

A Prefatory Note

Márcia Lemos

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The current issue of *Via Panoramica* revolves mostly around themes such as "otherness", "duality", "perception" and "gaze". The issue includes five main articles, the first being authored by Tiago Fonseca whose essay analyses language and communication in two Shakespearean plays: *The Merchant of Venice* and *Timon of Athens*. Fonseca investigates how financial vocabulary, being juxtaposed with more intimate and personal forms of speech, fosters numerous misunderstandings that eventually lead to tragic situations involving the texts' main protagonists. As Fonseca points out, "in both plays, what the characters believe makes it impossible to understand others . . . until it is too late" (23).

Vitória Ávila Fioravanti, on the other hand, considers William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* alongside with Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* to analyse antisemitic stereotyped forms of representing Jews, often seen as money-driven, suspicious and cruel people - a set of prejudices which originates from a time that precedes Shakespeare himself but would survive into the 20th century, as proved by the hostility displayed by Citizen in his encounter with Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), for example.

While Fonseca's and Fioravanti's texts provide two paradigmatic examples of how an insufficient language and a dominant set of prejudices can cause a complete group of people to be perceived as a threat, Jéssica Bispo's essay, still focusing on British literature and context, delves into the theme of duality to prove that the threat can actually come from inside. Indeed, in Bispo's reading of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, written by Robert Louis Stevenson, it is the individual who, driven

by the pressures of the Victorian society and the potentialities brought by contemporary technological advances, channels any negative feelings through his double, thus operating a split that is analysed by Bispo in psychoanalytical and mythical terms.

Moving strictly from the realm of literature into the realm of film (and film adaptation), Márcia Lemos suggests a reading of Samuel Beckett's *Film* (both the script and the actual short film) which somehow resonates Stevenson's exploration of the double theme and Jekyll's split. A metafictional work, *Film* explores Irish philosopher George Berkeley's thesis that "esse est percipi" ("to be is to be perceived") and focuses on the individual's impossibility of escaping perception, for even if the said individual manages to escape extraneous perception, he is eventually caught by self-perception and, therefore, the "agony of perceivedness" (*Film* 373) will never be successfully averted.

Ironically, the issue is brought into a conclusion by Gonçalo Dias and his essay "'Pretty-eyed Shirley Temple': The Wish of Being Perceived in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*", which, as the title indicates, examines race and identity anxieties in Morrison's work, by focusing on Pecola Breedlove's strong desire to be perceived not only by the dominant white American society, but also by her African American peers and family. Self-perception and self-loath cause Pecola to split in two in order to find a sibling soul and her desired elusive (and illusive) blue eyes. As in Beckett's *Film*, the "eye" becomes a metaphor for "I" and the phrase "the bluest eye" represents Pecola's deepest wish of acceptance as well as all her suffering and loneliness, thus embodying the saddest life.