

Vale a pena concluir com o excelente ensaio de Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, cujo título convoca a questão central do volume: “Devemos continuar escrevendo histórias da literatura?” Traçando o historial da disciplina, observa, no século XX, um movimento centrífugo em relação a todo o perspectivismo historiográfico; uma autêntica ‘fobia’ em relação à história e à forma narrativa foi-se adensando, à medida que entra em crise a epistemologia baseada no sujeito que vê ‘de fora’. Segundo o novo paradigma filosófico, o observador deixa de estar situado no limiar entre passado e futuro e passa a estar diluído, imerso no objeto observado; por conseguinte, a narrativa da nação perdeu interesse, mas ganharam relevo as experiências físicas de *imersão histórica*. Procuramos na historicidade da literatura “um sentimento sensual de ser parte de e inscrito no mundo material que nos cerca” (p. 239). Isso dará lugar a “um novo tipo de histórias da literatura que são fragmentados em centenas de pequenas ‘entradas’”, mas que “não convergem para quaisquer conceitos mais abrangentes que tentem capturar a identidade de uma nação.” (*ibid.*).

Permanecem, como se vê, muitas incertezas sobre o futuro da história literária enquanto disciplina académica – se futuro vier a ter, como nota Gumbrecht, pois, atualmente, “não temos manual de instruções”. Mas essa é uma discussão que não se esgota no presente volume. O seu mérito é sobretudo o de

debater as questões teóricas e culturais que hoje enfrenta quem se dedica ao estudo sistémico da literatura. Não é demais realçar a coerência e a qualidade desta publicação, que apenas peca por algum descuido na revisão dos textos, todos eles apresentados em língua portuguesa ou espanhola.

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**THE WRITTEN WORLD:  
HOW LITERATURE SHAPED HISTORY  
MARTIN PUCHNER**

London: Granta Books, 2017

410 páginas. ISBN 978-1783783137

*The Written World – How Literature shapes History* by Martin Puchner tries to trace the journey of literature and how it interacts with civilization. As a professor of English and comparative literature at Harvard, Puchner strives to guide the readers through a well-crafted chronological tour of world history. From the world of Homer through the establishment of Christianity to the eccentric world of Harry Potter, the book reflects on the world of literature as it develops parallel to the world of contemporary man. A critical look at the content shows that the focus of the book is not primarily on literature; rather, it touches on the technologies associated with the production and distribution of literature.

In his work, Martin Puchner indicates how present day literature originates from the political, social, religious, and economic elements of civilization and how well literature as a product of society interacts and impacts on the norms of that very society. As the cover suggests, the book offers an all embracing view, from the Stone Age to the contemporary world of print hence achieving the title 'Written World'.

In all its sixteen chapters, the author picks up an important issue and talks about the content, its author, and the time it was published. Furthermore, he highlights how the written material has shaped civilization. His primary focus is on the achievement of foundational texts and their influence on present day literature. Foundational texts may be explored as texts that have continuously accrued power and significance over a long period of time that they have become source codes for the society's culture, norms, and values. By tackling a chapter in its own time, the author aims at achieving a smooth flow and stream of literature based on history. For example, he touches on the Epic of Gilgamesh (p. 22), the first ever known and recorded literary work and narrative discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Austen Henry near Mosul in Iraq. Mosul is thought to be the ancient biblical city of Nineveh where literature was produced by using Cuneiform Clay tablets. The literature then to Don Quichote, Ezra's Bible, Derek Walcott poetry to the fantasies of George R.R.

Martin and J.K Rowling. By adopting such a chronological structure, the author reflects on actual effects of literature on the civilization of the world through written means. Interestingly, by presenting the story of literature in a chronological order provides a better opportunity for readers to understand the flow as well as how the world of literature came into being.

By means of works such as Alexander's Pillow Book (p. 3) – i.e. The Odyssey – the author demonstrates the influence language can have on people with a case study of Egyptian literature. The exploration by Puchner builds a better understanding of how Alexandria's influence resulted in the proliferation of beautiful things in Greek (p. 16). Additionally, the Epic of Gilgamesh informs the reader that before Alexander the Great, there were other important people such as Ashurbanipal, the Mesopotamian king (p. 26). More importantly, the Epic of Gilgamesh harbors some historical events such as the Old Testament that were recorded by Ezra (p. 46). Through the explanation, it becomes clear that Ezra worked on elevating the foundational text and content that eventually came to be referred to as the Holy Bible that carries the object of worship.

In connecting the past and the present, it is crucial to note the use of first person 'I' in the book. The direct involvement of the author in the events taking place in the narration makes the book more interesting to the readers.

As a result, it provides a groundbreaking environment where Puchner takes the reader through a remarkable journey through which literature and global stories have created a world society experiences today. It makes it simple for readers to understand how writing has indirectly and directly inspired the rise and fall of nations, empires, and societies that spark the political, philosophical ideas, and the birth of diverse beliefs. The strategy convinces the readers on the power and the influence that a good story carries. For example, the story 'One Thousand and One Nights with Scheherazade' (p. 121). Puchner explains how philosophical mentors such as Socrates, Jesus Christ, and Confucius spread their teaching through oral means. However, the author signals that the disciples of these philosophical minds coined the art of writing to propagate their message to their audience (p. 138).

The writing adopted by the disciples and the target groups provided the opportunity and the platform for the author to elaborate on the history of printing and how the automation of writing acted as an integral part of advancing world literature and history. For example, *The Communist Manifesto* explores the political, social and economic challenges present in Europe before the 1850s (p. 252). Additionally, the author enlightens the readers on other foundational texts like 'The Popol Vuh' (Chapter 8) of the Mayan people that was suppressed

and torched by Spanish Conquistadors in the year 1562 (p. 171). Additionally, he highlights the Epic of Sunjata that remained in oral forms until recently when it was converted into written text (p. 290). In totality, it delightfully narrates the chronicles of writing technologies, printing press, and how it eventually shaped the people, their values, and history. Puchner showcases his keen eye on the ironies progressed by diverse histories and how they influence the ideas, values, and practices adopted by diverse groups in the modern world.

A critical review of the book mirrors Puchner as an author who keeps the curious reader attached to the stories. He achieves this by exploiting his ability to integrate illustrations, photos, and maps into the textual notes hence improving the reader's experience. Furthermore, the incorporation of a personal tone that combines his research into the storyline makes it simple for the reader to relate and identify. As a result, he gives the readers a new touch and experience that is entirely different from reading a standard textbook. For example, towards the end of the narrative, he presents his views regarding the future of the literature. He informs the readers that the world is presently witnessing a transitional period that powers adoption into the world of technologies such as computers. This presents varied emotions towards the presentation of literature. For instance, he expresses his wor-

ries regarding the place of literature in an environment where technological revolution is resulting in traditional structures becoming obsolete.

Consequently Puchner feels the world is standing on the verge of a second great explosion where the written world is poised to transform any time soon. Nevertheless, he notes that in the age of the written world, people are becoming more literate based on the fact that many people are doing a wide range of writing at a given point in time. For example, in the age of technology, there are numerous types of blogs, websites, and databases carrying with them a different niche in literature.

In totality, in the *Written World*, Martin Puchner argues and confirms that literature extends far beyond an individual's experience in the world of literature. For instance, he informs the readers that historical events tend to follow a continuous pattern. In the same manner, a technological shift comes loaded with new forms of writing that give room for new ideas and voices to proliferate hence changing the societal norms, values, and culture. This is evident in 'The Tale of Genji' that gave rise to Murasaki Shikibu, a Japanese lady. Therefore, he argued that similar to how 'The Tales of Genji' acted as a foundational text to the revolution of Japanese aesthetic, so do technologies change the modern world. Therefore, by including Murasaki in the literature, Puchner focused on enlightening his readers on the techno-literary shifts

that are inserting change and anxiety in the contemporary age. In short, he believes that having an all-inclusive and evolving world literature provides an evidence-based solution to diverse global problems in the coming future.

Finally, there are numerous reasons why the book by Martin Puchner is a highly rated and recommendable reading. First and foremost, the book represents the true story of the evolution of literature. It explains to the readers how great texts and technologies have directly and indirectly shaped cultures, altered human history, and eventually streamed the path towards embracement of civilization. For example, in the modern world, people are enjoying innovation such as social media, websites, and blogs where they can publish their content. However, less is known about the foundation of these platforms. Nevertheless, Puchner takes a position to inform the readers on the influence of Spanish adventurers, American Astronauts, Japanese Court ladies, and Greek generals in shaping and spreading literature as it is enjoyed today by the vast majority of the reading public.

Therefore, as a captivating story on how the development of literature came to be, *The Written World* provides an intersection of different traditional pillars on political movements, development of religions, and social transformation hence providing a new, enticing, and informing perspective on human history. As a result, any reader

who wishes to understand the chronological achievement of print media has a golden opportunity of reading through *The Written World* by Martin Puchner. In conclusion, *The Written World* is an exact definition of a delightful narrative that features a chronological stream of writing technologies, evolution or printing press, and the book chronicles that shape people, their social life, economics, politics, religion, and commerce. It achieves this by showcasing how literature has turned planet Earth into an exceptionally written world. For that reason, it is recommendable to any reader who loves unearthing the foundation pillars of various literature innovation and publication present in the contemporary world.

See also PUCHNER, Martin (2018). “Martin Puchner Explains The History Of The Written World”. *Youtube*. Accessed 28.7.2018 in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4b2a9YbwBIQ>.

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**D. BEATRIZ DE PORTUGAL, A INFANTA ESQUECIDA (1504-1538)**

**ANA ISABEL BUESCU**

**Barcarena: Manuscrito, 2019**

**271 páginas. ISBN 978-989-8871-73-2**

1. O objetivo da obra que agora se publica é bem claro: resgatar do esque-

cimento uma figura do nosso século XVI. Trata-se da infanta D. Beatriz, filha de D. Manuel e D. Maria de Aragão, que, por força do “mercado de casamentos” que então vigorava nas cortes europeias, saiu do Reino aos 16 anos para casar com Carlos II, Duque de Saboia.

Pelas características que apresenta, a biografia em apreço pode aproveitar a um conjunto alargado de leitores, desde o simples interessado por temas de história cultural até ao estudioso do Quinhentismo. Para os apreciadores de literatura dessa época, por exemplo, D. Beatriz é relacionável com uma peça de teatro: *Cortes de Júpiter*, auto composto por Gil Vicente em 1521, justamente para assinalar a partida da jovem para a corte de Saboia. Três séculos depois, em 1838, Almeida Garrett empenhado em refundar o teatro português, viria a escrever e a encenar *Um Auto de Gil Vicente*, aproveitando ainda as circunstâncias que envolvem a viagem de D. Beatriz.

No auto quinhentista, a infanta é uma figura externa. A sua partida e o aparato que lhe é inerente parecem servir apenas para representar uma corte onde a jovem deixa saudades. De tal forma que, em alguns casos, os cortesãos e outras figuras são *transformados* em peixes que vão acompanhando a armada ao longo da viagem. Enganam-se porém os que pensam que a peça vicentina se esgota no divertimento celebrativo, que faz lembrar os cortejos marítimos e os momos medievais.