

Preface

JOANA CAETANO

Executive Editor

“For many people, utopia is a dream without a place, a forever unfulfilled desire. For me, I imagine that *that* place exists and that I am evermore approaching it.”

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo¹

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (1930-2004), to this day the only woman to hold the Prime Minister office in Portugal, is one of my personal heroes. Sometimes, we are lucky to find role models who seem to embody those ethical principles we deem essential to our daily praxis: an unbreakable sense of responsibility that impels you to use your privilege to help those who have little or nothing, courage, honesty, incorruptibility, the audacity to imagine a more just and free world and, of course, the strength to act upon that vision. When utopias were perceived as either unattainable or ridiculous, she was a politician unafraid to speak of them as *a path*; a path she was determined to walk towards, sometimes even at a high personal cost. As a leader, she believed that utopia was indissociable from politics and without it, there was no realisation of the human person. For Pintasilgo, utopia was a right (the right to pursue happiness) and a duty (a responsibility to fight for freedom and justice for all). It rests at the centre of a web, transforming individuals into a system of relationships, into a community, into a constellation.

Every time I am asked, usually by the students, whether utopia is useful, I reply: “In times such as these, are the sun and the air useful? Is hope useful? Is it desire?” It is an unfair reply, I know, but it does the trick. And then, they are usually ready to talk about complex things, such as the utopian paradox – as I call it – that tension between “personal freedom” and “social responsibility”. Something that Pintasilgo knew a lot about.

THE THEMATIC SECTION

During my reading of this issue of *VIA PANORAMICA*, Pintasilgo and the utopian paradox came to mind a lot. The thematic section that gives us the title of this issue, “Utopian Imagination: Power to Change the Present”, perfectly illustrates the relevance and usefulness of utopia as a tool to read and revise the present as well as imagine alternatives for the future. In this section, we have not only articles that address this combination of critique and imagination inherent to utopia as “social dreaming”, but also contributions by creatives and photographers who, through their art, add a more “personal” layer to our understanding of utopianism. What is striking about Maryana, Inês and João’s work is, indeed, this ambivalence they portray that makes us feel, at once, embedded in the involving space (urban or natural) and yet in complete solitude, like stars of a constellation that represent both connection and separateness. In this lies the utopian paradox: to be, at the same time, *part* and *apart*.

THE VARIA SECTION

VARIA is a special section. It is a sort of window to the personal and professional interests of our colleagues from within and without our research centre. It is a barometer of what has piqued their interest or what has caused them angst. This issue’s articles’ selection is, thus, as varied as it is stimulating.

Marisa da Silva Martins brings us a revision of the North American canon by introducing a counter-narrative to Laura Ingalls-Wilder’s popular *Little House on the*

Prairie. By adding a Native American voice and story through Louise Erdrich's *The Birchbark House*, we, the readers, start to discover how much more complex and multilayered the so-called "American" experience is, and how many cultures remain invisible still.

On a different note, "Echoes of the Unconscious: Freudian and Modernist Readings of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*" is a re-reading of a classic through the lens of psychoanalysis. Raquel Correia de Souza leads us through this popular tale of doubles and duplicity to show us how it continues to be "a timeless exploration of human nature and social expectations".

To close this issue, I selected a deep dive into "The Many Masks of Emily Dickinson". In this article, Marinela Freitas unveils Dickinson's poetics of excess as "a means of negotiating identity, authority, and desire". Like the utopian paradox that leads us to confront the needs of the self with the needs of others, Dickinson's poetic ambiguity makes us confront what we want to unveil and what we want to conceal. Either way, her poetry, like the utopian imagination, leaves us with a longing for more: more to be imagined and more to be desired.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Liam Benison for guest-editing the thematic section on utopian imagination and the authors who have accepted *VIA PANORAMICA*'s invitation to contribute: Matt York, Tânia Cerqueira, and Catarina Almeida. To the authors who entrusted their research to us, it was a privilege and a great responsibility: Marisa da Silva Martins, Raquel Correia de Souza, and Marinela Freitas. Your articles enriched this issue immensely, broadening the scope and the depth of this volume. To the nameless reviewers, who have offered us their time and knowledge in return for only private recognition (by us, the editors), my appreciation. And a humble thanks to our General Editor, Professor Gualter Cunha, for a renewed vote of confidence.

Finally, a very special thanks to the artists who have accepted my challenge to illustrate the idea of UTOPIA. Maryana Kovalchuk, João Bento Soares and Inês Doutel, thank you so much for finding the time to collaborate with us and for sending your versions

of utopia from around the world (Japan, Portugal, and Norway/Croatia/Italy), proving that utopia is an undercurrent that – undeniably – unites us all.

END NOTES

¹ Pintasilgo, Maria de Lourdes (1985). *As Minhas Respostas: em diálogo com Eduardo Prado Coelho, Jaime Nogueira Pinto, João Carlos Espada*. Lisboa: Dom Quixote; my translation.

HOW TO CITE

Caetano, Joana (2025). “Preface”. *VIA PANORAMICA: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos* Vol. 14 No. 1, 2025, pp. 9-12. Web: <http://ojs.letras.up.pt/>. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21747/2182-9934/via14_1pre