

ON THE EDGE OF SENSE: NONSENSE AND PARADOX IN EDWARD LEAR'S AND QORPO SANTO'S SELECTED WORKS

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Abstract

¹In this article, we delineate the relationship between nonsense, opposition and paradox in selected excerpts of the works of Edward Lear (1812-1888) and Qorpo Santo (1829-1883), considering nonsense and paradox in the light of the theories proposed mainly by Gilles Deleuze (2015) and Charles Ogden (1932) and secondarily by Jean Jacques Lecercle (1994), Wim Tigges (1988) and Ferdinand Saussure (1916). This article seeks to understand the relationship between sense and nonsense in relation to the way these theorists articulate the productive tension that exists between other kinds of binary relationships. Research carried out about the relationship between nonsense theories and the binary opposites delineated by pairs and more precisely about Edward Lear and Qorpo Santo has been extremely scarce, and this article seeks to contribute to the related literary scholarship.

Keywords: Opposition; Edward Lear; Qorpo Santo; Nonsense

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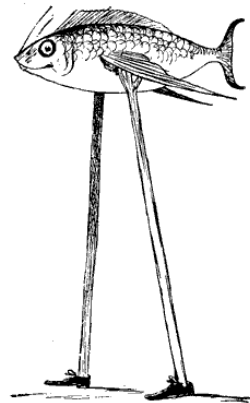
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Introduction

*Senti sair pelo meu umbigo um grande bicho.
Pousou no mar e converteu-se em grande nau².*

Qorpo Santo, *Miscelanea Quiriosa*
(Curious Potpourri), 1877



*The Fizzgiggious Fish,
who always walked about upon Stilts
because he had no Legs.*

Edward Lear, *The Complete Verse and
Other Nonsense* by Vivian Noakes, 2001, p. 259

The middle way of nonsense, situated on the edge of sense, is characterized by encounters and missed engagements, arrivals and departures, certainties built upon uncertainties and slippery sense that does not conform and takes shape in the crossroads of the in between, in between all possibilities and none, being at the same time all and none. Its structure deviates from the norm; however it conforms to margins that elude themselves, to pairs that begin and end within themselves, building pairs that opposed each other in tensions of characters, structures, genres and concepts. Its similarities fail to let themselves be defined by parity and its differences communicate without ever losing the articulation of their difference, emphasising the duplicity within its path of ambiguity, ambivalence, potency, patchwork, and mosaic of ways. The instances of meaning weaved by eternal movement, by Deleuze's paradox of pure becoming, which never lets it sit in a state of suspension brought by a definition that would close all possibilities of becoming become unlimited in the surface, dismissing depth which would entail (and it is inconceivable to consider it otherwise) the definition of upwards and downwards. It is in this winding road that we find Edward Lear's and Qorpo Santo's works.

In the first epigraph reproduced, by Qorpo Santo, we have a series of propositions that merge into one another without ever settling, which are followed by pairs of characters – the man and the animal, the animal and the ship – that are in constant tension and opposition against each other. The bellybutton neither fully exists, nor does not exist at all; the animal and the ship enjoy a similar transient

existence. This sense of moving but never arriving, the process of transformation from one thing into another, of always sliding and never resting, shapes our approach of the nonsense of Qorpo Santo and Edward Lear. In Edward Lear's epigraph, the propositions and the expectations that would necessarily follow in this case (that fish do not need to walk for they can swim and they do not live on dry land) do not, for in Lear's nonsense, the fish has to have stilts to walk, because he has no legs; the rules of the empirical world hold no water in this world, for the fish cannot overcome his lack of ability to walk or his lack of legs by swimming; it has to conform to a state of affairs that sits in unrest in-between conforming and non-conforming. Lear imagines a fish out of water: a being whose identity is put at risk because it is removed from its element. The traditional conception of fish has to be quickly dropped, for the logic of nonsense is the logic of paradox between fish and walking, of fishes becoming something different but never settling in another identity, hovering in between (for the stilts are merely attached and can very easily be removed), which holds itself together merely through the constant tension and opposition of terms that always evade the present of being something by never defining themselves and never allowing others to define them.

Lately, a revival of critical interest in Lear has taken shape led by James Williams (2018), Jenny Uglow (2017), and Sara Lodge (2018). This paper wishes to contribute to this revival of critical interest by considering Lear's work in an international context and comparing his nonsense to the work of Brazilian playwright and poet José Joaquim de Campos Leão (1829-1883), better known as Qorpo Santo, who has yet to be recognised as a nonsense writer. Edward Lear (1812-1888) was an English author, illustrator and painter, who worked for many years as illustrator of zoology publications and of scientific manuals about plants and animals. However, because of a problem with his eyesight, his creative drawing was hampered, for he lacked the necessary precision demanded by the activity. Edward Lear also had asthma and epilepsy. His sisters taught him to read, write and draw. Over time, Lear took on the habit of visiting rather often one of his sisters and took it upon himself to draw the landscape of her home. Lear used to spend long periods of time with a family that had many children and many birds; as a consequence of this coexistence, the author started using animals as models for the manuals and the children as target-audience of his literary creations. Lear created nonsense alphabets, three nonsense botanies, nonsense cookeries and many poems, songs and limericks. Noakes (2001) credits the creation of nonsense to Edward Lear, alongside its interaction between texts and images and its musicality. In the nonsense created by Lear, the rules of language are broken, paradoxically, for being followed to the letter. Therefore, the absurdity in his nonsense might stem from the fact that, for example, a figure of speech is understood literally. The works of Edward Lear, composed by limericks, nonsense alphabets and botany, were created in the nineteenth century and published in several editions throughout the time.

Qorpo Santo was born in 1829 in Triunfo, a city in the state of Porto Alegre. He lived there until he was 10 years old, when his father died in a situation that

involved the Farroupilha Revolution, and Qorpo Santo moved to Porto Alegre to study. After getting married, Qorpo Santo moved to Alegrete, his wife's hometown, where he opened a school, worked as a journalist, councilman and deputy. In 1862, Qorpo Santo started writing his works and having mental troubles, having later been diagnosed as a monomaniac. Qorpo Santo was interdicted at a request from his wife who claimed he could no longer manage his affairs. This led him to be further discredited by his peers and also made him suffer from the stigma of mental sickness and of isolation that soon followed. Doctors discussed his condition and Qorpo Santo was committed both in Porto Alegre and afterwards in Rio de Janeiro. Isolated from everyone and unable to publish his writings, Qorpo Santo opened his own printing shop to print his 9 volumes, which were given to a friend. Qorpo Santo eventually died of tuberculosis in 1883. Qorpo Santo wrote several plays with a theatrical structure like no other ever seen, defying the critics' categorizations which have, many times, placed him as a precursor of the *avant-garde* movements. The work of Qorpo Santo, entitled *Ensiqlopèdia ou seis mezes de huma enfermidade* (*Encyclopaedia or six months of an illness*), a collection of nine volumes published periodically between 1868 and 1873, in the towns of Alegrete and Porto Alegre. The collection is composed by different literary genres (poetry, theatre, chronicle, biography, prose), making up, according to Carozzi (2008), an "universal work", which was rediscovered in 1950 and today belongs to the special collection of the Irmão José Otão Central Library at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, PUC-RS.

Like Lear, Santo's poetry, plays, songs, characters, and situations draw upon the ideas of forever being on the margin, of being in constant movement and never settling, of being one and the other at the same time, of balancing sense and its lack and always sliding between one extreme and the other. In both Edward Lear's and Qorpo Santo's works, opposition is a double entity which can undergo changes and shifts between its excess of sense and its lack of sense because the traditions are perpetuated while at the same time being revoked. In one example from Santo's absurd play *I am liveliness, I am annihilation* (1866), a young man is astounded by the idea that his wife does not recognise him as her husband and cannot recall their wedding ceremony. The opposition between remembering and forgetting, being married or not being married, having or not having a husband, having no husband or two husbands pervades this play and in its very structure rests unexplained, for no one elaborates on the reasoning behind this unprecedented transformation with no known cause. Linda's reaction, or her mention that "I am enough to keep both of you at ease!" (4), proves to be a shift in perspective of this supposedly regular exchange that makes the sense balance itself between its excess and its lack, and the conflict of opposites is caught in between being referenced and at the same time deconstructed in discourse and being represented by the couple's (or trio's) exchanges, which bring with them the very traditions of a conservative society being perpetuated and revoked at the same time, but never settling. If we consider Edward Lear's excerpt in the third column, we have a constant failed attempt to grasp a sense of reality and of reference to it, which brings with it an

inner duality (the duck hopping with the aid of the kangaroo, changing his status while staying the same, the duck needing socks and smoking, being attributed human characteristics but failing to turn into a human, for he has web feet), and an opposition, with the Duck character’s desire to hop, and his wearing of wool socks, of a cloak, and his smoking every day.

Table 1: I am liveliness, I am not annihilation

<p>O RAPAZ (<i>muito admirado</i>) Esta mulher está doida! Casou comigo o ano passado, foram padrinhos Trico e Trica; e agora fala esta linguagem! Está; está! Não tem dúvida! (...) LINDA - Não precisa tanto, Lindo! Deixai-o cá comigo... Eu basto para nos deixar tranqüilos! (Qorpo Santo, <i>Eu sou a vida, eu não sou a morte</i>, 1866)</p>	<p>YOUNG MAN – (<i>astonished</i>) This woman is insane! She got married to me last year, Trico was best man and Trica was maid of honor; and now you talk like that! Yes, you are! There is no doubt. (...) LINDA – There is no need for that, Lindo! Leave it to me...I am enough to keep both of you at ease! (Qorpo Santo, <i>I am liveliness, I am not annihilation</i>)</p>	<p>Said the Duck, ‘As I sate³ on the rocks, I have thought over that completely, And I bought four pairs of worsted socks Which fit my web-feet neatly. And to keep out the cold I’ve bought a cloak, And every day a cigar I’ll smoke, All to follow my own dear true Love of a Kangaroo!’ (Edward Lear, <i>The Duck and the Kangaroo</i>, 1870)</p>
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The present study focuses on four poems (“Um Pinheiro” (“A pine tree”,1877), about a man that joins himself to a tree; “Penetração” (“Penetration”), about a lamp that turns into dancers and singers, “Conversação com um balaio” (“Chatting with a hamper”), about a man and a hamper, and “Incivilidade” (“Incivility”), about a man and a candlestick), and four plays (“Mateus e Mateusa”), about the arguments between the wife and the husband and the love and discord that encompasses their lives with their daughters; “Certa entidade em busca de outra” (“Certain entity in search of another”), about an old man and his constant troubles with his son and his many wives; “Eu sou a vida, eu não sou a morte” (“I am liveliness, I am not annihilation”), about a couple’s story of crime and infidelity; “A separação de dois esposos” (“The separation of the two spouses”), about a couple’s constant difficulty to be together without fighting which brings the idea of divorce but later results in them dying together and in their servants divorcing) by Qorpo Santo , as well as on longer poems by Edward Lear, some limericks and excerpts of his nonsense botany. The analysis of these excerpts will stem from a brief analysis of selected excerpts by Edward Lear which will be then brought in juxtaposition with the excerpts of Qorpo Santo’s work to highlight the common elements and the differences between them. This article holds its relevance against the fact that there has not been much research carried out about the relationship between Edward Lear and Qorpo Santo’s works, except for the relevant contribution of Myriam Ávila (2009) in her article entitled “Qorpo Santo” published in the *Sibila* journal, which proposes a preliminary comparison of Lear’s and Santo’s works on the basis of nonsense literature; there also has not been many research about nonsense theories and the binary opposites delineated by pairs of characters, structures, genres, concepts and rhymes that form a precision based on imprecision being held accountable only by the tension

between sense and its absence, and the research has been about the relationship between the works of Edward Lear and Qorpo Santo.

Literary Nonsense and opposition

Many theories of nonsense make reference to the unresolved relationship between sense and its absence as the defining characteristic of the genre, such as Wim Tigges's *An anatomy of literary nonsense* (1988), Elizabeth Sewell's *The field of nonsense* (1952) and Susan Stewart's *Nonsense: aspects of intertextuality in folklore and literature* (1978). Wim Tigges, in his *Anatomy of Literary Nonsense*, discusses the nonsense genre as one which is built from a tension between sense and its absence that takes shape in language and steers us into the matter of opposition in the language of nonsense, precisely because of the unsolved opposition that does not conform to a state, forcing upon the text the contradiction, the negative, the paradoxical, and the "pure becoming".

1. Review of Literature

If we consider the notions of pairings and opposition, it is important to emphasise the place of opposition in language and in the science that studies it, Linguistics: in Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916, we have that one of the first general principles formulated in his theory is the nature of the linguistic sign, in which Saussure posits that the linguistic sign is a double entity made up of two terms, the concept, or signified, and the sound image, or signifier. Saussure already draws upon the ideas of pairs and opposition, and mentions that there is an opposition that separates the two parts of the sign and each part from the whole. Then Saussure goes on to mention that the sign is arbitrary, having no necessary relation between the sign and the thing it represents, and that the signifier works in a single dimension, represented by a line, of time, succession and chain of events.

The sign is also characterised by immutability, which can be grasped when one notices the countless amount of signs that makes up a language and the inner complexity of such a system. Language is also connected to society and tradition, and continues throughout time being passed along from generation to generation in an arbitrary manner which brings about a conservation. However, the sign is also described from the perspective of mutability for, according to Saussure, "the sign is exposed to alteration because it perpetuates itself" (74). For Saussure, the continuity of language from generation to generation binds us to tradition and also brings about change, for there are "shifts in the relationship between the signified and the signifier" (78). These changes, in greater periods of time, do not enter the individual's perspective, since he is faced with a state in a given time, says Saussure.

To describe a language state is to enter into a synchronic analysis, whereas to describe a language through diachrony is to regard the passing of time and to consider different states in different times alongside each other. Inner duality,

Saussure adds, is what makes up language, as an expression of the synchrony and diachrony. In short, Saussure proposes a structuralist theory on linguistics based on quite a few opposing pairs that are juxtaposed in overlapping continuous tension which is never resolved: concept and sound image (linguistic unity as a double entity), signifying and signified, immutability and mutability, diachrony and synchrony (inner duality).

The definition of opposites and an analysis of their special relationship have been carried out by a number of theorists. Previous researches have treated the matter of opposition “in terms of degree, contrast, difference and hierarchical order” (Ogden 30), but Ogden (1932) feels the dialectic, the dichotomy and the hierarchical order have failed to explain the essence of opposition. Ogden affirms that, stemming from Fischer’s notion of “opposition as the prime form of all experience” (Ogden 35), he posits the stages of order, namely space (the limits are set from the opposite positions and are many and fixed), time (the idea of opposition is expressed at present only, which is between past and future, and flows as time does with one limit) and knowledge (interaction between opposites, as subject and object, with two opposite directions that might waver) to describe an opposition.

Primary oppositions would be “subject and object, being and not being, inner and outer, action and reaction, and unity and multiplicity” (Ogden 36). Opposites, then, “are two courses of action that are equivalent and balanced by one another and marked by a neutral point without which there can be no opposition” (Ogden 38). It is important here not to confuse opposition with difference, contrast or heterogeneity, for opposition is “a very special kind of repetition, namely of two similar things that are mutually destructive in virtue of their very similarity. They are always a couple or duality, opposed as tendencies or forces, not as beings or groups of beings nor yet as states” (Ogden 41) and “two unequal weights which balance one another on an unequally balanced scale are true opposites” (38). According to Ogden:

All oppositions whether of series, degrees, or signs, may take place between terms that find expression in one and the same being or in two different beings; and we must also note that the terms may be either simultaneous or successive. In the former case there is strife, and the equilibrium accompanied by destruction and loss of energy; in the latter, alternation and rhythm. When an opposition occurs in two different beings, whether of series, degrees or signs, it may be either simultaneous or successive – either strife or rhythm. Otherwise it can be both simultaneous and successive only if it is an opposition of signs. (41-42)

Opposites are, then, according to Ogden,

Either two extremes of a scale or the two sides of a cut; the cut marking the point of neutrality, the absence of either of two opposed characters in the field of opposition. By a cut, moreover, we can dichotomize either “a linear projection” or a “field of referents”. (53)

Thus, for Ogden, opposites are words defined in terms of their opposites that present themselves through spatial limits, the present time and the interaction of terms in opposing directions which follow two different courses, remembering always that opposites are “two unequal weights which balance one another on an unequally balanced scale are true opposites” (38).

2. Nonsense and Pairings

Theories about nonsense as a genre often mention explicitly the matter of pairing and opposition as a way to characterize the genre and the strategies authors may use to bring a nonsense text to life.

A logic that will sit, much like nonsense, in between sense and lack of sense, can be drawn initially from some of the ideas brought by Deleuze (2015) in his *Logic of Sense*. One of them is pure becoming, characterized by a simultaneous becoming one and another, of growing and diminishing at the same time, of going towards different directions at once, evading the present. Another important concept is Deleuze’s notion of paradox, which affirms that while good sense has a determinable direction, paradox affirms both directions at the same time, sliding forever without ever stopping.

Language is the carrier of the inner duality, it is the bringer of rules and of overcoming limits, for “it is language which fixes the limits, the movement, for example, at which the excess begins, but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming” (Deleuze 3). This brings with it an infinite identity and a loss of proper name which would challenge the continuity and the known boundaries, for names determine limits. This structure that goes simultaneously in two-directions splits the subject. As such, paradox, according to Deleuze, destroys common sense as something that designates fixed identities.

In our conception of nonsense, and in Deleuze’s conception of nonsense and paradox, paradox is “a dismissal of depth, a display of events at the surface, a deployment of language along this limit” (Deleuze 9). In it, “depth became width, which was inverted and became the becoming unlimited”, for “everything happens at the border” (Deleuze 9). In our view, the events of pure becoming that can be seen at the surface of Lear’s and Santo’s nonsense “bring to language becoming and its paradoxes” (Deleuze 11).

Structure, for Deleuze, when regarded in relation to opposing pairs in nonsense literature, is made up of a series of signifying and excess and another series of signified and lack, which are in eternal disequilibrium and perpetual displacement:

What is in excess in the signifying series is literally an empty square and an always displaced place without an occupant. What is lacking in the signified series is a supernumerary and non-situated given – an unknown, an occupant without a place, or something always displaced. These are two sides of the same thing – two uneven sides – by means of which the series communicate without losing their difference. (Deleuze 50)

Nonsense, then, contains the paradoxical element of *perpetuum mobile*, which, according to Deleuze, is able to

traverse the heterogeneous series, to coordinate them, to make them resonate and converge, but also to ramify them and to introduce into each one of them multiple disjunctions. It is both word = x and thing = x. Since it belongs simultaneously to both series, it has two sides. But the sides are never balanced, joined together, or paired off, because the paradoxical element is always in disequilibrium in relation to itself. To account for the dissymmetry we made use of a number of dualities: it is at once excess and lack, empty square and supernumerary object, a place without an occupant and an occupant without a place [...] esoteric word and esoteric thing. [...] This is why it is constantly denoted in two ways. (Deleuze 66)

As such, the paradoxical element is both word and thing, and “nonsense and sense are not analogous to true and false and cannot be conceived simply based on a relation of exclusion” (Deleuze 68). However, to try to come up with a logic of sense, one needs to position oneself between sense and nonsense, inhabiting a mode of co-presence (Deleuze 68).

Nonsense, then, which “does not have any particular sense but produces an amazing excess of it” (Deleuze 71) is opposed to absence of sense, in that “nonsense is that which has no sense, and that which, as such and as it enacts the donation of sense, is opposed to the absence of sense. This is what we must understand as nonsense” (Deleuze 73). Sense, as Deleuze puts it,

is never a principle or an origin, but it is produced. It is not something to discover, to restore, and to re-employ; it is something to produce by a new machinery. It belongs to no height or depth, but rather to a surface effect, being inseparable from the surface which is its proper dimension. It is not that sense lacks depth or height, but rather that height and depth lack surface, that they lack sense, or have it only by virtue of an “effect” which presupposes sense. (74)

Similarly, nonsense has been defined in Wim Tigges’ *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense* in a way that resonates with Deleuze’s concept of nonsense as something in between sense and its lack, in eternal disequilibrium and perpetual displacement, affirming both directions at the same time, sliding through the surface and evading the present.

The pairs contained within nonsense, sense and nonsense, sense and absence of sense, excess of sense and lack of sense, bring about the notions of unresolved tension, of being two different things at the same time, of balancing itself between two complementary but mutually exclusive fashions, like in mirroring, repetition, simultaneity and arbitrariness, where time is a construct that has to be grasped as a duality, as a union of opposites, a constant flux that goes to two different directions at the same time and does not conform nor settle.

The mirroring of two terms, both of which inhabiting both sides and going to both directions at the same time is always represented by an opposed couple

or repetition of things that are similar and mutually destructive because of their very similarity. These terms, after undergoing the simultaneous becoming of one thing and its opposite, which happens at the boundary between what's referenced and its referent, inhabit an absence of depth, of existing at the surface of the difference between the two terms which relate to each other without losing their inner duality and opposition, persevering in eternal disequilibrium between sense and its absence and perpetual displacement of sense as we know it and as nonsense as the permanent opposition and tension built in establishing limits and going beyond them, in a mode of co-presence in which reversals and inversions happen all at once, already and not yet, cutting too deeply and not enough.

This co-presence can also be described as a paradox in which meaning and intention of meaning have been deconstructed and transformed into a discourse which means not to mean and which brings the genre constraints to the forefront. The text of nonsense is therefore a patchwork, much like we see in Edward Lear (1846)'s *Book of Nonsense*⁴ and in Qorpo Santo (1868)'s *Encyclopaedia*. The idea of systematically organizing knowledge is present in the works of both authors, which bring this "mirrored image of common sense" into an attempt of making sense out of nonsense but forever sliding in between the two. The madness, therefore, and the discourse of eccentricity, insanity and exclusion are also present within nonsense in a prominent form.

The consideration of how each of the elements previously mentioned is understood has been broken down into five different parts, all of which related to nonsense, pairing of opposites, language and paradox: an analysis of the characters (1), followed by structure (2), genre (3), concepts (4) and formal rhyme (5).

3. Analysis

3.1 Characters

In the selected poems of Edward Lear⁵, we can notice a number of opposing and unusual pairings in the many nonsense characters: in the poem "The Quangle Wangle's hat," we have the Quangle Wangle and his hat, the Quangle Wangle and the tree, the Quangle Wangle and all the beings that eventually come to live on his hat.

I

On the top of the Crumpetty Tree
The Quangle Wangle sat,
But his face you could not see,
On account of his Beaver Hat.
For his Hat was a hundred and two feet wide,
With ribbons and bibbons on every side
And bells, and buttons, and loops, and lace,
So that nobody ever could see the face
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee.

II

The Quangle Wangle said
To himself on the Crumpetty Tree, —
"Jam; and jelly; and bread;
"Are the best of food for me!
"But the longer I live on this Crumpetty Tree
"The plainer than ever it seems to me
"That very few people come this way
"And that life on the whole is far from gay!"
Said the Quangle Wangle Quee.

III

But there came to the Crumpetty Tree,
Mr. and Mrs. Canary;
And they said, — "Did ever you see
"Any spot so charmingly airy?
"May we build a nest on your lovely Hat?
"Mr. Quangle Wangle, grant us that!
"O please let us come and build a nest
"Of whatever material suits you best,
"Mr. Quangle Wangle Quee!"

The Quangle-Wangle's hat, from Edward Lear's *Nonsense Songs*, 1871.

In "The Courtship of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo," he tries to marry a Lady, which later is revealed to have a husband, making a pair Lady Jingly Jones and Handel Jones. It is also interesting to note that while the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo has a hug without a handle, the lady's husband is called Handel, which is really close phonetically to a "handle":

I

On the Coast of Coromandel
 Where the early pumpkins blow,
 In the middle of the woods
 Lived the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.
 Two old chairs, and half a candle,--
 One old jug without a handle,--
 These were all his worldly goods:
 In the middle of the woods,
 These were all the worldly goods,
 Of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò,
 Of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.

II

Once, among the Bong-trees walking
 Where the early pumpkins blow,
 To a little heap of stones
 Came the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.
 There he heard a Lady talking,
 To some milk-white Hens of Dorking,--
 'Tis the lady Jingly Jones!
 'On that little heap of stones
 'Sits the Lady Jingly Jones!'
 Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò,
 Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.

III

'Lady Jingly! Lady Jingly!
 'Sitting where the pumpkins blow,
 'Will you come and be my wife?'
 Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.
 'I am tired of living singly,--
 'On this coast so wild and shingly,--
 'I'm a-weary of my life:
 'If you'll come and be my wife,
 'Quite serene would be my life!'
 Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò,
 Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.

“The Courtship of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò,” from the complete works of Edward Lear, 2001.

In “The table and the chair,” the table and the chair are defined in terms of each other as complementary terms which both have four legs, and their ability to walk is disputed, bringing into consideration the matter of identity and subject vs. object.

Table 2: The table and the chair/ The duck and the kangaroo

<p>I</p> <p>Said the Table to the Chair, 'You can hardly be aware, 'How I suffer from the heat, 'And from chilblains on my feet! 'If we took a little walk, 'We might have a little talk! 'Pray let us take the air! Said the Table to the Chair.</p> <p>II</p> <p>Said the Chair unto the Table, 'Now you <i>know</i> we are not able! 'How foolishly you talk, 'When you know we <i>cannot</i> walk! Said the Table, with a sigh, 'It can do no harm to try, 'I've as many legs as you, 'Why can't we walk on two?'</p> <p>III</p> <p>So they both went slowly down, And walked about the town With a cheerful bumpy sound, As they toddled round and round. And everybody cried, As they hastened to their side, 'See! the Table and the Chair 'Have come out to take the air!'</p>	<p>I</p> <p>Said the Duck to the Kangaroo, 'Good gracious! how you hop! Over the fields and the water too, As if you never would stop! My life is a bore in this nasty pond, And I long to go out in the world beyond! I wish I could hop like you! Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.</p> <p>II</p> <p>'Please give me a ride on your back! Said the Duck to the Kangaroo. 'I would sit quite still, and say nothing but "Quack," The whole of the long day through! And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee, Over the land, and over the sea;— Please take me a ride! O do! Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.</p> <p>III</p> <p>Said the Kangaroo to the Duck, 'This requires some little reflection; Perhaps on the whole it might bring me luck, And there seems but one objection, Which is, if you'll let me speak so bold, Your feet are unpleasantly wet and cold, And would probably give me the roo- Matiz!' said the Kangaroo.</p>
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“The table and the chair”; 2. “The Duck and the Kangaroo”, from *Nonsense Songs*, 1871.

In “The Duck and the Kangaroo” and in “The Owl and the Pussycat,” odd couples are placed together, and the same happens in the *nonsense botany*, where everyday household items or animals are mixed with plants, such as tigers and lilies, a stunning dinner bell, a clock that ticks, a circular tub, a rigid broom, a useful pair of boots or dogs that bark really loud. All these pairs are brought together arbitrarily, and exist in disequilibrium and constant tension and opposition which are never brought to association to the general understanding of common sense and constant challenge the supposed worldly knowledge necessary to grasp and to attribute meaning and sense to things.

Image 1: The Bountiful Beetle



**The Bountiful Beetle,
 who always carried a Green Umbrella
 when it didn't rain,
 and left it at home when it did.**

The Bountiful Beetle, from the complete works of Edward Lear, 2001.

In the above excerpt by Edward Lear presented from the *The complete verse and other nonsense*, organized by Vivien Noakes and published in 2001, we have a beetle that is characterised by the fact that it carried a green umbrella when it did not rain and left it at home when it did, completely contradicting the very purpose of using an umbrella. The beetle is also characterised as bountiful, or abundant, but the images shows us that the umbrella is quite small and does not seem to provide much cover. This short text already provides us with a variety of unusual pairings, especially when we consider that the beetle has a thick layer which would not get wet so easily, it is abundant and yet paired with a tiny umbrella which is not brought out when it rains (which defuses its very purpose and makes it unnecessary).

In Qorpo Santo's selected poems, we can see a number of opposing pairs and unusual pairings in his characters. In the poem "A pine tree," "I" and "tree" are one and two at the same time.

Table 3: Um pinheiro/ A pine tree

Um pinheiro	A pine tree
Juntei-me a um pinheiro, Ele disse-me: Ai! Chegue-se para lá Não vê não – que me dá Abalo imenso, – Conquanto extenso!? (Qorpo Santo, "Um Pinheiro", 1877, <i>Poemas</i>)	I coupled with a pine tree He said to me: Ah! Move over Don't you see – that this comes as a serious blow, – However profound!? (Qorpo Santo, "A pine Tree," <i>Poems</i>)

In four of his poems that figure in this analysis, the characterisation of characters and interaction is very similar. In all his selected poems, we can see that characters are only defined in terms of each other (a man and a pine tree, a man and a hamper, a man and a lamp, a man and a candlestick); their existence being nothing more than the mirror image of the other one.

The characters in the poems have no names and cannot be defined or referred to in any other way than the way in which they are characterised in the poems, making it impossible to consider them outside the sense and simultaneous lack of sense and perpetual disequilibrium that shapes the poems. In them, the pair of characters interact and change precisely because they stay the same. Therefore, if we consider the two terms as two extremes, they are always related and experiencing tension, which is never resolved, with the opposition remaining present and the disequilibrium and movement between the two being permanent. An example of this is the poem titled "Penetração" ("Penetration"), in which a lamp is seen to dance and to scream, later being paired with a ballerina, which later goes on to become a flute, a tenor, a bass player, and a contralto, without ever settling with one established identity, forever sliding⁶ and evading the present, according to Lecercle (190).

In Qorpo Santo's selected plays, the characters' identity and their names are a major cause for contention and discussion of opposing pairs and representation

of opposition. The name changes that happen in the plays create difficulty for the recognition, identity, knowledge of the characters involved. Therefore, we must tread lightly, for what we assume to know is not what actually is, and sense is not a powerful and strong platform to have, for it keeps sliding and becoming something else, evading persevering in the present, maintaining this fortuitous and wandering existence.

The characters' names and identities are reflections of what is perceived in the form and content of the plays: that common sense is no longer what drives the play or the actions contained within, and the names no longer hold the power to represent someone to the world and the knowledge that the world has of them. In *Mateus e Mateusa* (*Mateus and Mateusa*), a play centred around an 80-year-old couple with three daughters and a servant, the wife's name was Jônatas, and she changed it to Mateusa, to fit better with her husband's name, which gives rise to the fighting that is the end of the comedy. In *A separação de dois esposos* (*The separation of two spouses*) which is a play centred around the marriage of Esculápio and Farmácia, and in their immoral acts, Esculápio's name, inspired by the roman god of medicine and healing, later changes to Larápio, which is a pejorative term to designate burglars, which is interesting for he does not steal anything and later ends up killing someone related to his wife, even though he is named after a god of healing; Fidélis, Farmácia's lover, is also referred to by another name, Jadeu, and his former name, Fidélis, refers to fidelity and trustworthiness, which does not suit a lover. Farmácia is also called by her lover by the name of Marília. In *Certa entidade em busca de outra* (*Certain entity in search of another*), Brás, Ferrabrás and Satanás' names are connected by rhyme and sometimes by adding a prefix to the father's name in the case of Ferrabrás, and the identity of Ferrabrás' mother and Brás' wife is unclear and changed in a short amount of time (3 days), for Micaela is a chatty and annoying woman, and also Ferrabrás' mother, and more women are presented as his mother, and the identity of his mother fluctuates over a period of a few days.

Table 4: *Certa entidade em busca de outra*

Ferrabrás – Ora, meu pai, sempre o Sr. me está dando mães! Há três dias era uma velha de que todos têm nojo, porque lhe sai tabaco pelas fossas, mormente pelos ouvidos, pela boca, e até pelos olhos! Ontem era uma torta deste olho; aleijada desta perna (*batendo com a bengala na perna direita do pai*) (Qorpo Santo, “*Certa entidade em busca de outra*”, 1868)

Ferrabrás – Well, my father, you're always giving me mothers! Three days ago it was an old hag who disgusts everybody because tobacco keeps coming out of her nose, above all it keeps coming out of her ears, her mouth and even her eyes! Yesterday it was a woman with a crooked eye; crippled of one leg (*beating his father's right leg with the cane*). (Qorpo Santo, “*Certain entity in search of another*”)

“*Certa entidade em busca de outra*”, 1868, from Qorpo-Santo's *Encyclopaedia*.

These excerpts resemble Lecercle (1994)'s idea of the text of nonsense as “a patchwork, its pieces are of various origins, different materials, not only literary pieces, odds and ends of forgotten genres, borrowed bits extorted through parody” (195), and one of its popular themes is natural history, which enjoyed

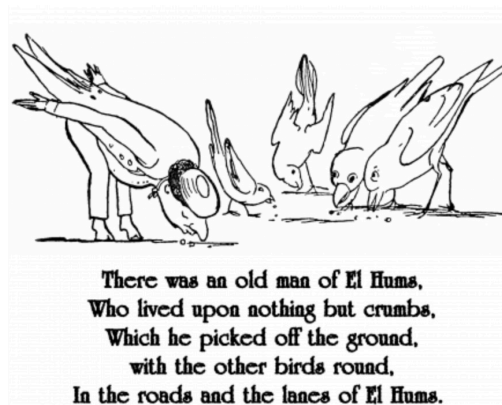
great popularity in the Victorian era, when “exploration, taxonomy, classification and systematic organization of a field of knowledge within a closed space” (203) comes to full bloom in nonsense; in it, according to Lecercle:

the museum is the equivalent of the dictionary in the field of natural history: it turns living beings into separate items, each bearing a number, which can be manipulated as one handles tokens in a game of draughts, or words in a dictionary. Nonsense manifests a taste for naming in the classificatory sense of the term – the heroes of Lear’s limericks are so many specimens. (203-204)

All these pairs are brought together arbitrarily, and exist in disequilibrium and constant tension and opposition that is never brought to association to the general understanding of common sense and constant challenge the supposed worldly knowledge necessary to grasp and to attribute meaning and sense to things.

3.2 Structure

Image 2: There was an old man of el hums

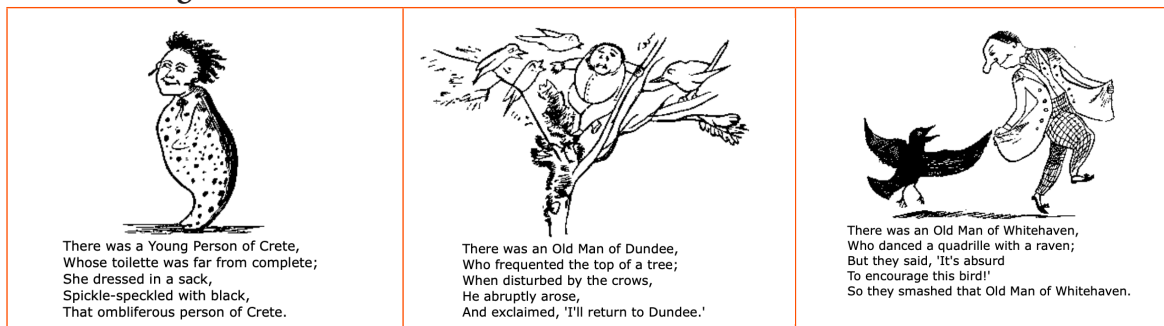


“There was an old man of El Hums”, from the complete works of Edward Lear, 2001.

In the above limerick by Edward Lear, from *The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense*, published in 2001, which follows the traditional form of five lines with rhymes AABBA (hums/crums; ground/round; hums/hums) we see, in the verbal and visual content, a series of oppositions and paradoxes that never settle: an old man (who does not appear to be old at all, for he can bend down with extreme ease) resembles the birds, eating nothing but crumbs off the ground with the other birds, being from El Hums (which might relate humming with the sounds of birds), and having his tailcoat resemble the birds’ feathers and his hands and arms resemble the birds wings, and his nose resembling the birds’ beak. Another thing is that the man is dressed formally to do something animals do, and he does this in roads and lanes, built by men that envisioned an urban environment, instead of using them for their purpose of transportation. The

mixing of categories that involve humans and animals can also be seen in the limericks below, which also bring about a series of paradoxes and oppositions:

Image 3: Limericks



(1) There was a Young Person of Crete, (2) There was an Old Man of Dundee, (3) There was an Old Man of Whitehaven, from the complete works of Edward Lear, 2001.

In the first limerick on the left, “There was a Young Person of Crete,” the woman is dressed in a sack that makes her resemble a caterpillar, blurring the boundaries between human and animal, much like the second limerick in the middle, “There was an Old Man of Dundee,” in which a man frequented the top of a tree (as birds do) and is disturbed when crows come up, showcasing a human having a behaviour of an animal, and like in the third limerick, “There was an Old Man of Whitehaven,” who danced with a raven, and the absurdity noticed in the limerick in the bird is resolved by smashing the man, another incongruity.

The matter of opposing pairs, nonsense, paradox and disequilibrium is not only perceived in the language, but also in the structure that shapes it. In all the poems analysed, a man interacts with an inanimate object or plant (pine tree, candlestick, hamper and lamp) and the disturbed party is the object. In all of them, we have a focus on disequilibrium brought by the man in the beginning and a softening of the disturbance by humour which is unsettling for the conflict is never explained nor resolved. One poem that deserves a closer look is “Penetração” (“Penetration”), an eight-stanza poem that refers to lamps as dancing ballerinas. The whole poem is built under a great disequilibrium and it is difficult to see it as anything other than a constant shuffling of identities that are continually displaced and happen on the boundary between things and propositions, forever sliding in its extension and never revealing any depth.

In Qorpo Santo’s selected plays, which are usually short comedies made up of two or three acts, we always have a couple (Lindo and Linda, Mateus and Mateusa, Farmácia and Esculápio, Brás and Micaela) in the beginning that at first seems to be fine but soon engages in fighting (a fight because the woman has two husbands, or because the wife has been unfaithful and the fidelity of the husband proved to bring no good for him, or because the wife cannot divorce her husband, or because who the wife and mother is in the play is not clear and she has more than one name and identity), and said fighting is amplified throughout each play and culminates in an unclear ending with the fight being the focus but

neither being resolved nor being continued, but erupting in a broken form of past and future events clashing into each other that is incongruent. In Qorpo Santo's plays, nothing ever settles or stays the same: the names of characters change, the couples change, the fighting opponents change, the marriage circumstances change, and the very idea of fidelity and separation is incongruent in itself for either a woman is married to two different men, or the woman is faithful to her lover but not to her husband, or the fighting couple wants nothing more than to die in each other's arms. In both Qorpo Santo's plays and poems, the opposing pairs never cease to become one thing and another at the same time, and sense is built in between an excess of sense (names are given, couples are placed side by side, family unities are presented, morality is discussed) and a simultaneous absence of it (depravity and immorality ends up being the centre of the play and its organizing principle, with names, couples, families and traditions falling to chaos and being deconstructed and left in a void of references in which common sense means nothing and nonsense means potentially everything).

The change and the tension brought upon by fighting is at the centre of the action in "Mateus e Mateusa" ("Mateus and Mateusa"), a comedy of one act and three scenes in which Mateus, the husband, fights with Mateusa, the wife. Throughout the play, we can perceive many instances of pairs in opposition, of paradoxes and of uneven and unbalanced circumstances, like the fight between husband and wife, the fact that Mateus has a nose made of wax and a fake ear, the fact that Mateusa is an 80 year old lady with a 10 year old daughter, or merely the fact that these two old people manage to have a fight so fearsome (with the throwing of books and chairs) that their daughters flee and no one resolves, but the play ultimately draws to a close when the servant, a usually unauthoritative figure, ends the play with a big speech (usually in the nineteenth century, servants did not have that much of a voice). The play's title, "Mateus and Mateusa", has a repetitive quality to it that emphasises their relationship and the fact they are a couple, but the incessant fighting which culminates in the end of the comedy is at the heart of their existence as a couple, and therefore the duality can never be free of tension, opposition and paradox.

Table 5: Mateus e Mateusa

Mateus (*abraçando-a*) Não; não, minha querida Mateusa; tu bem sabes que isso não passa de impertinências dos 80. Tem paciência. Vai me aturando, que te hei de deixar minha universal herdeira (*atirando com uma perna*) do reumatismo que o demo do teu Avô torto meteu-me nesta perna! (*atirando com um braço*) das inchações que todas as primaveras arrebetam nestes braços! (*abrindo a camisa*) das chagas que tua mãe com seus lábios de vênus imprimiu-me neste peito! E finalmente (*arrancando a cabeleira*): da calvície que tu me pegaste, arrancando-me ora os cabelos brancos, ora os pretos, conforme as mulheres com quem eu falava! Se elas (*virando-se para o público*) os tinham pretos, assim que a sujeitinha podia, arrancava-me os brancos, sob o frívolo pretexto de que me namoravam! Se elas os tinham brancos, fazia-me o mesmo, sob ainda o frivolíssimo pretexto de que eu as namorava (*batendo com as mãos e caminhando*). E assim é; e assim é, - que calvo! Calvo, calvo, calvo, calvo, calvo (algum tanto cantando) calvô...calvô...calvô...ô...ô...ô!... (QS, *Mateus e Mateusa*, p.2)

[...]

Mateus (*gritando*) – Ai! Cuidado quando atirar, Sra. D. Mateusa! Não continuo a aceitar seus presentes, se com eles me quiser quebrar o nariz! (*Apalpa este, e diz:*) Não partiu, não quebrou, não entortou! (*E como o nariz tem parte de cera, fica com ele assaz torto. Ainda não acaba de endireita-lo, Mateusa atira-lhe com outro de “História Sagrada”, que lhe bate numa orelha postiça, e que por isso com a pancada cai; dizendo-lhe:*) Eis o terceiro e último que lhe dou para...os fins que o Sr. quiser aplicar! (QS, “*Mateus e Mateusa*”, p.8, 1877)

Mateus (*hugging her*) No; no, my dear Mateusa; you know very well that this is nothing more than impertinences of an old man. Have patience. Bear with me, and I shall leave you my sole heir (*throwing a leg at her*) of my rheumatism that your fucking crooked grandfather put in this leg of mine! (*throwing an arm at her*) of the swelling that all those springs have caused to sprout in these arms! (*opening his shirt*) of the ulcers that your mother with her lips of Venus impressed in this chest of mine! And finally (*gouging out his hair*) of the baldness that you inherited from me, by sometimes plucking out my black hairs and at other times my white hairs, depending on the women I talked to! If they (*turning to the audience*) had them black, as soon as you could, you would pluck out my white hairs, under the frivolous pretext that they were dating me! If they had them white, you would do the same, under the insanely frivolous pretext that I dated them (*clapping his hands and walking*). And this is how it is; so bald! Bald, bald, bald, bald, bald (*somewhat singing*) bald...bald...bald... [...]

Mateus (*shouting*) – Ouch! Be careful when you throw things, Mrs. Mateusa! I won't accept your gifts any longer, if you wish to break my nose with them! (*Touches his nose and says:*) It didn't split, it didn't break, it isn't crooked! (*and since the nose is partly made of wax, his nose becomes somewhat crooked. He hasn't even finished straightening it, Mateusa throws at him another book, “Holy History”, which lands in a fake ear, and with the force of the impact the ear falls to the ground; Mateusa says:*)This is the third and last one I bestow upon you for you to do with it what you will!

Mateus e Mateusa, p. 8, 1877, from Qorpo-Santo's *Encyclopaedia*.

In “Certa entidade em busca de outra” (“Certain entity in search of another”), a comedy of two acts, the fighting is at the very core of the play: Brás, an old man, engages in a fight with Ferrabrás, his adoptive son, with Micaela (one of Ferrabrás' mothers) and with the devil. The play's title, “Certain entity in search of another”, is never quite reflected in the play, but it is alluded in the beginning, with Brás seeing the Devil and Judas through the curtains, Brás and the devil coming together, Brás coming together with Micaela, and later Micaela and Ferrabrás opposing each other and being joined by Brás. The whole play seems to revolve around the idea of unresolved oppositions and building tensions which derail the characters identities, their actions, the whole play and characterizes its very structure, which is marked by tension and opposition from the beginning, with the fighting between Brás and Micaela, to the end, with the fight between Micaela and Ferrabrás. In the scene that follows, the mistaken identity takes a whole new shape and entrenches itself in the structure, making characters flow in between places for contradicting reasons all at the same time, while also deconstructing expectations and failing to provide new ones:

Table 6: Certa entidade em busca de outra

Brás (*chegando-se apalpando os peitos de Tagarela*) – Que pomos deliciosos!

Micaela – Oh! Sr. Brás! Queira retirar-se da minha presença! O Sr. bem sabe que eu não sou dessas mulheres mundanas, para com as quais se procede de tal modo!

Brás – Desculpe-me, Sra. Tagarela! Pareceu-me – duas lindas laranjas; é por isso que quis tocá-los.

Micaela – Pois não continue a ter desses enganãos, porque podem ter más consequências!

Satanás – Sim! Sim! (À parte:) Penso que são conhecidos há muito! É talvez minha presença que os está incomodando! Retiro-me portanto.

(*Vai saindo; Brás o agarra*)

Brás – Onde vai? Aonde vai? Somos companheiros; e se não chega para dois ao mesmo tempo, há de chegar passada uma hora!

Satanás – Não! Não! Sempre tive, tenho e terei medo de mulheres. É para mim o objeto de mais perigo que o...Ah! Não digo! Mas fique certo que sim!

Micaela – Passem bem! Passem bem, meus Srs.! (*Retirando-se com a frente para ambos, e entrando em um dos quartos*)

Brás – (*fazendo um cumprimento e seguindo-a*) – Então já vai? Não acha cedo? Eu...sim; mas...Vamos juntos!(*Enfia-se pela porta, atrás de Micaela*)

Satanás – (*pondo as mãos*) – Céus! Meu Deus! Que imoralidade! Deixar a minha presença, e a minha visita, e meterem-se em quarto...em um quarto em presença...É audácia! É atrevimento! Mas eu os hei de compor! (*Puxa a porta e fecha por fora*) Agora hão de sair quando eu estiver cansado – de comer, de dormir, e de viver! Já se vê pois que aí têm que morrer, se alguém os não acudir, e secos como uma varinha de...como um palito! Porque já se sabe: eu cá hei de durar pelo menos cem anos! Ou o que é mais certo – não morro mais! (*Metendo a chave na algibeira*). Cá vai! Vou dar meu passeio, e não sei se cá voltarei mais! (QS, “Certa entidade em busca de outra”, 1866, p. 3)

Brás (*entering and groping the chatty woman's breasts*) – What delicious pomos!

Micaela – Oh! Mr. Brás! Remove yourself from my sight! You know very well that I am not one of those women who can be treated in this way!

Brás – I am sorry Miss Chatty! It seemed to me to be two beautiful oranges; this is why I wanted to touch them.

Micaela – So don't continue mistaking them for oranges, for you may face some dire consequences if you do so again!

The devil – Yes! Yes! (*Separately*) I believe you are acquainted for a long time! I'll retire myself. (*Starts to leave; Brás reaches to stop him from leaving*)

Brás – Where are you going? Where are you going? We are friends; and if it can't be done for two at the same time, it will be done eventually!

The devil – No! No! I have always had, still have and will always have fear of women. To me they are the most dangerous object that...Oh! I can't say it! But rest assured that they are!

Micaela – Farewell! Farewell my lords! (*Leaving while facing both of them, and entering one of the rooms*).

Brás – (*doing a greeting and following her*) – So are you going already? Isn't it too soon? I...yes...but...Let's go together! (*Throws himself through the door behind her*)

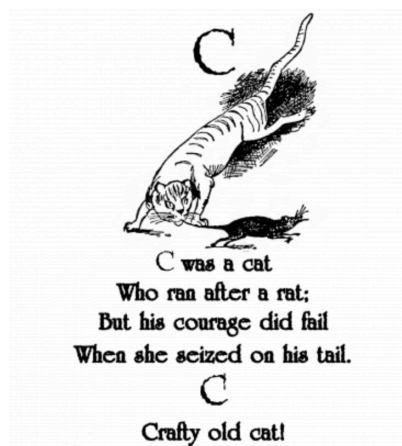
The devil – (*putting his hands*) Heavens! What an immorality! To leave my presence, and my visit, and to throw themselves into a room...in a room in the presence...What audacity! What a nerve! But I will put it right! (*Pulls the door and locks it from the outside*) Now they will get out when I'm tired – of eating, of sleeping, of living! Everyone can see that they shall die in there, if no one comes to help them, and dry as a wand, as a stick! For it is known: I am to last for at least a hundred years! Or even more accurate – I shall never die! (*Putting the key in his pocket*). Here it goes. I'll take a walk, and I'm not sure I'll be coming back!

“Certa entidade em busca de outra”, 1866, p. 3, from Qorpo-Santo's *Encyclopaedia*.

In *A separação de dois esposos* (*The separation of two spouses*), a comedy of three acts and six scenes, the wife is named Farmácia, which means pharmacy, and is also known as Marília; and Esculápio, the husband, who is named after the roman god of medicine and healing, is also known in the play as Larápio, or burglar, and Jadeu, which makes his identity – as all identities in Qorpo Santo's nonsense are – a fluid affair. The separation the title referenced (*The separation of the two spouses*) is not as related to Esculápio and Farmácia (as we might have thought), who end up dying together, but to the couple of servants. In this way, the unexpected becomes the common sense of the play; what we thought we knew is reversed and inverted time and time again, and we are left with situations that are simultaneously one thing and another, never quite settling: the things she will inherit no one would ask for; the nose is made of wax, but the man has young daughters, even though he is 80 years old, and so is his wife.

3.3 Genre

Image 4: Alphabet



Nonsense Alphabet, from Edward Lear's complete works, 2001.

In the excerpt above, from Edward Lear's alphabet (illustrated alphabets were a common genre that Lear reinvents in nonsense), from *The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense*, published in 2001, we have a depiction of the letter C as a cat (instead of bringing historical or biblical figures) running after a rat with mitigated courage, and yet is characterised as being *crafty*. Usually this word is used to indicate ability. In this case, however, the cat fails. Thus, we can say that a paradox shapes the very proposition of this short poem, for if the cat caught the rat's tail, maybe it did not fail at all, which brings us to that in-between place of nonsense, of failing and succeeding at the same time, and of never ceasing to move in the present. The illustration also suggests a movement that resembles the form of the letter C. In Lear's works, other genres also come into play to shape his nonsense, like the botany manuals and the zoological depictions of animals for which Lear was primarily known for as an illustrator of zoological manuals (as can be seen below, in his book about a family of parrots) and the scientific description of plants, as can be seen below, in Lear's nonsense botany, his animals that showcase each letter of the alphabet as in a children's primer, and in his nonsense trees:

Image 5: Nonsense birds and nonsense botany

1. A plate from Edward Lear's *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots*, published in 1832. 2. *Bottlephorkia Spoonifolia*. 3. *Manypeeplia Upsidownia*, both from Edward Lear's complete works, 2001.

We can understand, therefore, how in the selected writing of Qorpo Santo and Edward Lear, not only characters and structures are placed in opposing pairs that exist at the surface and on the margin between sense and nonsense, order and disorder, things and propositions, but also genres. In the case of Qorpo Santo, a hybridization of genres is undertaken, having each genre juxtaposed and opposed against one another and figuring in each excerpt in a way, but never fully taking hold of the writings as a whole and maintain a constant tension and opposition between one genre and the other, with the existence of extremes and disequilibrium persevering from one genre to the next. The comedy of manners is one of the genres perceived in Qorpo Santo's writings, and can be described as:

[...] Uma espécie de retomada de elementos da farsa, mas com ênfase na caricatura de tipos sociais e na crítica de costumes. Embora não se coloque como um projeto político-cultural do tipo do Realismo (“Crítico para corrigir”, dizia a geração de Eça de Queirós) e se proponha mais a ser uma diversão inocente para as famílias, uma vez que, no geral, não desafia a visão de mundo do espectador pretendido, nem seus preconceitos mais arraigados, ela pode, de tempos em tempos, ser encarada como perigosa ou até mesmo subversiva por parte de poderes cuja estabilidade se veja ameaçada. (...) A mensagem da comédia de costumes, numa torção de perspectiva tipicamente žižekiana, não é a de “riamos da sociedade ou riamos junto a ela”, mas sim a de que “rir da sociedade é rir junto a ela”. A revolução romântica estabelece um movimento duplo – e ambíguo – de permitir a crítica e a derrisão do próprio burguês, desde que esse burguês não possua as virtudes salvadoras da juventude, da beleza, do idealismo ou do enamoramento. Até a estouvada Mariquinha, de *O Judas em sábado de aleluia*, recebe o castigo de ser dada em casamento a um velho, mas, como ela reconhece, melhor marido velho do que marido nenhum, risco que ela corria de fato, caso se espalhasse a notícia de que ela era “namoradeira”.⁷ (Paula 2016, 25-26)

In *Certa entidade em busca de outra*, the devil and Brás are friends, there is an intense fight between Brás, an old man, and Micaela, a woman, in which she is crushed, her leg is broken and her dress is ripped, and Ferrabrás, Brás' son, also engages in a fight with Micaela because of his angst due to the many different mothers he supposedly has, but all of that inversion of the rules of the world is somewhat diminished or erased by the final battle in the end, which, according to the guidelines at the end of the play, is supposed to be a great mockery filled with jumps and nonsense words followed by a general disregard for Brás' feelings.

In *Eu sou a vida, eu não sou a morte*, the matter of having more than one husband, having married a woman that is already married to someone else, adopting a daughter of another man and of killing a man that has stolen one's wife are all themes and situations that are laughing matters in the comedy that twists the perspective portrayed but not to a point of actually challenge the established powers and institutions, for even though the references might seem reversed and questioned, marriage is at the end an upheld institution, for the winning party is the one that was married to the woman in the first place, and the one that stole the woman is punished in the end.

In *A separação de dois esposos*, Farmácia, the wife, is a married middle-aged woman with children, but has a boyfriend, and ultimately the existence of the boyfriend makes her husband realise that immorality is a better course of action and Esculápio ends up killing his wife's relative. Nevertheless, Farmácia and Esculápio still decide to stay together, to die together and to seek happiness in heaven together, and the couple of servants, even though they hint at homosexuality, end up going their separate ways and not challenging the institution of couples being made up of a man and a woman in the nineteenth century.

In *Mateus e Mateusa*, Mateusa wants to leave Mateus and engages in a terrible fight with him, throwing books, breaking his nose, ear and throwing chairs at him, but in the end all of them fall as one and the servant upholds the accepted discourse of the ones in power, that if the rights and responsibilities are not fulfilled, despair will eventually follow.

Another of the genres widely perceived in Qorpo Santo's plays is the farce, with its mechanism of fooling and malice, which is clearly used in some of the plays analysed here to reverse and invert the common sense, bringing out the paradoxes, showing the seams and revealing the mirror image of sense and order which structures the plays:

A farsa funda-se sobre um mecanismo de trapaça que apresenta técnicas específicas. Ela ultrapassa a etapa primária do enganador-enganado pela elaboração de um mecanismo muito mais complexo, engenhosamente conduzido segundo os diferentes artificios da trapaça e da malícia. Os mecanismos da trapaça podem seguir combinações mais ou menos elaboradas: eles podem se resumir a um simples retorno da ação ou a um retorno duplo. Em sua estrutura, ela nos revela oposições e simetrias de estratégias que incluem diversos jogos de enganos: a uma situação inicial ocorre uma situação paralela que inverte a primeira e uma nova ação que inverte por sua vez a segunda, sem, no entanto, anulá-la. O

recurso essencial inerente ao gênero é a astúcia. (...) Em todo caso, a estrutura de base da farsa é sempre fixada pelo jogo de enganar alguém, revelando uma construção imutável e aplicável a toda farsa, independente do grau de complexidade da ação.⁸ (Machado 2009, 125)

In *Eu sou a vida, eu não sou a morte*, an initial situation of Lindo and Linda being in love and happily married is destroyed by a parallel situation (the young man that is married to Linda and Lindo having stolen Linda) which reverses the first situation and a new action (the death of Lindo) which inverts the second situation without annulling it, for Manuelinha is the daughter of Lindo and a symbol of the second situation having arisen at some given point. In *A separação de dois esposos*, in the initial situation, Farmácia and Esculápio argue a lot and Farmácia has a lover, but this situation is thrown by the second situation in which the lover is found by the husband at his house and mentions through the *carte blanche* that he trusts Esculápio, and Farmácia's husband, instead of getting irritated with his wife's lover, ends up feeling happy for having this trust deposited in him, which is another situation that inverts the second action (of Farmácia and her lover being found out) but does not cancel it out, for Esculápio goes on to kill someone in Farmácia's family.

Another important genre when considering Qorpo Santo's plays and poems is the satire. For Brummack,

A sátira de tradição lucílica, também denominada romana, caracteriza-se pela utilização de hexâmetros e pela finalidade moralizadora dos textos. Nelas o riso é utilizado como meio de denúncia dos vícios da humanidade. (...) Já a tradição menipéica, de origem grega, foi introduzida na literatura latina por Varrão. (...) Nessa tradição, há nas obras uma miscelânea de diferentes metros, inclusive de prosa e verso em um mesmo texto. O riso é sua marca distintiva, sem assumir, no entanto, o caráter exclusivamente moralista da tradição romana⁹. (Brummack 1971 *apud* Soethe 2003, 156)

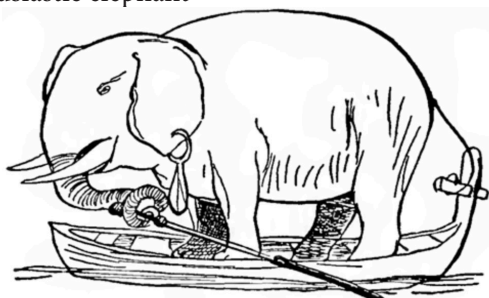
(IIb) Em literatura, o termo pode referir-se a qualquer obra que procure a punição ou ridicularização de um objeto através da troça e da crítica direta; ou então, a meros elementos de troça, crítica ou agressão, em obras de qualquer tipo.

(IIc) A partir desse último significado, ainda bastante amplo, é que a teoria da literatura atribui um sentido mais específico à sátira, qual seja o de representação estética e crítica daquilo que se considera errado (contrário à norma vigente). Isso implicaria, na obra, a intenção de atingir determinados objetivos sociais¹⁰. (Brummack 1971 *apud* Soethe 2003, 157)

In Qorpo Santo's poems and plays, the satirical aspect is constantly present; in "*Um Pinheiro*" ("A pine tree"), we have a mockery of a man and a tree and of a specific behaviour; in "*Incivilidade*" ("Incivility"), we have a man and a candlestick which again are opposed and object of mockery; in the plays, the comic aspect arises from the fact that the wrong acts are represented in a way that deconstructs the readers' expectation of said situations, portraits of everyday life and behaviour bringing about laughter, violence, fragmentation and incongruity.

3.4 Concepts

Image 6: The enthusiastic elephant



**The Enthusiastic Elephant,
who ferried himself across the water with the
Kitchen Poker and a New pair of Ear-rings.**

“The enthusiastic elephant”, from Edward Lear’s complete works, 2001.

In the above excerpt by Edward Lear, we have an elephant filled with enthusiasm (an interesting adjective because usually elephants move slowly and sit still, which are elements of their behaviour not necessarily associated with enthusiasm) that ferries himself with a tiny boat, a kitchen poker and a pair of earrings. All the concepts are paradoxical: the elephant would sink if he ever undertook such an endeavour; it would never have any use for a kitchen poker or earrings. The concepts in which Lear draws upon to set up his world of nonsense are, as such, always defying sense and meaning in an action that always evade definition, displaces the extension of possible meanings, revels in ambivalence and ambiguity and becomes unlimited in its never-ending present quality of perpetual movement. In the limerick below, we have the present moment of perpetual movement represented by the lady who stands in one foot, and by the birds that are caught mid-flight:

Image 7: There was a Young Lady whose bonnet



**There was a Young Lady whose bonnet came untied when the birds sat upon it;
But she said, “I don’t care! all the birds in the air
Are welcome to sit on my bonnet!”**

“There was a Young Lady whose bonnet”, from Edward Lear’s complete works, 2001.

In Qorpo Santo's poems and plays, some concepts are drawn upon, like that of coupling (like in "A pine tree" and all comedies), marriage and death ("I am liveliness, I am not annihilation", "The separation of the two spouses"), aggression, destruction ("Certain entity in search of another", "Mateus and Mateusa"). The paradoxical and contradictory ideas ("Chatting with a hamper" and "Incivility") and the use of words that imply contradiction but later expand their possible meanings is also explored, much like love and discord, unity and multiplicity, production and destruction, objects and subjects, silence and noise, objects and walking, or, in the case of the excerpt that follows, the *carte blanche*, which instead of being a way of depositing all confidence in someone, is a subterfuge for escape, not only of the predicament the character faces, but also of the predicament of defining his existence in a way that does not call for opposition:

Table 7: Certa entidade em busca de outra

<p>Fidélis – Vim de propósito (<i>revelando certo receio em suas palavras e em seus gestos</i>) trazer-lhe uma carta de um de seus maiores amigos. Ei-la (<i>apresenta-lhà</i>).</p> <p>Larápio – (<i>abrindo, e Fidélis escapando-se; aberta a carta, que nada tem escrito, Fidélis já se acha na rua</i>)</p> <p>– Que cachorro! Que audaz! Vir tra-zer-me uma carta branca! Que quererá dizer isso? Carta branca! Isto faz um Rei a um Presidente, quando neste deposita toda a confiança! Esperemos, ou refletiremos. O papel traz a coroa imperial. Querem ver que estou feito Presidente da Província!? E com carta branca (<i>para a mulher, que até então, como é seu costume, estava calada, arrumando a casa</i>): Sabes, minha queridinha? (<i>abraçando-a</i>) estou feito Presidente da Província; e com carta branca! (<i>salta; pula; toca castanholas; e faz o diabo – de alegria</i>)</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>(Qorpo Santo, "Certa entidade em busca de outra", 1868)</p>	<p>Fidélis – I have come deliberately (<i>betraying some apprehension in his words and in his gestures</i>) to hand you a letter from one of your best friends. Here it is (<i>presents the letter</i>).</p> <p>Larápio – (<i>opening the letter, while Fidélis escapes; after the letter, which has a blank interior, is opened, Fidélis is already in the street</i>) – What a villain! What audacity! To bring me a blank letter! What might it mean? Carte blanche! This is something that a King does to a President when in him deposits all confidence! Let's wait, or let's think this through. The paper has the imperial crown. Would you believe they have made me President of the Province!? And with a <i>carte blanche</i> (<i>to the woman, who up until this point, in keeping with her style, was quiet, fixing the house</i>): Would you believe, my dearest? (<i>embracing her</i>) I have been made President of the Province; and with a <i>carte blanche</i>! (<i>jumps; hops; plays castanets; raises hell – out of sheer joy</i>)</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>(Qorpo Santo, Certain entity in search of another)</p>
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"Certa entidade em busca de outra", from Qorpo-Santo's *Encyclopaedia*, 1868.

All these concepts bring about the idea of opposing pairs and opposing unresolved tensions that can be linked to nonsense, paradoxical elements, disequilibrium and perpetual movement.

3.5 Form/Rhyme

Image 8: The owl and the pussy-cat



I

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
 In a beautiful pea green boat,
 They took some honey, and plenty of money,
 Wrapped up in a five pound note.
 The Owl looked up to the stars above,
 And sang to a small guitar,
 'O lovely Pussy! O Pussy my love,
 What a beautiful Pussy you are,
 You are,
 You are!
 What a beautiful Pussy you are!'

“The owl and the pussy-cat”, from Edward Lear’s *Nonsense songs*, 1871.

In Lear’s nonsense song presented above, “The owl and the pussy-cat,” we have the first stanza accompanied by one of the illustrations. This poem is composed by many musical techniques, such as repetition and chorus, and has many words that rhyme, bringing with it a sense of harmony to the story of this eloping couple that first goes on its honeymoon and only after that marries, as can be seen in the second and third stanzas:

Table 8: The owl and the pussy-cat

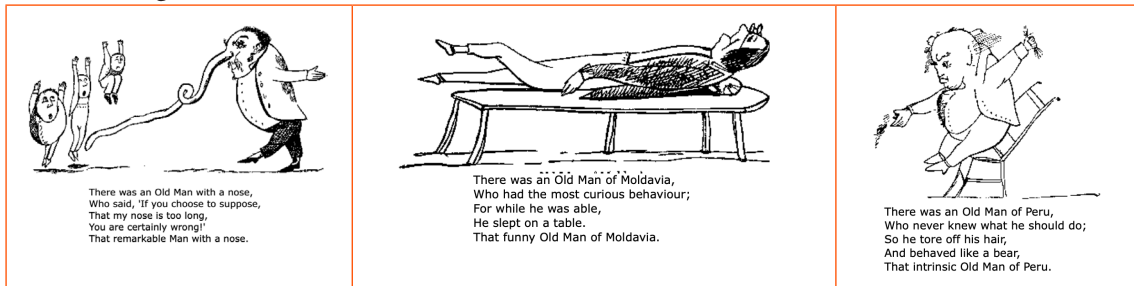
<p>II Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl! How charmingly sweet you sing! O let us be married! too long we have tarried: But what shall we do for a ring?" They sailed away, for a year and a day, To the land where the Bong-Tree grows And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood With a ring at the end of his nose, His nose, His nose, With a ring at the end of his nose.</p>	<p>III "Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will." So they took it away, and were married next day By the Turkey who lives on the hill. They dined on mince, and slices of quince, Which they ate with a runcible spoon; And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand, They danced by the light of the moon, The moon, The moon, They danced by the light of the moon.</p>
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“The owl and the pussy-cat”, from Edward Lear’s *Nonsense songs*, 1871.

In both Lear’s and Santo’s poetry, we have this subversion and simultaneous reaffirmation, which makes the paradox a thematical and formative element to their nonsense.

When we think about formal rhyme, it is important to realise that it first and foremost is a union of opposites based on sound; therefore, it can be considered as an arbitrary joining of terms that otherwise would never be found together and which hold some inherent tension and opposition against one another:

Image 9: More limericks



(1) There was an Old Man with a nose; (2) There was an Old Man of Moldavia; (3) There was an Old Man of Peru; all from Edward Lear's complete works, 2001.

In the first limerick on the left-hand side, "There was an Old Man with a nose," we have an old man with a long nose that claims anyone who thinks his nose is long is wrong; nose and suppose are linked by rhyme, and bring together the paradoxical idea that an assumption about the man's nose being long would be incorrect. In the second limerick in the middle, "There was an Old Man of Moldavia," we have one more instance of the rhyme joining two otherwise unrelated terms: Moldavia and behaviour, able and table (granted, able is contained in the word table, but is otherwise unrelated), which, in the limerick, bring about a set of paradoxical encounters that breathe nonsense and opposition into the overall representation of a curious man who slept in a table while he still had that ability, which is contradictory, for sleeping in a table does not require any special ability and does not seem curious. In the third limerick on the right-hand side, "There was an Old Man of Peru," 'Peru' and 'do' and 'hair' and 'bear' are connected by the rhyme, bringing together a string of absurd events which would not otherwise figure together.

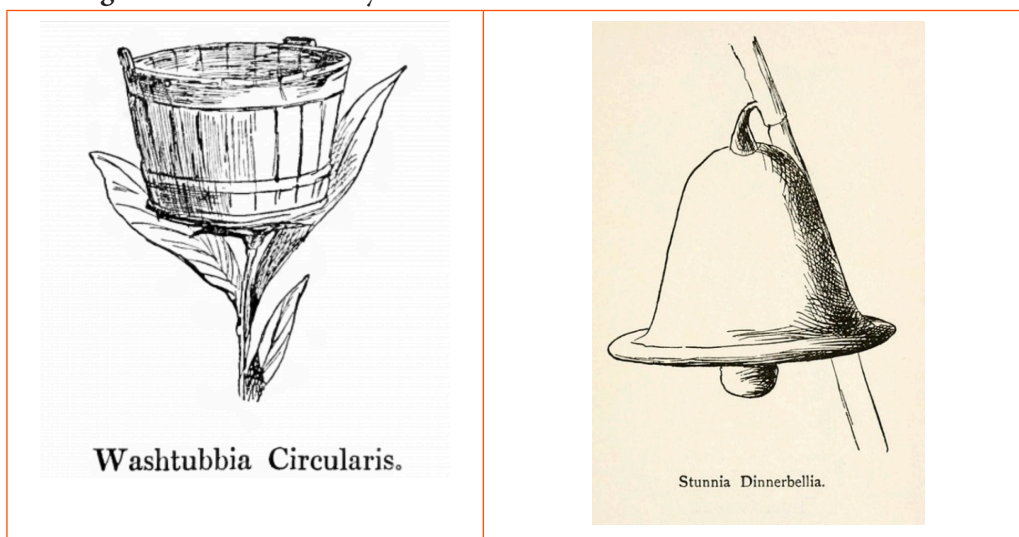
Looking at "*Um Pinheiro*," the rhymes bring together the pine tree with the idea of falling and taking up too much space, merely because of the presence of the man. The idea of unity is followed by an immediate sense of incongruity, for a man alone would never cause a tree to fall and to be made useless just by joining it and doing nothing more.

In "*Penetração*," we have a *lâmparina* (lamp) joined with a ballerina by rhyme, alongside a number of pairings that would never be attributed sense as a pair for they would not necessarily be found together, if only in some cases for belonging to the same categories, as in nouns or verbs. In "*Conversação com um balaio*," we have the build-up of words (as in *bulha* and *barulhas* and in *ouviu* and *viu*) that fit inside each other and also the joining of words by rhyme, as in *sábio/balaio* (wiseman/hamper), which are both nouns but do not make sense together; *ouviu/viu* (listening, seeing) which are both verbs but describe different aspects of something that might be contradictory; *escrever/ser* (writing and being) which are verbs but are not necessarily featured together.

In Qorpo Santo's plays, as in *Mateus and Mateusa*, rhyme is a part of and adds to the comedy and to the dynamic of it, and sometimes even figures in characters names, such as Mateus/Barriôs and Mateusa/Catarina/Pedra/Silvestra or in Brás/Satanás/Ferrabrás as in *Certain entity in search of another*.

4. Discussion

Image 10: Nonsense botany



(1) “Washtubbia Circularis”; (2) “Stunnia Dinnerbellia”, from *Nonsense Songs*, 1871.

In these excerpts of Lear’s Nonsense Botany, we have a play on the very manuals of botany and on the studies of nature and science that were being carried out at the time; this plant is given a scientific name that mimics scientific nomenclature in Latin and its double name for genre and species. In the name, we have the idea of a circular washtub which sprouts from a plant much like a flower. In the second excerpt, a bell which could be used in Victorian times to inform people in a house about dinner being ready is reproduced as a nonsense plant. It is also interesting to note that the Victorian times were a time in which houses became flooded with new inventions and sometimes it might have seemed for kids that they grew in trees given the speed of production. In Qorpo Santo’s *Encyclopedia*, we have this notion of organizing scientific knowledge in tomes, themes and genres that was characteristic of the nineteenth century while at the same time subverting its content which is an aspect that is perceived in both authors works.

We can see, therefore, that there are similarities that can be drawn between Edward Lear and Qorpo Santo in terms of their nonsense, their representation of opposition, pairs, paradoxes and unbalance: both of them organise knowledge in categories, Edward Lear with his limericks, songs and longer poems, botany, alphabets and plants, and Qorpo Santo with his plays, poems organized in his *Encyclopaedia* of nine tomes. Both of them play with language in a nonsensical way establishing limits and going beyond them, placing themselves and their creations between an excess of sense and a simultaneous lack of sense. Both draw upon the uncertainty, imprecision based on precision, fragmentation and lack of references. However, we can also see some differences between the two, mainly the types of characters, the genres and traditions they stem from, and the language they write in, their countries and historical context of origin.

Even though there are some differences, it is impossible not to notice the ways in which both of their works built, in similar ways, characters, structures, genres, concepts and rhymes that forever displace extensions, never cease to move and to destabilize frontiers, happening always on the boundary between things and propositions where everything happens all at once in both directions in perpetual disequilibrium and eternal movement that never settles and is in constant tension, which is what is the main feature that characterises literary nonsense. Both Qorpo Santo and Edward Lear are on the margin between sense and nonsense, representing the oppositions and the pairs found within the world of nonsense as a world in between mirror image of common sense and an absence of sense.

Notes

1. This article is the result of a much broader research carried out by the authors. However, between November 2018 and May 2019, there has been significant contribution by Dr Anna Barton, Reader in Victorian Literature at the University of Sheffield and Senior Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Co-Director of the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies, who was an advisor of one of the authors during the visiting PhD student research period undertaken between Nov 2018 – May 2019 (estágio de doutorado) within which the main production of this article took place, under the supervision of Dr Anna Barton within the University of Sheffield, UK.
2. I have felt an enormous animal coming out of my bellybutton. It has landed on the ocean and converted into a large ship. (Translated from Portuguese into English by the authors. All the English versions of the excerpts in this article are translations carried out by the authors).
3. Archaic form of sat.
4. *A Book of Nonsense* is part of the complete works of Edward Lear. *Encyclopaedia* is the title of the complete works of Qorpo-Santo, in which all poems and plays cited in this text can be found.
5. Edward Lear's poems appear for the first time in the *Nonsense Songs* published in 1871.
6. The idea of constant movement in more than one direction and the possibility of multiple identities illustrated in the excerpt brings the notion of paradox, which is revisited in Jean Jacques Lecercle's *Philosophy of Nonsense* (1994) by referencing the works of Mikhail Bakhtin about the genres of discourse and mentioning that a general utterance is made up of a three elements that occur simultaneously: an exhaustiveness of meaning (1), an intention of meaning (2) and the constraints and form of the genre (3). In the case of nonsense, what we have is the 1st and 2nd elements deconstructed by a paradox in which the author, says Lecercle, either means not to mean or means to mean nothing, which brings the genre constraints to the forefront. (LECERCLE, 1994, p. 190).
7. The genre would be, therefore, a species of upturn of the elements of farce, but with an emphasis on the caricature of stock characters and criticism of manners. Although it doesn't put forward the idea of being a cultural-political project like Realism ("Criticize to correct, would say the generation of Eça de Queirós) and proposing to be more an innocent entertainment for the families, once that, in general, does not challenge the world view of the intended spectator, nor his most strong preconceptions, it can, from time to time, be seen as dangerous or even subversive by the powers whose stability might be threatened. (...) The message

of the comedy of manners, in an inversion of perspective typical from Žižek, is not that of “laughing at the society or laughing with society”, but of “laughing at the society is laughing with the society”. The romantic revolution establishes a double and ambiguous movement of allowing the criticism and the derision of the very bourgeoisie, as long as this bourgeoisie does not possess the saving virtues of youth, beauty, idealism or love. Even poor Mariquinha, of *Judas em sábado de aleluia*, receives punishment of being given in marriage to an old man, but, as even she recognizes, it is better to have an old husband than no husband, a risk she ran indeed, in case the news of her many boyfriends came to be known. (Our translation).

8. The farce is founded under a mechanism of trickery which presents itself with specific techniques. It overcomes the primary stage of deceiver-deceived by the elaboration of a much more complex mechanism, ingeniously conducted according to the different artifices of trickery and malice. The mechanisms of trickery may follow more or less elaborate combinations: they can be a simple return to action or a double return. In its structure, it reveals oppositions and symmetries of stratagems which include many deceiving games: to an initial situation occurs a parallel situation which inverts the first and a new action which inverts the second, without, however, annulling it. The essential resource inherent to this genre is ingenuity. (...) In any case, the base structure of the farce is also fixed by the game of deceiving someone, revealing an immutable construction applicable to all the farce, no matter the level of complexity of the action. (Our translation).
9. The satire of Lucilian tradition, also called Roman tradition, is characterized by the utilization of hexameters and by the moralizing purpose of its texts. In them the laughter is used as a way to denounce the vices of humanity. (...) The Menippean tradition, of Greek origin, on the other hand, was introduced in Latin literature by Varrão. (...) In this tradition, there are a miscellaneous amount of meters, including prose and verse in the same text. Laughter is its distinctive mark, without assuming, however, the exclusively moralist character of the Roman tradition. (Our translation).
10. (IIb) In literature, the term might refer to any work which seeks to punish or ridicule an object through mockery and direct criticism; or even through mere elements of mockery, criticism or aggression, in works of any type. (IIc) Stemming from this last meaning, while still wide, is that the theory of literature attributes a more specific meaning to satire, being that of the aesthetic and critical representation of what is deemed to be wrong (contrary to the current norm). That would implicate, in the work, the intention of reaching certain social goals. (Our translation).

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