

Second Language Learning and Teaching

Issues in Literature and Culture

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Otília Martins *Editors*

# Personal Narratives, Peripheral Theatres: Essays on the Great War (1914–18)

 Springer

# **Second Language Learning and Teaching**

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# Introduction

One hundred years exhaust the limits of human memory. No one who fought in the Great War, and few who were just babies at the time, can still be living and breathing. But memories of another kind still subsist. My grandfather, a Nottinghamshire village policeman, enlisted and fought in the trenches, survived the Battle of the Somme (indeed the whole war) because he was gassed and invalidated out of the army. The mustard gas ruined his lungs and shortened his life, but he still lived long enough to meet his grandchildren. Although I knew him as a child, I never heard him talk of his war experiences. My father told me that he never spoke to his own sons about his war. My father, in contrast, who saw active service throughout the Second World War, and was at the Battle of El Alamein, the invasion of Sicily and the drive up through Italy, was quite content to tell his children about his war experiences. He was, however, careful to render all his accounts comedic. His war was one of the constant movements, on convoys, back and forth across the desert and forced marches chasing and being chased by the enemy. His tales were of dodging danger and staying hale. Like my mother, who served in RAF Bomber Command, he started the war as an expectant teenager and returned home in 1946 at the age of 27 having had a lifetime's worth of adventure on three continents. His experiences, perhaps perversely, became the bedtime stories of my own children.

Thus, memories of the Great War live in me, but they coexist with the richer accounts of my father's war, and here the contrast could not be greater. The Great War, in my family, was always the one of which one could not speak. The Second World War was the one about which tales abounded. No doubt this distinction is a distortion of the historical record and of some of the terrible deprivations and sufferings endured between 1939 and 1945. But it speaks to certain realities which other families and other historians have noted. The Great War has certainly been one about which the drawing out of personal testimony has been protracted and distressing. A certain reticence about the war seemed natural to its participants, but it has become urgent, following the 50th anniversary of the war, to collect people's micro-histories in the spirit which informed both the 50th anniversary and the recent centenary, the spirit of "Lest We Forget." The second point of radical



contrast is of course that of mobility. My grandfather saw very little of France before he saw a field hospital, and most of what he saw was mud glimpsed from ground level. Both the war and the popular image of it have remained remarkably static in our imaginations. The iconography has scarcely changed in 100 years: the muddy trenches, the barbed wire, artillery barrages, No-man's land and the charging of well-defended positions.

Extending the range of perceptions of the Great War is the purpose of this collection, in exactly the two domains mentioned above. The war of 1914–18 was more than just the Western and Eastern Fronts—to have been a great war, a world war, the conflict has to have extended well beyond the parameters of Europe, and to have had consequences well beyond these specific years. *Personal Narratives, Peripheral Theatres* look at the people, the places, the phases and the aspects of the war that do not readily come to mind. Around the margins of the war, there are many stories which still need bringing to light. One such story is that of the Portuguese. Although Portugal did not officially enter the war until March 1916, tensions had been running high over with Germany over cross-border incidents in east Africa and would come to a head over the German U-boat campaign and Portugal's traditional close ties with Britain. Portugal was in domestic turmoil in the years preceding the outbreak of the war and subsequent involvement in it continued to divide the country bitterly. Controversy raged between parties committed to the war and those who opposed it or otherwise found the nation ill-prepared for military engagements. Three essays in this volume take up the Portuguese perspective on the war. The first looks at experience in France post-March 1916 of the Portuguese Expeditionary Force (a group which eventually rose to 55,000 men), particularly during the hiatus before fighting began (Portugal did not sustain its first western front casualty until April 1917). Diarist Américo Olavo reports the leisure pursuits of the junior officer class around the trenches of Flanders and their tendency to perpetuate the divisions of the home country on active service. Our second essay contrasts the outlooks of two Portuguese artists, one an official war artist at the front and the other an avant-gardist who was deeply affected by the war although he did not leave his native country for its duration. The third piece looks at how the war was reported back in Portugal by the committed political journalism of the Republican movement there. This essay shows just how fragile the Portuguese state was and how vulnerable it was to political turbulence in respect of the war. Together, these three essays reveal how military set-backs, when they started to occur, could shake a nation to its institutional foundations.

France could not realistically be regarded as on the margin of the Great War. And yet there are aspects of French culture that have only more recently been given equal consideration with either official historical sources or accounts of adult military personnel. In particular, this volume looks at the participation of what we would now consider to be children, as under-age enlistees, and the involvement *in extremis* of animals on the western front and of the emotional bonds that grew up between fighting men and these creatures. Two chapters look at the testimony of child-soldiers and look at the ideas, schooling and social pressure which informed their commitment to the national cause. One of these also explores the way that

child-soldier testimony could be taken up to reinforce establishment discourses and to endorse the French educational system as it existed in 1914 and hoped to go on after the war. A further article looks at the newly considered role of animals in the First World War, and the appalling rates of injury, suffering and death that they experienced. Recorded memoirs also uncover the consolation and intimacy which certain animals afforded troops under these harshest of conditions.

Where major writers figure in this volume, it is for their oblique renderings of war experience. Céline's anti-war novels are discussed not so much for their polemical objections to the war itself but rather for their presence lurking behind other professional considerations. His subsequent career as a medical advisor and hygienist, and his commentaries on developments in industrial practices, are shown to be informed by his sensitivity to inhuman organizational behavior. In a similar vein, the war content of *Casse-Pipe* is less important than an analysis of how its publication and republication helped to rehabilitate a writer whose reputation had suffered continual reappraisal in the turbulent years of the Second World War and its aftermath. Indeed, the uses of the First World War as *exemplum* are manifest in other papers too. Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got his Gun* was published to keep America out of the war in 1939, only to be willingly suppressed shortly afterwards to get America into the war. This article looks at just how an anti-war novel and the film based upon it, showing such a potent instance of human suffering, could be a political football over the course of the mid-twentieth century. This, and a further article on the conflict in East Africa, look at how fiction and cinema joined the cultural fray, taking up the causes of the past to reprocess them for the ideologies of new ages. Indeed, how the boy's own adventures of the early century would become the cautionary tales of a postcolonial world sensitized (but perhaps not sufficiently) to their own euro-centricity and concealed racism.

Also part of a recent movement in historiography is to consider the impact of the war on the home front, on communities far from the fighting. In this volume, we look at contrasting fictional treatments of alienation from the war experienced by the people, mainly women, left behind. In particular, an article explores communities in the Corrèze in France, Cornwall in England and in faraway Canada for the devastating effects of war suffering and loss. Deprivations are shown to take multiple forms and these works of fiction enlarge our sense of what it was to be a casualty of war. Significantly, a volunteer nurse on the western front, Cecily Hamilton, was writing a novel in the last days of the war which would reflect the rising nihilism of the time. Hamilton's neglected novel, *William: An Englishman* (1919), comes to conclusions about modern warfare and its consequences for the social fabric of Europe, which, although fruit of her pessimistic experiences 1914–1918, comes to address some of the realities of the next world war. Hamilton understood where industrialized war was taking us, abolishing the distinction between the front lines and the homeland.

Intimist accounts of the war have to be conjoined with the macro-effects of the war if we are to understand its importance for the twentieth century, going forward. The break-up of nineteenth-century empires and the ruination of combatant nations meant turmoil for the vast populations in Europe and beyond. The Spanish Flu

epidemic of 1918/19 was nature's contribution to the misery and it was neither well understood nor well-handled by the responsible authorities. Some of the political situations left by the war were addressed at Versailles in 1919, some new ones were created by Versailles agreements, but others were simply ignored or felt to be too intractable to be broached. Perhaps the most momentous of these was the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece. So many peoples found themselves on the wrong side of the redrawn lines of modern nations, and such was the persistence of nationalist feeling after the war that it was at all levels felt prudent to relocate ethnic populations from their generational homes to these redefined and rebounded nations. This process was effected with great insensitivity in many cases, and with much loss of life. A parallel instance of emergent persecution was that of the Jewish communities living in Austro-Hungarian-run Galicia. Having experienced a degree of toleration, if not actually acceptance, these peoples found themselves after the break-up of the Hapsburg empire exposed to new forces of nationalism. The affirmation of Polish identity following the reformation of that nation after over a century of partition between Russia and Prussia left these communities at the mercy of new intolerant and aggressive regional actors. Again, freedoms were constrained and lives were lost, as Jews were held to account for their past loyalties to Vienna.

While *realpolitik* was playing itself out on the frontiers of Europe, the First World War was also the cradle for forward-looking and optimistic views about a future. The German-Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig projected in the final years of the war a new internationalist *mitteleuropa* connecting Germanic central Europe with Turkey by the bridge of a nationless Balkan region. Rosenzweig posits an identity-less Balkans to shift eastward a new European-centered empire or new Levant, that could embrace both Turkey (a contingent German ally of the war) and Egypt and parts of the Middle East, a genuine union of east and west. This was a way of thinking about the future which escaped old ethnic nationalisms and which found in the First World War itself a necessary crucible for positive change. Another way of reading this idea was as a justification for German imperial expansion eastward and the forcible sublimation of Slav identities under external ideas of a greater destiny. A country whose modest international presence did not prevent it from pursuing an independent foreign policy during these years was Denmark. We include an essay on the preservation of Danish neutrality during the Great War, something that many contemporary figures thought to be a near impossible achievement. Certainly, the invasion of Denmark by Hitler in 1940 revealed to some extent just how improbable the respect for the territorial sovereignty of Germany's neighbor to the north had been in 1914. But then this outcome was the fruit of some exceptionally adroit diplomacy on the part of Danish leaders and a clear sense of national purpose formed by the trauma of Prussian invasion of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864. This essay draws out the continuity of situations between 1914 and 1939 but also shows the very different character these conflicts assumed. High hopes for independence were also harbored by M.P.T. Acharya, the Indian nationalist leader and intellectual who found himself seeking allies in Berlin for the cause of Indian emancipation from British rule during the war, having already built a reputation for himself as a revolutionary activist in many countries

around the world. During much of the war he had been based in Afghanistan, where he organized and agitated for insurrection against the British. The collapse of the German war effort in 1918 meant that Acharya was obliged to transfer his hopes to the Soviets, who quickly took up the mantle of the Czarist Russians, who had been traditional rivals of the British in Afghanistan and the Hindu Kush. His skill as an organizer of revolutionary groups was sorely tested by the convoluted Bolshevik politics of these years and the unmanageable differences between Muslim and Hindu elements of the Indian revolutionary movement. He became disillusioned with the behavior and imperial ambitions of the Soviets, as they maneuvered themselves into dominant position in the central Asian republics. Acharya withdrew from the region and gradually became associated with postures we would now identify as pacifist. In these turbulent times, my enemy's enemy, twice over, could not be relied upon to be my friend.

Finally, we present as a coda an article on how the term "Great War", a phrase we have been using throughout this volume, came to become common currency. Certainly, the scale of the conflict in these years was unprecedented but it remains to be explored the extent to which other wars past and future could make the phrase meaningful and/or useful. In the British political discourse which this article follows in detail, we see how the term could come to serve a number of ideological purposes in changing political and social contexts. In particular, we discover how the term predated hostilities in 1914 and existed to some extent in anticipation of them. It could be and was used as a propaganda device to engage volunteers in the conflict, using "great" in the sense of a momentous challenge not to be missed. Frequently, the term was used with heavy irony to carry the very mixed feelings that, to say the least, the war engendered. All in all, we feel that this volume takes a fresh look at the mentalities and experiences which went on to condition many of the significant events of the rest of the century. A hundred years on, we can see why this is so with some clarity.

Anthony Barker

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**Part I**  
**Personal Narratives of War**

# Leisure and Free Time in the Trenches of Flanders: Américo Olavo's Account

José Barbosa Machado

**Abstract** *Na Grande Guerra* (Guimarães & C.<sup>a</sup> Editores, 1919) by Américo Olavo is one of the most interesting autobiographical accounts that has been written about Portuguese participation on the European scene during the first Great War. In a style surely influenced by Eça de Queirós, the author describes in detail, and always with a sharply critical tone, the activities to which soldiers and officers devoted themselves in the trenches of Flanders. Thus, irony plays a fundamental role in the characterisation of human types and absurd situations. Not exactly a book tending towards the comic, like *A Malta das Trincheiras* by André Brun, or a diatribe against Portuguese participation in the war, like many other books that were written and published, it is first and foremost an *apologia* for that participation, politically close to the views of Afonso Costa's Democratic Party.

Américo Olavo's military narrative *Na Grande Guerra* ("In the Great War"; Olavo, 1919, 2015) is one of the most fascinating autobiographic works about Portugal's participation in the European theatre of World War I. In a style likely influenced by that of Eça de Queirós, Américo Olavo describes in detail the activities of soldiers, and particularly officers, in the trenches in Flanders.<sup>1</sup> His prose is marked by a sharp critical spirit in which irony plays a crucial role in characterizing human types and

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Translated by Milton M. Azevedo, *University of California, Berkeley.*

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<sup>1</sup>Besides *Na Grande Guerra*, Américo Olavo wrote, in coauthorship with Chagas Franco, the collection of essays *Centro da Vida*. He also wrote *Os Preconceitos da Viscondessa*, *Suzana*, *Rebelde*, *Cartão de uma Noiva*, *O Pequeno Cantor*, *Estéril*, and *Uma Tragédia* (Liv. Guimarães, 1909). All of these works are out of print and hard to find.

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farcical situations. However, his book is neither a comical work like André Brun's<sup>2</sup> *A Malta das Trincheiras* ("The Trench Chaps") nor, like so many other books, an indictment of Portugal's role in the First World War. On the contrary, it is a celebration of said participation, politically in line with the views of Afonso Costa's<sup>3</sup> *Partido Democrático* ("Democratic Party").

Américo Olavo, whose full name was Américo Olavo Correia de Azevedo, was born on December 16, 1882 in Funchal, today the capital of the self-governing Island of Madeira. He was trained as an officer at the *Escola do Exército* ("Army Academy"), was commissioned in the infantry, and later took a Law degree. He became a freemason in 1901, joined the so-called "Young Turks",<sup>4</sup> and steadfastly defended republican ideals. He became involved in republican conspiracies from 1906 to 1910, when the monarchy was abolished and Portugal became a republic. As a result of his efforts he was elected a Deputy to the Constitutional Assembly in 1911 and successively re-elected until 1925.

An early supporter of Portugal's entry in the war and of sending troops to the European theatre, Captain Américo Olavo volunteered for the *Corpo Expedicionário Português* ("Portuguese Expeditionary Corps," usually referred to as CEP) that fought in Flanders as part of the British First Army. Imprisoned by the Germans during the battle of La Lys (April 9, 1918), he returned to Portugal in early 1919 and was decorated for bravery with the *Cruz de Guerra* ("War Cross") and the *Ordem da Torre e Espada* ("Tower and Sword Order"), Third Class.

Re-entering political life, he was elected a Deputy for Funchal in the elections of May 11, 1919. Between March 8 and July 6, 1924, he served as War Minister in a cabinet made up of members of the Democratic Party, independents, and intellectuals linked to the Lisbon-based liberal magazine *Seara Nova* ("New Harvest"). In June 1924, during his term as War Minister, there was a revolt of aviation officers, and he was killed on February 8, 1927, during the republican coup against the military dictatorship that had been instituted on May 28, 1926.

As mentioned in the 1919 edition, *Na Grande Guerra* was originally intended as a two-volume work on Américo Olavo's experience in the trenches of Flanders. The first published volume goes as far as the battle of April 9, 1918. Olavo meant for the second volume to be an account of his experience as a war prisoner. He may have given up on this idea when his brother, Carlos Olavo (1881–1958), who had

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<sup>2</sup>André Francisco Brun (1881–1926) was a Portuguese Army officer who fought in World War I and distinguished himself as an author and playwright, usually in a humoristic vein. (*Wikipedia*, s.v. "André Brun," accessed December 10, 2015, [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9\\_Brun](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Brun)).

<sup>3</sup>Afonso Augusto Costa (1871–1937) was a Portuguese Law Professor and politician, and a member of the Cabinet that decided on Portugal's war declaration on Germany. (*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Afonso Costa," accessed December 10, 2015, [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afonso\\_Costa](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afonso_Costa)).

<sup>4</sup>A group of Portuguese Army officers, organized around the *Jovem Turquia* ("Young Turkey") masonic lodge, who took part in political actions leading to Portugal's entry in World War I. (*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Jovem Turquia," accessed December 10, 2015, [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jovem\\_Turquia](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jovem_Turquia)).

also been a war prisoner, published his *Jornal d'um Prisioneiro de Guerra na Alemanha* (“Journal of a War Prisoner in Germany,” 1919).

In the first chapter, “A declaração” (“Declaration of War”), Américo Olavo sought to justify the need for Portugal’s entry in the war. Essentially, he backed the position adopted in 1916 by the Democratic Party, to which he belonged:

When on August 7 the Cabinet headed by Dr Bernardino Machado proposed that Portugal follow her old and faithful ally [England], it did no more than to seek confirmation of the constitutionally mandated adoption of a national conduct from which we must not deviate under any pretext. On that date our future attitude was pre-determined, and our place among the fighting nations rigorously established in such a clear and evident manner, that only the mentally blind could fail to see it. (Olavo, 2015, p. 7)<sup>5</sup>

From that viewpoint, the justification for Portugal’s entry in the war was, or seemed to be, constitutional and legal, and therefore the government was merely implementing existing treaties with England, and entering the war was considered both necessary and unavoidable. We know today that such a position was biased and demagogic. However, since Américo Olavo was a politician committed to the pro-war faction, his opinion could hardly have been otherwise.

In his view, the responsibility for the Portuguese disaster in Flanders was not the fault of the 1916 Cabinet, which decided to send the Expeditionary Corps. On the contrary, he believed it fell to the illegitimate and Germanophile cabinet chaired by Sidónio Pais,<sup>6</sup> which stopped supporting the Expeditionary Corps in 1918 and left it to its own devices. Further blame, in his opinion, went to the cowardly and incompetent officers who commanded the troops.

As a career officer, Américo Olavo resented the reluctance to depart for Flanders displayed by some of his colleagues, who grasped at any excuse to avoid duty.

Since the Army was an institution specifically created to make war, it was criminal to let officers collect the benefits and advantages of their status in peace time and, when the time came to go to war, to make sacrifices and to run risks, allow them to drop the burden of their obligations upon the shoulders of those who (...) were willing to perform their duty as soldiers, no matter how bitter the hour and how hard and violent the situations to be faced. (Olavo, 2015, p. 17)

As an Army Captain, Américo Olavo set an example, volunteering as soon as the war broke out in 1914: “I felt, as a voter and military man, that I had a moral obligation to request being included in any of the units that might be mobilized for war service” (Olavo, 2015, p. 18). In fact, his expectations eventually came true: in 1917 the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps, already organized, received orders to depart for Flanders, even though the argument against such a move was still raging, and in spite the fact that public opinion, with the exception of a few pro-government

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<sup>5</sup>All citations from *Na Grande Guerra* are from Olavo, 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Sidónio Bernardino Cardoso da Silva Pais (1872–1918) was a Major in the Portuguese Army who headed a coup d’état against Afonso Costa’s government in 1917 and governed Portugal dictatorially until his assassination on December 14, 1918. (Wikipedia, s.v. “Sidónio Pais,” accessed December 10, 2015, [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sid%C3%B3nio\\_Pais](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sid%C3%B3nio_Pais)).



newspapers, was unanimously against it. “Under such poor, disastrous moral circumstances”, he wrote, “the first contingent departed for France, followed by others, without demonstrations or fights and even, one might say, with confidence and almost gladness in some sectors” (Olavo, 2015, p. 18).

From the second chapter on, Américo Olavo describes his own experience as an expeditionary. The voyage to Brest afforded him an opportunity to mention a few Portuguese characteristics he viewed negatively, like the rough features of a decaying, rudderless nation oblivious of its glorious past. Confined to the ship’s hold, the troops became seasick:

I went to see my soldiers. There were only a few on the deck that morning. Wrapped up in their overcoats, scarves pulled up to their eyes, they did not look like the descendants of ancient navigators who astonished the world with the wonderful prowess of their feats. Their pale, fatigued, seasick faces evinced sleepless nights (...) some of them were seeing the sea for the first time. (Olavo, 2015, p. 22)

As the troops get used to the pitch and roll of the ship and, fortunately, to the fresh air on deck, they “recover from seasickness” and pass the time singing, dancing, or just watching the sea.

What else can those poor devils do, having been dragged from the fields, where their education was neglected or even, in those days, thwarted? Being illiterate, they cannot read anything that might amuse or educate them. They cannot write to their families, whom they miss dearly. They cannot, as they put it, even relax, except by looking at the vast blue sea. (Olavo, 2015, p. 25)

Enjoying abundant meals and comfortable cabins, officers spent most of their time smoking, gambling, talking about women and griping about the government that had sent them to war:

They gossip, talk about domestic and foreign politics, attack ministers, tear apart, with a few words of conceited and irresponsible criticism, projects that took many days to be planned and executed (...) And as is usually the case among Portuguese men, conversation invariably shifts to womanizing, each one endeavouring to hide the vanity that compels him to boast of his affairs. They work on the details, spicing them with imagination so as to make them livelier, more suggestive, more rakish, and slipping quite naturally toward pornography and obscenity. (Olavo, 2015, p. 23)

The officers’ views on politics did not differ much from those held by citizens today:

Nobody bothers to say or think how things might be done better, but everyone agrees, by virtue of a deep-seated national quirk, that things are in a sorrowful, shameful state, for in Portugal anyone who holds a high position is necessarily considered an idiot, a scoundrel, or a thief. (Olavo, 2015, p. 28)

At times someone would sing the *fado* in the officers’ improvised mess:

A tall, slender young man walks in, swaggering, his long hair sticking out under a cap worn askew over one ear. He was from Coimbra, where as a student he had spent many a night getting drunk in bars. They say he sings well, and it seems to be true, because the obscene jokes cease, giving way to a respectful silence (...)

The initial chords set the tone and his voice begins, drawn out poignantly it gradually reveals the sufferings of a maudlin harlot in love. His voice rises sweetly, like a prayer begging for pity and admiration for that unhappy woman inescapably bound for a hospital. On the audience's faces I detect moved countenances, agitated emotions, and moist eyes. Someone attempts a clumsy comment, "He sounds like a nightingale!" to which another replies, curtly, "Shut your trap, you idiot!" And at once a shouting match erupts, at first about a nightingale's singing and somehow shifting to the matter of the fabric of our new uniforms (...)

The husky voice starts again, modulating *fado* inflections, whining loose verses that delight the listeners. Someone requests a well-known *fado*, the audience whispers approvingly, and the *fado* begins, full of feeling and sensuality, caressing the listeners' libido. At another request the singer excuses himself, "No more today, I'm wiped out, tomorrow is another day," but he goes on anyway, a cigarette stub dangling from his lips, hands busy with the guitar, eyes half-shut because of the smoke, and he starts, "That woman (...)" But then an officer appears at the door, shouting, "Hey boys, we've sighted land! It looks like we're arriving in Oporto! (Olavo, 2015, pp. 24–25)

Those rowdy, gambling officers were a "synthesis of Portuguese life: laziness, gossip, vanity, ignorance and pretence of cleverness, *fado* and gambling" (Olavo, 2015, p. 29).

Once in France, battalions were sent for specialized training to villages in the rear areas, several kilometres behind the front lines. The troops were billeted in barns and the officers in family homes. Days were spent on long marches, drilling, and intensive training in trench warfare.

According to Américo Olavo, the training carried out in the rear areas, while waiting for orders to march to the trenches, could have been more effective and useful if their new equipment had been issued in advance. The equipment used for instruction in Portugal was totally different from what they would use in the trenches. The rifles, ammunition, hand grenades, mortars, gas masks, and so on were totally new, and consequently training had to go back to square one. While the troops waited for the new equipment, they were kept busy with more drill and marches, thus wasting weeks that might have been more productive if they had been properly equipped.

Once at the camp, training aimed at loosening the men's limbs, strengthening them for maximum flexibility and endurance. Later they were trained to use the recently-issued English Lee Enfield rifle, and in the afternoon there were long, exhausting marches, purportedly for preparing soldiers for such long displacements as might become necessary. (Olavo, 2015, p. 52)

Far from friends and home comforts, after a day's training soldiers "tried to find some kind of distraction to rest their mind and drive away longing memories that would inevitably sadden them" (Olavo, 2015, p. 47). Some such distractions included a walk to the nearest village for a drink with comrades at an *estaminet* and, with luck, to meet a charming young woman. Particularly in villages and small towns,

[t]emptation came in the shape of women who, back home in peacetime, even in the poorest villages, would never have even warranted a glance (...) Two months away from civilization, lost in those tiny hamlets, visiting the nearby villages only from time to time, doomed to live in a region where there were thousands of men and only a couple dozen of Eve's daughters, women much more homely than those we might have scorned in the past now became the cause of sleepless nights, restless days, and troubled hearts. (Olavo, 2015, p. 58)

Américo Olavo's company was billeted in Avrout. Well installed in family homes, officers enjoyed comforts denied to the troops, such as room and board and a living room that served as their mess. Dinner was usually "abundant, with plenty of wine and beer, and coffee to be enjoyed with spirits" (Olavo, 2015, p. 61). They chatted, bragged about love affairs, talked about Portugal's political troubles, and griped.

Regarding those dinners, Américo Olavo comments again on incompetent officers, his comrades:

For some, military life was just a job, a means to collect a salary at the end of the month, to support a lazy, unexceptional, obscure existence. Never had they suspected the State might someday ask them to undergo sacrifices or run risks in return for the sums it paid them every month (...) There are officers here in France who say, even in the presence of their soldiers, that they have been sent to a slaughterhouse for the sole purpose of serving Mr Afonso Costa's goals, Mr Bernardino Machado's vileness, or Mr Nórton Matos's shady deals. At mess there are often arguments about politics, about the hatred for politicians who honoured our alliance treaties and who wished to lend their effort to the admirable cause of the saving of Latin civilization. The most terrible things are said about England and the English, and when things quiet down, they amuse themselves singing parodic *fados* in which not even the High Command is spared.

Américo Olavo tells about a senior officer who said "at the mess, with effrontery and anger, and in the presence of lower-ranking officers" (Olavo, 2015, p. 78), that Afonso Costa had sold their skins to the English. Sometime later, that officer "gave up a command position in the unit in which he was supposed to have the glory of leading troops, and went to hide his fears in the comfort of a brigade adjutancy" (Olavo, 2015, p. 78), that is, a desk job in the rear, far away from the danger of the trenches. Worse still, there were officers who considered "such running away from front line risks (...) which contributed to demoralizing the troops" something natural, and only regretted "not being able to do the same" (Olavo, 2015, p. 78).

Another officer "who had returned from the front with a chin twitch caused by a nervous spasm, stated that life on the front lines could only be defined by the word *horror*, and vowed never to set foot there again" (Olavo, 2015, p. 78). A few days later he walked out on the soldiers under his command and secured for himself a safe rear line secondment that would protect him from the risks and dangers he feared. "And he thought that was the right and proper thing to do, and he did not feel ashamed that his men noticed his fear or lack of commitment to sacrifice for the country he supposedly represented" (Olavo, 2015, p. 78).

Others, whom Américo Olavo, while still in Portugal, had heard talk against taking part in the war, once they got to France became obsessed with "securing an assignment outside their unit, or at least in the command of a battalion, which was less dangerous." Such opportunistic military men, "good enough only for acts of peace", preferred to be in "places where they did not have to make war" (Olavo, 2015, p. 79).

The Army has become infected with the fever to escape, and many want to spend the war in the rear lines, in the comfort of a well-supplied mess, comfortable quarters, and good pay. Some even say, with more amorality than cynicism, "If this is war, let me have more of it."

Even worse than that, I have seen professional military men reporting sick, begging doctors to let them stay in hospital for a few days, or to recommend them for a leave, or for permanent release from active duty, even if the price of saving their body turned out to be their moral death. (Olavo, 2015, p. 79)

With the advantage of a hundred years' hindsight, however, it seems hardly surprising that officers opposed to Portugal's participation in the war, particularly in Europe,<sup>7</sup> should endeavour to avoid service in the trenches. Therefore, Américo Olavo's strong criticism, based as it was on his enthusiastic support for such participation, needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

From Avroult, Américo Olavo's company moved on to Enguinegattes, where officers were again billeted in private homes. Three days later, they had already found their way to intimacy with the women living in the house, thus "securing some small concessions" (Olavo, 2015, p. 84) to improve their personal comfort.

The old lady, her daughter, and her granddaughters wished to be pleasant, to show their gratitude for a few home repairs I had my soldiers do for them. They also wanted to correspond to the kindness with which they were treated, the small attentions which they had not received until our arrival. (Olavo, 2015, p. 84)

They secured "ample lodgings—a large bedroom, a spacious room for dining and reading—and the right to cook on that enormous stove that nearly took up the whole kitchen" (Olavo, 2015, p. 85). After dinner they went for a walk on the road,

to see the young women, children, and old folks working the land which the young men's strong hands had been forced to abandon, so the land might go on producing for the families left behind. While there was still daylight, we amused ourselves watching the aeroplanes from the Estrée Blanche School performing their dangerous flying manoeuvres. (Olavo, 2015, p. 88)

When Ribeiro Gomes, an officer who played the piano well, was billeted at the same house in Enguinegattes, his fellow officers welcomed him enthusiastically:

As soon as Ribeiro Gomes arrived, visitors started flocking in to greet him, eager to find out what was going on in Lisbon, in politics as well as at the fashionable bars and restaurants, as if they feared those magnificent institutions might have suffered from their absence. (Olavo, 2015, p. 85)

There was in the house an old, dusty piano, completely out of tune. Ribeiro Gomes, "ever keen on improving their living conditions, started working on the piano, which the old lady said had not been played since the Prussian invasion in 1870" (Olavo, 2015, p. 87). When the piano became operational again, they had one more source of entertainment for their evenings.

As soon as dinner was over, while we were still at table, enjoying a second cup of coffee dutifully provided by our orderlies, Ribeiro Gomes would sit at the piano at our request, gently running his fingers on the keyboard in search of some feeling he endeavoured to express in

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<sup>7</sup>Portugal fought off German attacks against her African colonies of Angola and Mozambique since October 1914. (*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Portugal na Primeira Guerra Mundial," accessed December 10, 2015, [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal\\_na\\_Primeira\\_Guerra\\_Mundial](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal_na_Primeira_Guerra_Mundial)).

notes. He usually began with the classics, which he brought to life with zest, and after his favourite composers, Beethoven and Schubert, he would start playing opera arias and end up with a few predictable pieces, requested by this or that comrade. (Olavo, 2015, p. 88)

When the pianist tired, they would go out for “a long walk on the road, to pass time and get tired, to prepare their muscles for a night of restful sleep” (Olavo, 2015, p. 88).

The officers’ comfort contrasted sharply with conditions prevailing in soldiers’ lodgings. Although Américo Olavo does not go into details, we have information from other sources. The troops slept on straw piled up in barns, amidst an abundance of fleas, lice, and other parasites. They lined up for chow, not always plentiful or varied, hygiene was precarious, and clothing inadequate, particularly for rainy or cold conditions. In other words, more than ninety per cent of the Army lacked basic needs. Officers were a privileged class. We do not have much information about the sergeants’ situation.

In their free time, the soldiers helped farmers with their field work. Besides keeping themselves busy at something useful, they earned the locals’ esteem as well as gifts of food staples with which to improve their diet.

And they all threw themselves with gusto into that activity, which for many of them meant more than simply memories of their peacetime life—it actually meant returning to the peaceful work in the fields, in which man’s effort marries the earth to extract from it the goods he requires. (Olavo, 2015, p. 90)

Américo Olavo, who commanded a company, sometimes deigned to talk to his soldiers—something unusual for a captain, who as a matter of habit tended to keep his distance from the troops and to deal directly with subaltern officers, sergeants, and orderlies.

Sometimes I talk to them about our country, trying to make them understand that it is for her that we are fighting in this corner of France. And at least I have the solace of feeling in their words that, despite the discipline I keep, I am surrounded by friends. Sometimes I have them sit in a circle around me and I tell them at length about our country’s history, about the time when, rich, strong, and powerful, we used to amaze the world with the boldness of our enterprises! (Olavo, 2015, pp. 109–110)

The contact among officers and locals—mostly women, since the men, except for the elderly, were away at war—“has resulted in the habit of *collage* [hooking up] with the *nouveau arrivé* [newly-arrived], which most women engage in, and actually seek with interest, even eagerly, like a vice” (Olavo, 2015, p. 90). It was a rare officer who did not have a French girl friend.

They say this is an immoral country, because the women, having been left behind, give themselves up to those they fancy, just a few days after meeting them. Even the engaged girls, whose fiancés are at the front, have got used to this life of amorous intimacy with the available men. (Olavo, 2015, p. 90)

Generally speaking, the population, “out of affection, or gratitude, or the desires of the flesh, or even just as a pastime, in a manner of speaking” (Olavo, 2015, pp. 90–91), got along very well with the Portuguese, “the most recent intruders to arrive in their village and to install themselves in the intimacy of their homes” (Olavo, 2015, p. 91).

One day Américo Olavo and his comrades billeted in Enguinegattes decided to offer a dinner to their battalion Commandant and other fellow officers. They bought champagne, spirits, fruit, and sweets in the town of Aire.

The menus are a joint effort, scribbled the night before on the back of postcards adorned with the Portuguese flag. They are cast in a language perfectly in tune with the plain, monotonous dishes we can offer, but also reflecting our pleasure in seeing our comrades at our table. Naturally, at the top of the menu the soup is introduced by the words *ab introibo*, and as an allusion to our Commandant's habit to say, "Well, here comes our friend So-and-So", the traditional main course is introduced by the opening, "Well, here comes our faithful friend codfish." (Olavo, 2015, p. 92)

With plenty of flowers, a lot of light, and an impeccable white tablecloth, one dines with pleasure, even though the food is mediocre (...) Faces begin to turn red, eyes light up, conversation becomes livelier. At this dinner we are friends rather than soldiers, and the Commandant knows how to put his officers entirely at ease, the only formalities being those dictated by good manners and good taste (...) We then start raising toasts to Lieutenant X, to Captain Y, to Major Z, until several toasts have been raised to every officer present (...) And then we talk about women, pleasures, travels, and to *épater* the less cultivated, some talk about art or literature, but when time comes for coffee and spirits, we go back to griping about military matters. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 95–96)

Américo Olavo leaves for Le Thouret, where he is inserted for a few days in a British company to train for trench duties. There he meets Johnstone, a Scottish officer who speaks some Portuguese picked up during short stays in Cape Verde and Brazil. Johnstone adores whisky. "He talks a lot, mentions the Portuguese he has met, gives long descriptions of dinners, evenings spent at the *estaminets*, and drinking binges" (Olavo, 2015, p. 101). Américo Olavo and Johnstone share biscuits and corned-beef, drink water when there is nothing else to drink, and elaborate on the virtues of whisky. Américo Olavo orders a case from Battalion Headquarters, they open the first bottle, and start drinking. Word gets around and English officers begin to show up at their tent. "I guess their sense of smell captures the presence of the wonderful liquid, which they currently find hard to obtain. Or maybe it is Johnstone's presence that attracts them. Pretty soon the bottle is empty" (Olavo, 2015, p. 103).

Liquor was the only means to prevent troops from mulling too much over the war. In addition, it gave them enough stamina to put up with the hardships of trench life. Maybe because they had been there longer, the English drank a lot more. The wine issued to the Portuguese troops was bad, "a lot worse than the *carrascão* [cheap rough wine] we drink back home" (Olavo, 2015, p. 120). But the English thought it was quite good.

Johnstone, however, resigned and heroic, wants to share his comrades' hard life, he wants us all to suffer the same martyrdom of exchanging the comforting, tempting whisky for that horrible, vinegary dark beverage. With his ever shaking hand he presented his cup and, lifting it cautiously to his lips, he emptied it in a single gulp. He winked in delight, muttered *very good* and reached out for a refill (...) Johnstone is among his comrades, clean-shaven and looking like a yellow frog, but his enthusiasm is no match for theirs, as he misses the elixir which alone can enliven his mind. He looks dull, almost indifferent, abandoned by his usual good humour, which so often amuses us. Despite our repeated toasts, the watered-down brandy drunk before, during and after our trip, had not been enough to wake him up. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 120–122)

In the meantime, the company settles down in Fosse, a hamlet closer to the front, and officers try to maintain the comfort to which they had become accustomed. They set up their mess in a *ferme* and, whenever possible, treat their battalion comrades to dinner. “Dinner is a merry, animated, even noisy affair. We try to make it last, seized as we are by the fear of the boring hours that will come after it” (Olavo, 2015, p. 110). Not having the piano that used to amuse them in Enguinegattes, they decide to try to rent one in Béthune, “a little town located some ten kilometres away,” which Américo Olavo visits whenever he can, “to escape boredom” (Olavo, 2015, p. 110). He goes to town with some comrades in search of the piano and they meet a certain *mademoiselle* Froissart, the owner of a music instrument store. She receives them deferentially and, since no piano is available, she promises to find them one.

*Mademoiselle* is surprised at the ease with which we all speak French, some even better than the locals, whose pronunciation suffers from being exposed to the *patois*. She talks to us at length, in a conversation that ends with rather expensive champagne at the café next door, which also happens to belong to her. (Olavo, 2015, p. 111)

She lets them know she has “studied at the Conservatory in Lille, the piano was her only source of amusement” (Olavo, 2015, p. 111), and she was glad to play for them.

Our search for a piano afforded us a magnificent evening of true art. Above all, it was an improvement in social relations that would often bring us back to Béthune, where our acquaintances included ladies like the shapely young woman who sold me newspapers and that charming *mademoiselle* Froissart, who gently insisted that we call on her whenever we came to town. (Olavo, 2015, p. 112)

Socializing with the Béthune ladies intensifies as the Portuguese officers, bringing offers of wine and cakes from their canteen, spend more and more evenings with them. “We spend very pleasant moments of intimacy. This is nearly happiness, an oasis in this wilderness of boredom, isolation, and sadness(...)” and “(...) since flirting with discretion is allowed, time goes by quickly, fleetingly, giving us the illusion of an independent, carefree life without troubles or crushing homesickness” (Olavo, 2015, p. 113). Finally, a piano materializes and “is cushioned with soft mattresses, on a solid, spacious military truck” (Olavo, 2015, p. 113) that takes it from Béthune to Fosse. All in keeping with the time-honoured tradition of using military transportation, supposedly intended for Army purposes only, for jobs having nothing to do with war.

We finally have our longed-for pastime, which fills our nights with pleasure, even though our mess tends to lose intimacy as amusements increase and attract other comrades who had kept their distance until now. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 113–114)

At last the company leaves for the front and arrives in Fauquissart and then in Neuve-Chapelle, where trench duty begins. Until that moment, visits to the front had been brief, for training purposes only, but now comfort is drastically curtailed.

And now, farewell, quiet nights of soothing rest in the cosiness of mattresses and the luxury of a few poorly washed old cotton sheets. Farewell, unforgettable pleasant hours of intimacy at our mess, sitting around our table next to the piano, listening to Beethoven, Schubert, Debussy, and Grieg with heartfelt emotion. Farewell, happy evenings in Merville and Béthune, amiable conviviality, welcoming relations, which offered us the illusion and evocation of peacetime surrounded by our loved ones. (Olavo, 2015, p. 130)



Américo Olavo's view of trench life is contradictory. On the one hand, he recognizes that the trenches can be rather quiet, as the soldiers' duties involve far more standing guard than actual fighting. Rarely is an explosion or even a shot heard nearby. On the other hand, he acknowledges that trench life is hard, mostly due to the lack of the creature comforts to which he was accustomed:

Despite this near-peacefulness, life here is tiring and after a few days it wears out the most resistant man. From stand-to at dusk until stand-to at dawn, it is impossible to have a moment's sleep (...) By the end of six or seven days of this harsh routine, the strong feel an urgent need to rest, and the weak just fall ill (...) Life drags on monotonously. There is not a single moment of pleasure, peace, or happiness. The only distractions that help us pass the time are our work and the action in the area in front of our parapet during the night, and, during the day, watching the flight of scouting and artillery liaison aeroplanes. (Olavo, 2015, p. 36)

In such a context, there is an increase in envy and scorn for those comfortably installed at the rear, at General Headquarters, on bureaucratic appointments, or for those who, having left for Portugal supposedly on a short leave, have not returned. In Flanders there are now two opposed groups that hate each other: the combatants and the *cachapins*, or shirkers. Américo Olavo speaks his mind: "In this stationary war, this war of positions, which someone has correctly described as a war of batteries, companies and platoons, everyone tries to be precisely where no war is being made" (Olavo, 2015, p. 140).

After little more than a month in the trenches, Américo Olavo realizes the troops have dwindled down "for lack of replacement of the few that were killed or wounded in combat, or the many that were pushed to the limit of their resistance by hard work and intense cold" (Olavo, 2015, p. 139). But the main reason for the lack of officers in the trenches is that so many shirkers continuously try to secure an assignment in the rear, at the headquarters of a battalion, brigade, or division, or even at Expeditionary Corps Headquarters:

At any given battalion headquarters, besides the Commandant and the Second-in-Command, there are also an adjutant, an observer, a liaison officer, a gas specialist, a grenade specialist, a machine gun specialist — what do I know, all sorts of niches, where the protected lucky ones can sit and wait, almost in security and comfort, for the end of this cruel war. As soon as one of these positions becomes vacant, the companies are contacted to provide the next lucky fellow, even though doing so will be to their disadvantage. Most of these officers, however, have never spent a single day on the lines, nor counted the minutes of a night of constant vigilance, nor taken part in missions beyond the trenches, nor run the risk of an attack with grenades, or mortars, or machine guns.

They always sleep in peace, reassured by the dedication and courage of those at the front. They eat hot lunches and dinners at regular times, enjoy leisurely conversations, read novels to kill time, and it is no exaggeration to say that, every now and then, they can afford the luxury and pleasure of fresh contact with clean sheets. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 140–141)

At brigade level the number of shirkers is even greater and the laziness and luxury they enjoy is almost scandalous:

When we reach the brigades, we find a spit-and-polish General Staff, comfortably installed in a well preserved *château*, living pleasantly, dressing well and tastefully, promenading with pleasure, and sleeping in peace.



The number and good disposition of the officers living there—captains, lieutenants, second-lieutenants—contribute to make war an almost desirable and safe occupation. There are eighteen or twenty of them, but only two or three actually do any work, either because of their temperament, or because they want to justify their situation. (Olavo, 2015, p. 142)

Even more scandalous is life at Division Headquarters or Expeditionary Corps Headquarters:

There, in some small town or major village, populous and fully protected, except perhaps from long distance bombardment, the General Headquarters is located, a noisy beehive of several dozen officers. That is the happy, quiet and comfortable residence of what I would call the aristocratic segment of this operational unit.

Wearing smart uniforms, magnificent pelisses, and staff armbands, they go in and out in groups, some talking, others working silently at their desk, while others go for long drives in the rear areas, comfortably and pompously installed in racing automobiles.

They sleep on large, soft mattresses, in spacious, airy rooms where they often receive the gentle care of female hands that offer them the impression of the family life we have forsaken.

They take their meals in messes that seem luxurious and merry to the rest of us, they dress fastidiously and elegantly, and they treat us—poor, obscure, inglorious trench workers—with haughty scorn for our soiled uniforms and muddy boots. As far as they are concerned, we are the beggars from the lines, to be carefully kept at arm's length. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 146–147)

Such differences between the two groups “contribute to creating a deep gap between line officers and the lucky ones dubbed *cachapins* (...) The advantages are for those who rest; for those who sacrifice themselves there is only (...) more sacrifice” (Olavo, 2015, pp. 141–142), and nearly all shirkers “are there to shine, to enjoy, to give orders. We are there to obey, to work, to fight, to suffer, to die” (Olavo, 2015, p. 147).

And these, who make up such a useless court, number in the hundreds, playing a merely decorative role in offices dealing with information, complaints, instruction, burials, billeting, whatever, and they are charged with the most bizarre duties. (Olavo, 2015, p. 148)

Américo Olavo's indignation inveighs against those lucky enough to secure a comfortable situation far from the trenches, which allows them to live peacefully, pleasurably and well-provided for:

There are officers who left Portugal before I did, in order to fill vacancies in front line units, and who are still (...) unassigned, for whatever reason or pretext, so that even after many months in France, they have yet to report to what should be their logical assignment (...) Months go by fast, one after another, and no force can drag them away from the pleasures in which they let themselves be immersed. Even though they constantly feel under the threat of being sent to their supposed destinations, they go on enjoying the comfort (...) and the hope that the end of the war will find them where they are (...) They live in the carefree merriment of beaches and towns, lodged in good hotels, in excellent *appartements*, some of them enjoying a cosy family life. It is even rumoured that a few have secured a situation for their wife and children, right there at the base. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 152–154)

Nonetheless, Américo Olavo recognizes that there are exceptions, line officers who, like him, refuse to leave the trenches, as well as officers who, having an opportunity to remain in the rear, choose to volunteer for line duty:

There are also officers who do not wish to leave the lines and even refuse a comfortable posting in the rear for one that may entail sacrifice or even death (...) One of those officers is Captain Jaime Batista, who left a position at Division Headquarters in order to command a company (...) When dozens of officers grasp every kind of pretext to avoid trench duty, while others hang on to unjustifiable assignments, this officer gives up the comfort, safety and pleasures of a position in the rear to risk his life next to the troops. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 158–159)

Receiving the visit of friends is one of the main pleasures in the trenches: “These hours after lunch can be spent pleasantly when we are lucky enough to meet friends we have not seen in a long time” (Olavo, 2015, p. 160). Sá Cardoso and the painter Sousa Lopes are two such welcome guests.

Alfredo Ernesto de Sá Cardoso, a career artillery officer, and also a freemason and a republican, was a personal friend of Américo Olavo’s. After the war he served as a Cabinet Member from June 29, 1919 to January 21, 1920. Américo Olavo was pleased to receive him.

We talked with pride about that admirable gesture that was our participation in the war. Whatever the travails we have to suffer, the hardships we have to undergo, and the dangers we have to face, we bless the hour when we joined the fight in order to live up to the obligations of our alliance with England, and to place ourselves next to France and Italy, our Latin sisters, who are fighting for a civilization that is also ours, and for Liberty and Right. (Olavo, 2015, p. 160)

We regret with disgust the attitude of many who, unable to understand the reach and the imperative of their obligation to the Fatherland, belittle our efforts, despise the actions of the men who have been the interpreters of the will and the interests of our country. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 160–161)

Even though there are officers who gripe about their assignments, and others who shirk their duty, and although politicians unpatriotically inveigh against our military action or become involved in revolutionary movements, and although the men who brought us to this military enterprise may be slandered for their loyalty to the given word, to the treaties signed, to the help given their ally [England], to the support of Latin civilization, World History will forever bear the eternal, shining testimonials of our small country’s sacrifice, honour, and chivalry. (Olavo, 2015, p. 161)

Sousa Lopes, a painter, visits the trenches to make sketches he will later use in his paintings about the Expeditionary Corps, which are now at the Military Museum in Lisbon. Américo Olavo accompanies him, shows him the parapet, no man’s land, the sentry posts, and the dugouts.

At daybreak I wake up Sousa Lopes with the good news. He does not believe me at first, but when I confirm it he tosses away his comfortable blankets, rushes through his fastidious *toilette*, and shows up amazed at the door of the first-aid post where I found him a place to sleep. Since magnificent weather promises him a long stay in this strange landscape, we decide to spend some time over coffee and toasts served by dutiful orderlies in my command post, where a stove keeps us warm. (Olavo, 2015, p. 169)

When we get to the first line, we turn right. The painter takes advantage of my every stop to sketch his impressions. I walk up to the parapet, get into a dugout or another, and when I come back I find him, pencil in hand, sketching trench scenes, mines, a bridge over a ditch, graves of unknown soldiers which someone’s charity tends to daily. Everything holds interest for him. Every now and then he asks me to wait so he can finish a sketch. (Olavo, 2015, pp. 171–172)

After a week of trench duty, the companies spend another week recovering strength in the nearby villages. Even there, amidst considerable danger due to constant bombardments, the troops try to maintain a minimum of comfort. Those days of rest, however, are not enough, and “in early February, fatigue and near-exhaustion, as well as the drastic reduction of troops, made it urgent for my brigade to be relieved” (Olavo, 2015, p. 175). They left for Paradis, located a few kilometres away from the lines, where “soldiers are lodged in the *grainiers* of the *fermes* and officers in small, decrepit rooms” (Olavo, 2015, p. 175). Even so they enjoy the “quiet nights, in the nearly forgotten freshness of clean sheets, sometimes sunk in a vast French bed with worn-out springs” (Olavo, 2015, p. 175). They even try to recover some of the creature comforts they once enjoyed in other billets, such as the mess and the piano, which they have brought over from Fosse. They spend a month resting and recovering strength.

Afternoons and evenings, however, are free and quiet. Sometimes we walk along the roads leading to Béthune—always dear to our heart and where so many affections await us—, to Merville, to Lestrem, where Sá Cardoso is billeted, we go everywhere that old, strong friendships attract us, where we can feel the soothing happiness of being with those who kept us company in moments of peace and merriment, which we now remember with longing and feel so distant, after a long year of work, of fighting, of sacrifice, of suffering. (Olavo, 2015, p. 176)

On other afternoons we remain in our cramped lodgings, listening with pleasure to Gomes playing the piano. Sometimes Sousa Lopes comes by for a trip to Merville or Béthune in the ample comfort of a coach I have permitted myself to buy. (Olavo, 2015, p. 177)

On cold February evenings, sometimes they listen to Ribeiro Gomes playing the piano, and sometimes, sitting around the stove, they listen to their elderly landlady’s stories, “which go back to the distant days of her youth” (Olavo, 2015, p. 178).

Américo Olavo’s company, short of men like all the others, returns to the trenches and is caught in the German offensive of April 9, 1918, during which he is captured and sent to a prisoner camp in Germany.

A constant deluge of iron rains all over us, the enemy has too many cannon and mortars firing so many shots that their sounds generate a single, continuous, awesome rumble that rolls on interminably, over the land, which trembles and vibrates as if shaken up. I have the impression that a monstrous storm is pouring over us, and my ears are incessantly echoing the sound of a thousand thunders, followed immediately by another thousand, and so on, ceaselessly. (Olavo, 2015, p. 220)

Disarmed, extenuated, after trampling on mud for half an hour along crumbling, rubble-filled trenches, facing hundreds of men armed to the teeth, all resistance would be pointless and any intention to go on fighting, sheer madness. The six of us were surrounded, and from that moment on there was no more hope of salvation, we were no longer fighters but *vanquished* prisoners, walking under guard, carrying the weight of defeat toward captivity, where we would live for an uncertain period of time under the yoke of brutal and barbarous Germany. (Olavo, 2015, p. 226)

For Américo Olavo the war was over, soon to be replaced by the discomfort, suffering, misery, and homesickness of a prisoner camp. Those would be the themes of his brother Carlos Olavo’s book, *Jornal d’um Prisioneiro de Guerra na Alemanha*.

Américo Olavo's memoir-based book gives us a rather restrained account of the life of Portuguese soldiers in Flanders, particularly those of the officer class. Readers may get the impression that the war, with the exception of the battle of April 9, 1918, was not nearly as bad as other writers have described it. However, we know from other sources, autobiographical or historical, that the war as a whole, and not just that last battle had a very negative impact on the troops' morale, well-being, and health. To minimize such an impact, as Américo Olavo tried to do in order to justify the political options and the individuals belonging to his political party who were responsible for the decision to send men to the trenches, while it is understandable, nevertheless causes a negative impression on today's readers.

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# Opening the Eyes of Memory: War Painting in Adriano Sousa Lopes and Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso

Maria Teresa Amado and Ana Rita Rodrigues

**Abstract** After a hundred years, when we open the eyes of memory with photographs, drawings and paintings of the Great War, it is impossible not to feel the horror of war. Beyond recording events and allowing us to remember them, what is the purpose of the art of the period? How can we bring to life a war which became a huge generalized massacre, a mechanical war with tanks, artillery, gas, airplanes and submarines, hidden and without a face, with no clear goals? During the conflict, war not only lost its traditional iconography—the horse, the flag, the soldier, the hero—but even the traditional “language” of painting struggled to express the states of light and movement, of speed and noise, of pieces of flying metal and fragmentation. It is in this context that this article seeks to compare the artistic and iconographic language of João Sousa Lopes and Amadeo Sousa Cardoso. In Sousa Lopes, an official war artist working in the trenches of Flanders, the horror and the absurdity of the unnatural violence is expressed in a figurative and realistic way. In Amadeo Sousa Cardoso, the language is contemporary and abstract, as well as profoundly original in aesthetic, conceptual and artistic terms. In his war paintings, and above all in the painting titled “Entrada”, Amadeu, twenty years before Picasso, shows how war leads to the destruction of life, harmony and the Light. In the perversity of war, electric light, traditionally a symbol of modernity, becomes something unnatural.

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