So, when she would run into some courtier at the entrance to the royal gardens, she would cause delicate questions to surface, merely to demonstrate her knowledge” (Piñon 2009, 203-204)].

⁸ We can see an example of this passion in the following quotation: “Mas Scherezade, fingindo obediência ao esposo, tinha ciência de não ser a cupidez, naquela circunstância, a melhor arma para vencê-lo. Sua fabulação verbal, plena de erotismo, consagrada à libido dos seus personagens, parecia ser o suficiente para revitalizar o corpo gasto do Califa” (Piñon 2007, 216). [“But Scheherazade, feigning obedience to her husband, was certain that under the circumstances cupidity was not the best weapon to defeat him. Her storytelling, full of eroticism, dedicated to the libido of her characters, seemed sufficient to revitalise the Caliph’s worn body” (Piñon 2009, 207)].

⁹ See for instance: “Ainda que se retire da cena, na extremidade dos aposentos, Dinazarda participa dos folguedos amorosos, que lhe atijam a fantasia. Ao seu lado, Jasmine, de infatigável diligência, inventa pretextos para permanecer naquelas dependências formadas por quartos unidos sob forma de arcos...” (Piñon 2007, 81). [“Even though she retires from the scene, into the far reaches of the chambers, Dinazarda participates in the amorous frolics that ignite her fantasy. At her side, Jasmine, indefatigably diligent, invents pretextos to remain in those quarters formed by rooms united by arches...” (Piñon 2009, 74)].

¹⁰ In his essay, Connerton (2008) mentions that this repressive erasure does not always have to be negative. However, in the case of *Shahrazad of The Thousand and One Nights*, it seems obvious that only the (negative) definition of the expression would apply here.

¹¹ With “attack of the present on the rest of the time”, Kluge refers to the negative effects on the stability or identity of contemporary subjects because of the negative pressure of the “present of consumer capitalism” upon past and future (Kluge cited in Connerton 2008, 67). I am using Kluge’s expression to focus on the importance of the use of the present as a way to revise the values of the past.

¹² This is, for instance, the case of chapter thirty. The following quotation illustrates this intertextuality: “Por força dessa atração, Scherezade mergulha na memória arcaica e nos arcanos de outras latitudes, revive enigmas históricos, como o reencontro de Príamo com Aquiles, após a morte de Heitor. E o reproduz com riqueza de detalhes, dando realce, por pura

solidariedade feminina, aos lamentos de Andrômeda e de Hécuba, mulheres golpeadas pela dor” (Piñon 2007, 128-129). [“Under its attraction, Scheherazade plunges into the archaic memory and the arcana of other lands, relives historical mysteries like the encounter of Priam and Achilles after the death of Hector. And she reproduces it with richness of detail, from feminine solidarity emphasizing the laments of Andromeda and Hecuba, women battered by pain” (Piñon 2009, 120)].