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**Embracing the Storm:  
The Wreck of the Deutschland By G.M. Hopkins**

Unlike any of Hopkins's juvenile poems, indeed, unlike any other poem in the English language<sup>1</sup>, *The Wreck* explores the horror, the havoc and the glory of man's encounter with the Real Presence of the Lord. That which before Hopkins's conversion revealed itself first and foremost as an unattainable goal, became in *The Wreck* the sacramental reality, the living centre which not only determines the personal character of the man-God relationship, its intensity and depth, but what's more, allows the encounter to find its climax in man's being united with the Divine.

Fully immersed in this eucharistic drama both as its participant and narrator, the Hopkins's persona in *the Wreck* is quite unlike its equivalent in Hopkins's juvenile poems. Whereas in his devotional, pre-conversion works, Hopkins's priestly disguise occasionally helped him to discuss the doctrine of the Real Presence<sup>2</sup>, in *The Wreck* he fashioned a genuine priest-persona, capable, like himself<sup>3</sup>, of enacting the Eucharist<sup>4</sup>, both as the God-chosen servant revealing the Lord to

<sup>1</sup> Among others see Bernard Bergonzi, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, London 1977, p. 164; also James Finn Cotter, *Inscape: The Christology and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Henry M. Snyder & Co., London 1972, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> See Eleanor McNeess, „Beyond 'The Half-way House': Hopkins and the Real Presence”, in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 31, no 1, Spring 1989, p. 96; See also D.A. Downes, „Beatific Landscapes in Hopkins”, *The Great Sacrifice: Studies in Hopkins*, University Press of America, Lanham, New York 1983, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> In the letter to Bridges Hopkins wrote „What refers to myself in the poem is all strictly and literally true and did all occur; nothing is added for poetical padding”. See C. Phillips, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, OUP, Oxford 1991, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> See Eleanor McNeess, op. cit., p. 86. McNeess writes that Hopkins's ode recreates

His people and as poet, the celebrant of the Logos, recreating – through language the specificity of man's encounter with the Divine, and, above all, the real Presence of Christ. Implementing this task, the key objective of Hopkins's poetics of the Real Presence,<sup>5</sup> he projects the world of syntactical and grammatical obstacles, in which, finding his way to God, man is forced to reassess his faith again and again, rediscovering the presence of the Divine, dramatically obscured in contorted sentences, inescapable and irregularities of diction. Sacrifice after sacrifice of having to disentangle meanings and to discard stereotypical, linear, and sequential notions of thinking of and interpreting God, man is taught to realize the incarnational character of language, allowing him to experience the moment of Communion with the Divine inherent in the text. This concern with the sacramentalization of language, more than anything else, characterizes the speaker as an artist. He is thus a creator, in his own right, of Christ evoked and offered through language to those who participate in the sacrament of the Word. By stressing the linguistic aspect of the communion, the man–God relationship is made to live on, prolonged and refreshed by those ever newer readers who, immersed in *The Wreck*, can succeed in penetrating, if only partially, the mystery of God's stress.

the Holy Mass, is an enactment of a poetic Mass offered to R. Bridges and the British public (89). *The Wreck*, she claims, is constructed as „a poetic Eucharist in which words actually embody the things which they signify“ (90). The poem is analogous to the Prayer of Consecration in which Christ's words are recalled and offered to the people (92). In the second part Hopkins presents the actual sacrifice and communion of the Tall Nun and offers the nun's experience as a communal to the British people (95). The language precisely reenacts the moment of the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the violent culmination of the poet's conversion“ (96).

<sup>5</sup>Discussing the significance of the Real Presence dealt with in Hopkins's poems E. McNeess states that its poetic involves specific devices of compounding and condensation which destroy the „linear syntax in order to reveal a presence obscured by referential language“. This is done, among others, by interrupting ordinary syntactic patterns (hyperbaton, tmesis) and /or transposing parts of speech (anastrophe). See McNeess op. cit., pp. 91, 93, 98 and 100.

The priestly authority of this artist manifests itself in a variety of ways: in the speaker's knowledge of theology and his Ignatian spirituality, in his meditations indicative of his familiarity with the Bible and the lives of the saints, in his deep awareness of how a human soul can react to the mystery of divine intimations, and finally, in his adherence to duty and responsibility towards his congregation. After all, it is to his flock that he delivers his most unorthodox sermon on God's ways of „mastering“ man, combining in this statement of faith his own experience of divine grace, objectified by and mirrored in the experience of others, the passengers of the Deutschland. It is on behalf of his sheep that during the poetic Mass<sup>6</sup> he celebrates he offers various prayers of praise and petition. Urged by the need to share his profound insight into the divine mysteries with others, he educates his nation to his Christology, with its ultimate gifts of the „gospel proffer“ and the Great Sacrifice. E. McNeess writes that having established his priestly authority by detailing in the first section of the ode his own conversion and his entrance into the priesthood, in the second, Hopkins's persona „presents the actual sacrifice and communion of the Tall Nun and offers the nun's experience as a communal one to the British people. The nun's death cry grants Hopkins a second grace, what he terms „after gracing“, or a further communion. Equipped with this second grace he is able to offer both his story and that of the nun as example of perfect communion“<sup>7</sup>.

This way towards linguistic transubstantiation leads through an intricate network of contrasts–in–likenesses<sup>8</sup>, of „interpenetrating layer upon layer of idea, sound, syntax and experience“, all of which, also structurally, capture the complexity of the man–God relationship. Anchored in the powerful psycho–drama of the Holy Mass and therefore inherent in its cycle of grace, sacrifice, and redemption, this relationship becomes an extension of the mystery of Love which

<sup>6</sup>McNeess writes that Hopkins's ode recreates the Holy Mass. See op. cit., p. 99. McNeess, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>8</sup>See Bergonzi, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>9</sup>R.K.R. Thornton, „The Diagram of Mind“, *HQ*, vol. 3, no.2, July 1976, p.48.

fulfills itself through specific encounters. Inherent in the two shipwreck stories the ode captures, these encounters are retold by the priest-speaker whose depiction of the workings of Providence centres on a variety of responses to God's "touch" felt "afresh" and "over again" in the poet's own (part I) and others' (part II) lives.

Meditating upon his spiritual progression, the speaker re-experiences various stages of creation through undoing. Entrapped by the sea of God's love, the ship of human life is wrecked so as to make the man articulate his 'fat', the yes of submission, allowing the deity to truly possess the heart He desires. This personal experience of crisis finds its objective correlative<sup>10</sup> in the ensuing part two with its account of the actual shipwreck.

In this way the man's individual, subjective experience of God acquires a collective and at the same time historic dimension.

When "Master of the tides" strikes again, his target is the whole of mankind, represented by the passengers and the crew of the Deutschland. It is on this plane that another "fat" is heard, the nun's calling "Christ to her", a prayer with which the sister offers herself to God. However, neither the significance of this attack and the tragedy that follows nor her prayer could have been properly assessed had it not been for part one and the lesson it offers to both the speaker and the readers alike, training them to recognize the signs of God's presence, to contemplate the specificity of His strategies, and educating the man to the depths of God's love and the grandeur of his designs.

The speaker learns this lesson through prayer, this channel of spiritual communication which "ropes" him to the source of all knowledge and all experience.

1

THOU mastering me  
God! giver of breath and bread;  
World's strand, sway of the sea;  
Lord of living and dead;

<sup>10</sup>See Downes, op. cit., p. 97.

Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,  
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,  
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?  
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee. (p.51) <sup>11</sup>

No longer determined by the constraints of time and space, he is given a chance to explore the intimate world of encounter, expanding through the sheer force of prayer as far as there can be from the "I" to the "you", and as far back in time as the beginnings of God's love for man and Christ's crucifixion – resealing God's covenant with man for ever.

Lifting up his soul to God, intimately addressed and familiar enough to recognize and answer the deity's invitation, the speaker responds to God's gift of encounter<sup>12</sup>. The ancientness of this gift remains unrealized till after the experience of the Real Presence, when the speaker acquires, by divine grace, a profound insight into the origins of the mystery of God's stress:

6

Nor out of his bliss

Springs the stress felt

Nor first from heaven (and few know this)

Swings the stroke dealt—

Stroke and a stress that stars and storms deliver,

That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt—

But it rides time like riding a river

(And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss).

7

It dates from day

Of his going in Galilee;

Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey;

Manger, maiden's knee;

The dense and driven Passion, and frightful sweat:

Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be,

Though felt before, though in high flood yet—

<sup>11</sup>All quotations from Hopkins's works come from *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, fourth ed., W.H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie, OUP, Oxford 1970.

<sup>12</sup>See *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Pallottinum, Poznań 1994, p. 576. (Prayer).

What none would have known of it, only the heart, being hard  
at bay,

8

Is out with it! Oh,  
We lash with the best or worst  
Word last! How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe  
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,  
Gush!—flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,  
Brim, in a flesh, full!—Hither then, last or first,  
To hero of Calvary, Christ, 's feet—  
Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it—men go. (pp.6–8)

Pointed to as the source of man–God relationship is the same  
Love which, instressing the great mysteries of Christianity from the  
Incarnation to the Resurrection, drives people to „hero of Calvary”,  
the mystery of „never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it”,  
solvable only at Christ's feet.

Like others before him, the speaker has already begun his life–  
time quest, and managing to avoid the „miss” of the faithless, though  
not quite free from „waving” of his faith, he has been caught and  
found God. Now the speaker's prayer, an expression of this spiritual  
feedback still existing between man and God, gives the poet a chance  
to retrace the roots of his faith and, rendered by the memories of the  
divine doctoring, to re–experience the Calvaries of his heart, this  
vivisection of making and undoing that allows God to refashion the  
man into a spiritually functional whole. This new creation, it seems, is  
completed with „God's touch”, this stamp of divine property, symbolic  
of bestowing upon man a gift of spiritual memory, enabling him to  
instantaneously recognize the divine presence. Interestingly, his old  
dread weakened by time, the speaker has, is if lost his capacity of this  
immediate recognition. Hence, even though he can talk to God, at the  
outset of his prayer he is no longer certain of his ability to interpret  
God's signs. Confused, he can but resort to enquiring of his Maker:  
„And dost thou touch me afresh?”

Moving between the various spiritual realities revealed to him, the  
speaker is at once Everyman and his very self, a pilgrim privileged to

perceive his progress from the perspective of mankind's crusade to  
sainthood. His explorations invariably lead to Calvary which,  
recognized as the principle organizing the world of encounter,  
determining its depth and quality, defines both the sense and direction  
of human existence. This is why suffering features so prominently in  
the speaker's life; even a prayer involves a sacrifice: an effort of  
reaching out for the Divine, of man's exposing and giving himself to  
the Master in an act of deliberate self–enslavement.

Although finally capable of such an offering, the speaker recalls  
the time when, neglecting the father who bound his bones and veins,  
and „fastened him flesh”, he chose to free himself from the divine  
supervision. However, not even in his destructive struggle for liberty  
is the prodigal son left all by himself. God follows in his footsteps,  
close enough to monitor every swoon of the speaker's heart, to hear  
his most intimate thoughts „truer than tongue could confess”, or to let  
him see the „frown of his face”; close enough to lash „with fire of  
stress” till finally, the extorted „yes” puts an end to his war on the  
divine.

So much can be gained for just one word. The man finds a remedy  
for „the horror of height”, and the gift of „whirling out wings that  
spell” the name of Christ, brings him right into „the heart of the Host”,  
where, renewed by the eucharistic meal, the speaker communes with  
Trine God. However, despite the spiritual nourishment and the  
ecstasy felt when, transformed into „flame” the man is soaring „from  
the grace to the grace”, his understanding of the experience of the Real  
Presence of the Lord seems imperfect. Not only does it present itself  
as a side–effect of the speaker's rebellion, but the vividly–remembered  
dread and pain of „undoing” close the man's perception of God to  
anything but „Mastery”.

It takes time for this partiality to give way to an ever greater  
awareness of the complexity of the Divine, realized, among others,  
through the speaker's acknowledgment of his absolute dependence on  
Christ and his „gospel proffer”. Slowly the man learns various names  
of the Divine and the continual redefinition of the concept brings him

closer and closer to the paradox of Unity in Multiplicity: to „God, three-numbered form”, giver „of breath and bread”, „Lord of living and dead”, to „arch original Breath”(25) and „a feathery delicacy”(31) of the Holy Spirit, to „hero of Calvary” who refers the man back again to the „Father and fondler of heart” who is both „lightning and love” and „a winter and warm”. The remembrance of „mastery” is still there, yet as if neutralized, pushed away by other characteristics of God who, to quote E. Jennings, „can be refused, wrestled with, surrendered to, terrible, yet also merciful and to be found”<sup>13</sup>.

Apart from prayer, struggle or the Eucharist through which the Love is offered and consummated, God can also be found by way of contemplating the beauty of Creation, revealing such inscapes of the Divine as „glow” and „glory in thunder”, existing „under this world's splendour”, his „mystery” one that „must be instressed, stressed”.

I kiss my hand

To the stars, lovely-asunder

Starlight, waiting him out of it; and

Glow, glory in thunder;

Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west:

Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder,

His mystery must be instressed, stressed;

For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I under-

stand

(p.53)

In this communion with nature, the speaker rediscovers the sense of his priesthood: the vocation of ‘stressing’ God through sharing His world and contemplating it, and of ‘instressing’ Him through conducting the Holy mass the ode is said to reenact<sup>14</sup>. Thus another Communion experience takes place, and unlike the one depicted in at

<sup>13</sup>Elizabeth Jennings, „The Unity of Incarnation” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins's Poems. A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. by M. Bottrall, Macmillan Press Ltd., Houndmills, Basingstoke 1975, p. 36

<sup>14</sup>See McNees, op. cit., pp. 86–89.

the beginning of the poem (st. 3), marking the speaker's spiritual awakening, and the birth of his mature relationship with the Divine, the Eucharist rendered at the foot of Calvary (st. 8) is the feast offered by the priest himself. His humble presence enhanced by his meditation, the celebrant, now the true servant of the Lord, performs the ritual to expose the power of the tiny wafer clinching the greatest mysteries of Christian faith: the Incarnation, the Passion and the Resurrection. Thanks to this service of the priest-poet the Real Presence becomes as tangible and obvious as the words that convey it, as powerful as the image of the sloe „mouthed to flesh-burst” which, momentarily hyphenating man and Christ, finally brings them together, cleansing and flushing the communicant and „filling him with a Presence he is unable to request or resist”<sup>15</sup>. Almost felt exploding on the tongue, the Host, the burst body of Christ brings about another explosion, one within the speaker's prayer which, having returned to its initial directness and intensity, is offered for the whole of mankind. Mixing adoration and petition, the priest asks God for another „dark descending”, „most merciful then” and for „wrecking and storm” with which to crush the rebel man, thus allowing Christ to return to human hearts, to „English souls”, and be adored as King of the whole world.

Offered under a safe roof, „on a pastoral forehead of Wales”(12), this prayer is answered near the Kentish Knock, where, „American-outward-bound”, the Deutschland has found herself on the dark side of the bay of God's blessing. In the „cursed quarter” of the North Sea, hurled by its „flint flakes”, „Wiry, and white-flery and whirlwind-swivelled snow”, she has been made to spin „to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps”(13). „[F]etched in the storm of his strides”, Christ desires to reveal Himself to the men, hoping that in this harvest of the shipwreck He will find the grain worthy of „the heaven-haven of the reward”(35) he is ready to give in return for his Love.

<sup>15</sup>McNees, p. 89



Despite the speaker's merely indirect involvement in the events he narrates – his knowledge of them second-hand only – his spiritual experience, poetic sensibility and, most importantly, his peculiar empathy with the shipwrecked in whose responses to the divine visitation in storm and thunder he recognizes many of his own, all this makes him almost an inspired eye – or rather 'heart witness' of the Deutschland's foundering. Given a chance to participate in another lesson on God's love, repeating, yet at the same time broadening and deepening the scope of the man's earlier experience, the speaker does his best to learn. Also to share this knowledge of the heart, whose spiritual growth is measured not only by the complexity of man's relationship with God viewed now through an intricate net of contrasts—in-likenesses between his individual and this large-scale shipwreck, but also by the depth of the poem which, having succeeded in rendering the inexpressible, is so unique that, to quote T. S. Eliot, it constitutes a class of one.

In his attempt to share with the readers the lesson which — as he reruns it — begins with the triumph of Death to end with the triumph of Christ returned to the Father, the speaker retells the Deutschland story from an angle completely neglected by the various newspapers covering the catastrophe. Hence, although true to the fact, he mentions the number of passengers, weather conditions and lists some topographical or nautical details, he focuses his attention first of all on various dramas taking place when the specific passengers become confronted with the mystery of God's providence.

One of the heroes, or rather anti-heroes in this conquest of souls, trying to „save the wild-womankind below”, is an anonymous man, a believer in his physical strength who, 'playing saviour' for others, commits an act of tragic arrogance, a sin of pride at the basis of which there lies, however innocent or altruistic it may seem, the intention of deciding for God that which only God can decide.

16

One stirred from the rigging to save  
The wild woman-kind below.

With a rope's end round the man, handy and brave —  
He was pitched to his death at a blow,  
For all his dreadnought breast and braids of tow:  
They could tell him for hours, dandled the to and fro  
Through the cobbled foam-fleece. What could he do  
With the hurl of the fountains of air, buck and the flood of the  
wave?  
(p.56)

Disregarding the divine presence in the storm, not secured by the rope of gospel proffer, the unfortunate rescuer — „For all his dreadnought breast and braids of tow” — cannot stand a chance against the elements which even after his death mock his heroism and his pointless sacrifice.

Unable to „Read the unshapable shock night” (29), the majority of the passengers of the ship do not even realize that they have been caught in the middle of God's „dark descending”. As they do not even think of God, thus, on the whole, the Deutschland is the community of „Two hundred souls in the round” (12), as Hopkins described the passengers who, having lost „touch” with the Maker, no longer respond to the divine finger. Consequently, their fighting with the „electrical horror (27) „of endraged seas” and with all that which the speaker rightly interprets as „God's cold” (17) is doomed to failure. The God who hears „truer than tongue confess”, does not hear His name among the general wailing and moaning. Even the strategy of undoing and of heart wringing, the speaker so vividly recalls from his own experience, seems to no effect. In this case the people shout out only their grief and despair, yet, it is believed, that even these do not die „uncomforted”. So ends the encounter of the jealous, unrequited love of God with the men who are not able, or perhaps do not want to kiss the rod, to recognize their master and Creator.

Their lament is broken when „the virginal tongue” of the Franciscan nun „tells” the name of Christ. „Towering in the tumult”, „A prophetess” „breasts the babble”, and calling „O Christ, come quickly” she articulates her prayer of the name, her brief credo, the bride's song of songs expressive of her love of God. The „lionsess” and

„Orion of light” have found each other in the extremity of their hunt; God’s harvest through storm hasn’t been all in vain after all.

19

Sister, a sister calling

A master, her master and mine!—

And the inboard seas run swirling and howling:

The rash smart slogging brine

Blinds her; but she that weather sees one thing, one;

Has one fetch in her: she rears herself to divine

Ears, and the call of the tall nun

To the men in the tops and the tackle rode over the storm’s

brawling. (...)

24

She to the black—about air, to the breaker, the thickly

Falling flakes, to the throng that catches and quails

Was calling ‘O Christ, Christ, come quickly!’

The cross to her she calls Christ to her, christens her wild—worst

Best. (p.59)

Hearing the nun’s call, her behaviour representative of other members of „a coifed sisterhood”, the speaker’s heart is stirred by the woman’s desire of God, and identifying himself with this desire, the priest becomes personally involved in this ‘date’ on the „wild waters” which he will be reporting from the depth of his heart and simultaneously, from the board of the Deutschland. With the help of „arch and original Breath” (25), the man realizes that Christ comes to the woman delighted by the impatience of her heart, ‘seduced’ by the gesture of hugging the cross to her body(24), and ‘lured’ by her determination of having „this one fetch in her”. Moved by her effort of „rearing” herself to divine ears and being his „bell”, the Bridegroom surrenders himself to her so that she can „have” him „for the pain, for the / Patience”. In this act of consummation of love, the nun turns into a follower of her „martyr—master”, a true apostle of Christ who, responding to her need, comes to „cure the extremity

where he had cast her”, and accepting the sister’s sacrifice puts an end to his harvest on the sea, „his doom there” (28).

In the moment of inspired vision, transforming the landscape of the tempest into the „lovescape crucified” (23), the speaker can experience — through the nun — another encounter with Christ, the spiritual distance allowing for but sensing the Presence which only she can really make out, seeing — clearly — God who welcomes her on her last journey. This brotherhood in Christ come true in the moment of Communion allows the speaker to see/feel in his heart’s mind the power of the „passion—plunged giant risen” (33), the power to embrace Him all at once as „the Master, Ipse, the only one, Christ, King, Head”. Enlightened by that power, the priest realizes how precious for God, for whom „The goal was a shoal” (12), was the „heart right!” and the „single eye!” (29) of the woman who, capable of seeing through the storm „knew the who and the why; / Working it” (29). The joint Passion and the Resurrection are the triumph of human and divine love which gives birth to a new Mary who, in turn, gives birth to a new Christ, worded, and hence reborn in her call.

Once again the experience of the Real Presence culminates in prayer, in clinging to God through meditation on His saints, or the mystery of the Incarnation. Dramatic, articulated in snatches, this prayer is the speaker’s hymn to „grasping God” „past all”, to the „all of water” who himself is an ark for all believers. Towards the close of the poem this adoration turns into a prayer to the tall nun asked to intercede and help to return „Our King back, Oh, upon English souls!” and „Let him easter in us, be a dayspring of dimness of us”.

Dame, at our door

Drowned, and among our shoals,

Remember us in the roads, the heaven—haven of the

reward:

Our King back, Oh, upon English souls!

Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us,

be a crimson—cresceted east,

More brightening her, rare—dear Britain, as his reign rolls,

Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, hugh priest,

Our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts' chivalry's  
through's Lord. (p.63)

The prayer flows, in itself a gift bestowed upon the speaker who in this final address to his sister in Christ (now perhaps more than ever) relives the Resurrection of Christ — also of his own heart made very much alive — royally reclaimed by the Father and reinstated as the Lord of human hearts. This apart, the priest is „lashed” with other blessed gifts. Wasn't he made to see? Wasn't he shown the power of the word that christens „the worst / Best”? Or the glory of the woman in her readiness to offer herself to the Last Supper of her life? Wasn't he given an insight into how different the divine perspective is from the one man has access to? What people perceive as the doom of „the storm's brawling” is in fact the storm of „scroll-leaved flowers, lily-showers, sweet heaven was strewn in” (21) and „the wild waters” turn out to be a bath in God's „fall-gold mercies”, „in his all-fire glances” (23).

What's more, the man is actually made to experience the power of the Real Presence which, offering the climax to the Deutschland story and his poem, blacks out everything else. All of a sudden the night disappears, the seas no longer „endragoned”. What remains is the impression of sweetness, swiftness, too, of the nuns' deaths, of the easiness with which one can pacify the sea if one clings to Christ and prayer. The speaker remains in this world of direct/indirect encounter, and yet even though he keeps praying to God, to Christ and the Holy Spirit, he isn't — yet — able to articulate these most essential words „O Christ, Christ come quickly” which could again bring the Divine into direct contact with the human world.

Whether his faith is „waverling” after all, or whether this is the problem of courage and/or the awareness where such a call might lead, remains to be solved by another encounter, an encounter with God who, as the speaker best exemplifies, comes also to those who do not call His name.

Edyta Królik

### Considerações sobre o tempo e o espaço na peça *O Dia Seguinte de Luís Francisco Rebello*

#### 1. Situação do teatro português nos anos 50

Comparando a vida teatral nos anos 50 em Portugal e nos outros países europeus, é impressionante resuscitar o clima cultural influenciado pela situação política. A história de Portugal do século XX é marcada sobretudo pela ditadura de António de Oliveira Salazar que terminou em 1974 com a revolução dos cravos.

Durante a ditadura de Salazar, Portugal fechava-se, progressivamente, aos contactos com a Europa. O teatro foi sempre tratado como uma arte de resistência, visto que os dramaturgos continuavam a sua obra mesmo no estrangeiro, entre os países acolhedores salientando-se a França. É muito provável que, entre as diferentes manifestações artísticas, nenhuma tivesse sido tão perseguida pela censura salazariana como a actividade teatral. O poder pertencia à Comissão de Censura que vigiava a segurança do país e eliminava todas as publicações que podiam ameaçar a tranquilidade do estado. Quanto ao teatro, a censura do texto não era suficiente, a vista de tal era preciso criar uma secção especial que se ocupava das representações executadas nos teatros nacionais.

Os contactos com o estrangeiro foram bastante limitados, tendo em conta o fechamento de Portugal às influências culturais dos outros países. Dentre os diferentes autores era integralmente proibido apresentar:

- todas as peças de Berthold Brecht e de Jean – Paul Sartre
- algumas das peças de Jean Anouilh