Voices from War, a Privileged Fado

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With the growth of comparative studies, new approaches have revealed how shared voice(s) and tone(s) may be perceived. Some voices may be concealed in any urban *beco* or alleyway in Lisbon and in Buenos Aires, in a fictional space where some army veterans are found. In literature and cinema, places like Afghanistan, Angola, Europe, the former Yugoslavia, the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, Iraq, Palestine and Syria are not mere fictional locations of a given war, but the settings where people find, meet and define themselves and each other in any specific war. War is a source of crucial life experiences that translate into fiction, where both the viewer and reader meet and find some individuals back in their motherland trying to digest and assimilate their war experiences. Regardless of the war the characters fought in, when listening closely to their voices a range of sounds may be distinguished. In those sounds and words, a thematic analysis brings up a common narrative thread, neither limited by literary

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traditions nor historical time, but a place in which a fictionalised collective voice can be heard. In *Fado alexandrino* and in *El raro privilegio* [The Odd Privilege] whether described in a 'fado' song or a novel, war surfaces as a collective experience for a fictional community of voices.[1]

This chapter focuses on the novels *Fado alexandrino* by the Portuguese novelist António Lobo Antunes (b. 1942) and on *El raro privilegio* by Ronnie Quinn (b. 1960), an Argentine writer of Irish descent. My main interest is to compare how writers belonging to different literary traditions are affected by the same pretextual experience: war as an accident in their lives, translated into a fictional reflection on aspects of this experience. In these two novels a common voice is heard; Lobo Antunes and Quinn use a mixture of fact and fiction to generate this common voice, with which they evoke the Portuguese Colonial War[2] and the Falklands/Malvinas War,[3] as well as the dislocation that people such as these novels' protagonists experienced back in their respective motherlands. Certainly, the fictional construction is different in each novel. Nevertheless, their shared sense of dislocation and common voice is the angle that will be tackled in this essay.

1 *Fado alexandrino* and *El raro privilegio*

In these two novels, António Lobo Antunes and Ronnie Quinn narrate accounts of war from a number of different perspectives. War, however, is an experience that conscript soldiers cannot control, and it is therefore confronted in the narrative present. The soldiers' experiences of war determine the relations between war veterans and the rest of society. The war veterans are presented as individuals who feel, and are, displaced in Buenos Aires and Lisbon. From their perspective, their motherlands do not seem to be the familiar places they knew before the war.

In *Fado alexandrino*, António Lobo Antunes offers an account of five veterans from the Colonial Wars (1961–1974). As pointed out by Maria Alzira Seixo, this novel focuses on the African wars and the post-war urban experience, as well as the role of family in the protagonists' childhood, and the difficulty the soldiers have in expressing and decoding emotions; we see evidence of the latter when they mingle with women.[4] The novel is divided into three main sections: before, during and after the revolution. Four of the characters recount their stories to a fifth. The three parts of the

novel are structured around the Carnation Revolution (25 April, 1974). As military officers organise the revolution, each character has to make a crucial choice about whether to join it, oppose it or run away when the uprising occurs. Throughout the novel, we see that incidents and images from the Colonial War in Mozambique are still present in the lives of these army veterans. Though their lives change according to the choices they make, the consequences of war tend to resist and are still present in their lives. By the time of their reunion after the revolution, none of them seems to have gained much, suggesting that the Carnation Revolution was not as significant for these soldiers as the war that preceded it. Their meeting in Mozambique had been the essential moment in their lives. Now, the five former soldiers meet back in Lisbon, some 10 years later, for a night of debauchery, at which they share their stories and catch up on the events of the intervening years. Despite their differences of rank, social background and political points of view, their experiences after the war have been similar overall. Their difficulty mingling with women clearly illustrates the problems they face when socialising in general, as they are not able to fully adapt to the new political landscape that has been brought on by the revolution. Their time together as a cohesive group is the basis of their bond; it is a form of collective identity highlighted with the intermingling of the army veterans' voices and stories, as presented in this process of organization of their individual and group memory, their dislocated lives.

The main character of *El raro privilegio* is named after the author of the novel. The character Quinn, as I shall refer to him in the pages of this essay, is an Argentine lad of Irish descent who fought in the Malvinas/Falklands war (April–June 1982) and now lives in Buenos Aires. He is a native English speaker who was sent to war since speaking English was an essential skill for the Argentine army, enabling them to spy on the British army on the islands. Thus, the character Quinn was one of the last Argentine soldiers to leave the islands at the very end of the war. Back in Buenos Aires, he lives in the family home with his mother, paternal aunts and close relatives. It is back in the motherland where he found and still finds some comfort, both in English and Spanish, but this is only so at home. He is working as an English teacher; his personal connections with contemporary Argentina are rather weak, as he hasn't met many people since the war. His work as a teacher remains as a side aspect in the novel.

As the character Quinn remembers at the beginning of the novel, when he first returned from the war he spent all his time sleeping and watching movies: he limited his life to passive activities, observing but not taking part, listening to the radio and music of that place and time, and, only communicating with his close relatives in the family home. The character Quinn is busy enough ruminating over his own past. *El raro privilegio* unfolds from his experiences. The character is called by the police to be told that an army veteran friend has died, having apparently committed suicide. Thus, Ronnie Quinn's narrative not only goes beyond an actual memory or account of war and post-war experiences, but also contains elements of, and transcends, the genre expectations of a detective/spy novel: this is more than just a factual mystery to be solved.

In *El raro privilegio* some former soldiers find themselves embroiled in a mystery after a friend and ex-soldier, el Turco,[5] supposedly commits suicide. In his address book el Turco kept the names and phone numbers of all his wartime friends. By combining the theme of war with the detective/spy element, Quinn illustrates certain trends in contemporary democratic Argentina, where business practices are not always above board. The problem of arms trafficking allows Quinn, the writer, to portray Argentine society through the lens of detective/spy literature, often perceived as a literature of escape but which also, notably, usually includes a representation of a period in social history. Through their memories, Ronnie Quinn's characters move through different spaces in Buenos Aires, Montevideo and the Malvinas, as seen in the novel when the character Quinn's past is narrated; at this point, that war and those islands emerge as an element representing a clear breaking point and the defining time in the main characters' lives. This element allows the character Quinn to interpret and understand his current life and the events he finds himself led into. In *El raro privilegio,* war and the veterans' experience of war constitute the bond that holds them together in the face of their dislocated lives. This bond appears in the process of organisation of their individual and group memory, where the option for the character Quinn is to leave by plane Argentina. In this novel, Ronnie Quinn explores the inner conflict that the character Quinn goes through, trying to find his own place in contemporary Argentina; where, from his perspective, there are two groups in society, those who fought in the Malvinas war and the rest. In

both *Fado alexandrino* and *El raro privilegio*, the writers introduce a fictional narrative whose core element is war. Certainly, this is an experience that leads characters in both novels to feel out of control; they find themselves struggling with the limited emotional or physical personal resources at their disposal. The war was the turning point in their lives, the experience they are trying to come to terms with. Thus, their war experience is going to determine and to make itself a condition in the lives of most of the characters in these two novels.

2 War and Fiction, Argentina and Portugal

In all literary traditions, the connection between war and fiction is a prominent one given that storytelling lies at the heart of the narration not just as a reflection upon a traumatic individual experience, but as a fictional framework in which to reflect upon human existence. War is the reason for some events and encounters, as for some characters who were directly involved in the conflict, the only thing they have in common is that they share this moment in time. Much of the storytelling concentrates on the experiences of these people, and is expressed by voices that haunt some characters, whose narrative present is determined by that past. Thus, their war experience is a core element of the narration, not just a mere setting that may explain their fictional lives and experiences. The narrative voices the past in the characters' present. These fictionalised voices may take the form of a Portuguese 'fado' song, but echo the meaning of the Latin noun *fatum*, in that the fate of these voices and characters proves to be purely determined by the characters' pasts, their own experiences of war. Thus, parallel discourses are being generated being that fate a matter that brings each character back to their past, both a common and an individual past, but where to also carefully hear the voices that resonate from that past. For this reason, Susan Barnett's 'has-happenedness' approach allows us to consider literature with an awareness of its the historic context, where the act of writing and reading takes place.[6] This is also the space in which the narration takes place, providing a common sphere in which the relations between different periods in history can be analysed. Consequently, in the social margins of contemporary Portugal and Argentina, facts and fiction outline the fictional crossroads where Lobo Antunes and

Quinn call into question, through the lives of some army veterans, the absurdity of militarism and the war; where they give a voice to these army veterans and to common discourses.

In Portugal and Argentina, by means of the Salazarist discourse in Portugal and equally that of Argentina's Junta Militar, nationalist rhetoric and discourse constituted a common feature that was vivid during both of these wars. For both regimes these two wars meant the maintenance of the nationalist discourse that they were promoting. These two regimes concentrated their nations' efforts and aspirations on these wars since they were promoting the eternal nationalist values and conceptions of each nation. The significance of this discourse lies in the fact that the African Colonies, for Portugal, and the Falklands/Malvinas, for Argentina, implied the completion of the nation, which was a vital driving force and concept for both regimes. So, even if Boaventura de Sousa Santos was only referring to Portugal, it could be argued that Argentina was also a society 'craving change, … resisting change, … in vertiginous movement, … frozen by vertigo.'[7] Thus, being defeated in these wars meant the non-completion of each nation in each true form, as the regime saw it. As a result, when the Estado Novo dictatorship ended in April 1974, the coup d'état that brought it down was connected to the defeats of the Colonial Wars.[8] In June 1983, after defeat in the Falklands/Malvinas War, the Argentine Junta Militar (1976–1983) also collapsed.[9] Both regimes shared one target: the reuniting of their country with its territories, of Portugal with the Colonies, of Argentina with the Falklands/Malvinas. As this target was not achieved, these two countries were left amidst the rumbles, as Lobo Antunes put it. Both societies were left amidst the ruins at a crucial time in which they were facing a new political era: that of post-dictatorship. As underlined by Eduardo Lourenço, after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal 'everything was charged to Salazar, and Salazar was not charged to anyone',[10] which also applies to Argentina in the 1980s and 1990s. Standing by those ruins, conscripted army veterans represented a silenced collective memory in Argentina and Portugal, as these veterans were overloaded with an excess of personal recollection. In Portugal and Argentina few people were willing to hear about those experiences of war. For both António Lobo Antunes and Ronnie Quinn, the Colonial War and the Falkvinas War (if I may refer to it as such) consti-

tute a pretextual experience; the personal driving force that allows Lobo Antunes and Quinn, as conscripted army veterans of each war, to explore and show where characters like themselves end up in their societies after having lived through and survived a war. And so the character Quinn says: 'Yo estaba harto de escuchar lo mismo. Para la mayoría lo que nos pasó era una anécdota. Lo comentaban como a un partido de algún mundial de fútbol.'[11] Therefore, Quinn describes a division between two groups in Argentina: the conscripted soldiers and the majority of Argentine society. The character Quinn perceives that for the latter, the war is just a historical incident with little biographical meaning. For the former, war was more than just an anecdote, it was an event with enduring meaning in their lives, more significant than experiencing defeat in a soccer match. It exceeded the limits of the pitch, of the motherland. The personal and biographical implications of the war for them are at the core of their lives and the narration: it explores what this group of conscript soldiers in the motherland have to process.

3 Being Back in the Motherland

As pointed out by Santos, in the aftermath of these wars, both Portugal and Argentina were torn between craving and resisting change. As portrayed in these two novels, for their soldiers, returning meant coming back to a different society to the one they had left; a thornier society, undergoing change. In the translation into fiction of these experiences, being back in the motherland is an essential fictional ingredient that allows Lobo Antunes and Quinn to articulate the sense of unsettlement these army veterans experience. As conscript soldiers, they had no say in when to leave and return to the motherland, which visibly illustrates the sense of dislocation they underwent. Thus, even if initially being back in the motherland is perceived as being back to where they were before conscription, their encounter with their motherland is not trouble-free.

Both Lobo Antunes and Quinn turn to historical facts—connected with these two wars and those who returned to their motherland after them—as the source for fiction which is critical of contemporary Portugal and Argentina. As a result, Susan Bassnett's 'has-happenedness'[12] approach allows

to connect literature and a historic context, where the act of writing and reading takes place. This is also the space where the narration takes place, providing a common sphere where to analyse the relation between the two novels. Thus, the 'has-happenedness' of the plurality of voices depicts a group of soldiers who have returned from a lost war and who, either in Buenos Aires or in Lisbon, find there is no room for them. So, in both capitals, human degradation is manifest in the existence of characters who have undergone the 'violent process of deterritorialization and re-territorialization, marked by the individual and collective loss', by the existence of their collective and individual voices.[13] As noted by Ribeiro with reference to Portugal, but in a comment that could also apply to Argentina, the experience of place and space is a feature of recent Portuguese prose; she relates that 'the collective loss of memory [about some facts] and an excess of personal memory' coexist in the urban lives of these conscript army veterans, who have returned to their motherland along with their vivid recollections.[14] In these novels the urban space is presented as an area in which the protagonists do not interact with society, unless society requests them to do so. The urban space is where the protagonists meet up and increasingly realise that their experience of Lisbon or Buenos Aires is home to that group bond, in which they try to construct their form of identity around their group.

In this manner, the experience of war comprises two clear moments and directions: leaving and returning to the motherland. Thus, homecoming is the unmistakable shared experience for the community of voices portrayed in *Fado alexandrino* and in *El raro privilegio*. This is related to the essential stage of returning, 'desde que volvimos'.[15] As emphasised by the use of the adverb 'since', that past time is crucial in the character Quinn's eyes, and where he situates himself, since he uses the first-person plural: 'we returned'. Those not belonging to his group are those that did not return from war, the rest of Argentine society. In addition, the essence of what made the experience of those war veterans unique was 'returning home, finding themselves back in that familiar space'. Once there, this experience becomes a coming-to-terms with how that very same space, home and the motherland, no longer feels so familiar. The war is the turning point in their lives in the narrative present. As a result, war is at the heart of the narration since war turns into a 'topos' in some of the characters' memories. The characters' personal experience brings the reader through familiar urban landscapes and

alleyways where, however, the characters are still trapped by their war experiences, and have limited breathing space in their surroundings. The characters hardly interact with others, and find themselves on the edges of society. This is related to the fact that these post-dictatorship societies had changed and, additionally, to the transformations that had taken place in them after each war. Thus, the task of confronting and attempt to process past situations and experiences, faced before but associated with the narrative present, are handled back in their motherland. The dislocation these former soldiers experience is attributable to their return to a changed society.

War circumstances and experiences determine the lives of these soldiers. In the two novels, both of which could be described 'as a fictionalization of the past',[16] this 'topos' is the space that inhabits the memory of the characters, coming back in the novels as flashbacks, driving them to search for answers to the question(s) that still haunt them. Through a kaleidoscopic perspective, Lobo Antunes and Quinn depict, in the alleyways of both societies, a space where this type of 'Other' attempts to find their individual space and, as well, where by fictionalizing these writers live, survive or overcome that experience. Even if the war between nations is over, this is not so in their lives. As a result, in an exercise of memory and recollection, they attempt to organise both their collective and individual memory, voicing that imagined community. Memory is the device that keeps and recalls facts, events or experiences, that personal mental picture. Being this a crepuscular memory, this type of memory is an essential one since, for these war veterans, time stopped with those wars as this was a breaking point in their lives, 'conceiving imagination as the arrangement of memory', as the length of time over which remembering extends.[17]

4 A Category of Other(s)

In this manner, these former soldiers incarnate a certain type of 'Other', a group which remains, whose members have experienced war and who still find themselves conscripted by that circumstance, which is determining the course of their lives. This is because of the sense of unsettlement and perturbation they experienced in Portugal and Argentina, since the characters are representative of those army veterans who need to come to terms with their

war experience and their role in their societies, in the past and in the present. Given that other nationals do not share that war experience, nor the unsettlement brought with it, these characters stand as 'Others', who must learn to cope with their own narrative present. As a result, the inner group voice reflects the disconnection between society and these 'Others' as only the group's members are familiar with that voice. Thus, a bitter tone and a lonely surface illustrate how these 'Others' do not distinguish their own space within those societies. The gap between the groups of these 'Others' and those who did not go to war constitute a preliminary feature. However, the core aspect in these novels is the disconnection between the two groups, which is attributable to the unique experience of war for these 'Others'. The tone and voice of those who have not experienced war is evidence of the lack of interest and concern for 'el sufrimiento de los que fueron a Angola' [the suffering of those who went to Angola]' in the words of Lobo Antunes.[18] In the eyes of these societies: 'cuando terminó todo, volvimos a nuestras vidas de costumbre y fuimos nosotros los responsables de la derrota [when everything was over, we came back to our ordinary lives and we were responsible for the defeat]';[19] the veterans returned to a life as conscripted army veterans and defeated citizens. As a consequence, living in the motherland in isolation was an initial step in the process of personally absorbing their experiences, whilst separated from each other. Nevertheless, for this imagined community, in both *Fado alexandrino* and *El raro privilegio*, a corpse proves to be the initiating factor in coming to terms with the past.[20] Thus, this voiceless being will offer the characters, for the first time, the chance to give testimony and to be heard. '¿Te molesta si te pregunto algo sobre Malvinas? [Does it annoy you, me asking you about the Malvinas?]' is the first question the character Quinn is asked by a policeman.[21] Back in the motherland, the veterans become aware that they belong to a category of 'Others', as opposed to those who were not conscripts.

5 Dislocated Voices

Voices and silences articulate the expression and outcry of these army veterans. In the pattern of these sounds homecoming is a vital moment, as mentioned before, but being listened to at home constitutes another essential

moment, a way of accomplishing the homecoming process. Voices and sounds bring us towards the original starting point, place or condition. Hence, the character Quinn recalls how, after the war he used to spend all his time sleeping and watching movies, limiting his life to passive activities, observing but not taking part in life, listening to the radio and consuming the media of that society. Only his close relatives listened to him, not the rest of society. On his own, the character Quinn is busy enough fictionalising his and his fellow veterans' past. The time they spent together in the 'Falkvinas' war created a bond between them and, now, another event will bring them together in Buenos Aires. This stirs up the character Quinn's memories of the events and people he encountered during the war. The police contact him because a fellow veteran that he knew has killed three people. This will lead the war veterans to meet up again.

This murder is revealing, not just of how some internal layers of society function, but of this group of army veterans, whose disruptive behavior becomes visible to Argentine society. Thus, the police get in touch with the character Quinn. This is a noteworthy phone call for the character as, for the first time, since he returned to Buenos Aires, he appears to be relevant in the eyes of the motherland, even if this is just because the authorities want to find out why his friend has killed three citizens, or what he himself knew about this killing. In the novel no connection is made between the psychological conditions of the killer and the killing itself. In this novel, Ronnie Quinn is not primarily concerned with the socio-mental aspects of the war experience, of whether this man is a mass murderer or not. Ronnie Quinn's intention is to bring together the protagonist and his former companions, and to confront contemporary Argentine society with a corpse. So, since 'murder is the unique crime, and its investigation tears down the privacy of both the living and the dead', this corpse echoes the lives of the living and the dead of Argentine society as it will bring to light what remained concealed in that society: the 'Falkvinas war, having lost that war, war veterans, corruption.'[22] The character Quinn finds himself, once again, caught between the police and his wartime friends, thus the narration portrays and explores that past and present while the character Quinn wanders around Buenos Aires and Montevideo, embroiled in a mystery, with many unanswered and vague questions. The character Quinn meets up with his fellow veterans, people

from varied social backgrounds, a circumstance that forces them to share their stories and questions of the Falkvinas years.

In *Fado alexandrino,* a murder takes place when one of the army veterans is killed just for fun.[23] This corpse functions as the element that 'tears down the privacy' of these army veterans back in Portugal.[24] Further, the novel reflects the process of dehumanisation that the army veterans experienced in Africa, since they treat this death in the same way they used to deal with the deaths of Africans during the war.[25] The protagonists 'relate their personal crises that are circumstantially reinforced by a feeling of temporal and geographical displacement in the post-colonial setting of the metropolis'.[26] The conscript army veterans back home form a silenced collective memory, overloaded with an excess of personal recollections, that their societies are not willing to hear about. Thus, at their reunion, they can verbalise their thoughts/memories and feel heard. In *Fado alexandrino* and *El raro privilegio,* the use of voice highlights how their experience is a common one. Whether or not they can become a part of their respective societies again is determined by their identities, which are now fixed and determined by their personal and shared war experience. This sense of displacement articulates their voices back in the motherland; the only breathing space in that society is in the company of their old war comrades, where those who are 'Other' can establish a bond. The dual function of the reunion is essential in both novels. Back in the motherland, this reunion is a time to exchange and share their experiences, and when a dead body is found, it provides them with the opportunity to become visible and audible to their societies.

In this context, Lobo Antunes and Quinn tear down divisions between present and past by introducing the corpse into the narration. Although a corpse is a body with no voice, it is still able to reveal information to those alive as it can articulate the exploration of this time and space where these former soldiers are going to be relevant for these two societies. Thus, in *El raro privilegio*, the death of a Falkvinas veteran who had been involved in an arms-trafficking case exposes some of the detritus of contemporary Argentine society. In *Fado alexandrino*, Celestino, the communication officer, dies after a night out involving heavy drinking and the company of prostitutes. As a woman in the cabaret asks: 'Que fazemos nós do cadáver? … dentro de três horas … é um fedor aqui não se pode.'[27] In both novels, a corpse is the element that goes beyond the actual limits of the group and

the momentary intense stink as the murder affects the society. This exemplifies how the connection between the group of former soldiers, not fully visible in the eyes of these two societies they belong to, is clear in the eyes of the reader, not just for the legal implications of the murder. Long after the wars and the experience of defeat, Lobo Antunes and Quinn are underlining the presence of the army veterans in their respective societies and as a result raising awareness of them in contemporary Argentina and Portugal. Furthermore, the legal implications of the murder are not treated as significant to the plot; this emphasises how these two novels are not concerned with the who-done-it aspect of such an offence, but more with using it to shed light on the actual homecoming of the protagonists of these two novels and contemporary Argentina and Portugal.

Consequently, the detective or spy component in Quinn's novel goes beyond the factual mystery to be solved, allowing the writer to examine the underbelly of that society. Therefore, in post-Falkvinas Argentina, Ronnie Quinn brings to light some of the less visible aspects of Argentine society, the arms trafficking and money laundering; in this underworld, the police, the army, Mossad, the IRA, the paramilitary groups in Libya and Croatia, and a new subversive group are pretty close entities. In *El raro privilegio* the corpse gives voice to what lies beneath the surface of Argentina; and Ronnie Quinn brings into light the official discourse of Argentina about its claim to the Falkland/Malvinas Islands. As reverberated in the last years, for Ronnie Quinn, this claim is no longer essential for the nation. As a consequence, Argentine claims over these islands are something of a side issue, only relevant for those who fought in the war. Besides, the function of the corpse is to make those 'Others', those semi-outsiders defeated in those wars, become temporarily visible to their societies, in an ephemeral way; for almost as long as the corpse stinks. Thus, in *El raro privilegio*, Buenos Aires police's main concern is not the murder that has been committed against a background of arms trafficking and money laundering, but how this killing is portrayed by the media.

In *Fado alexandrino*, Lobo Antunes focuses on how the army veterans deal with the murder of Celestino, the communication officer, and how destiny itself deals with this murder. As a matter of fact, on the night when all the army veterans meet, the veteran that killed Celestino himself dies in a car crash. Celestino represents the ideals of the Carnation

Revolution and his death demystifies that revolution, revealing a society not fit for change, where destiny seems more significant than the people's will. In the portrayal of these two societies that crave change, each murder exemplifies a state of *non-change*: these societies were and still remain frozen by pure vertigo or by other forces. Furthermore, the narrative structure of the fado or novel allows its protagonists, the army veterans, to witness the underworld that Argentine and Portuguese society do not seem to notice, or that they do not wish the media to portray. In the case of Argentina, this underworld is at the fringes of contemporary democratic Argentina, and is a place where the nature of the various businesses carried out there is not always clear. In the case of Portugal, this underworld portrays the disillusion of the periods both before and after the Carnation Revolution, and with how that revolution's promises have not come true. Officially, such dissatisfaction is swept aside. An obvious sense of disillusionment at the failure to realise an illusion also determines the lives of the characters in *El raro privilegio*, in post-Army Junta Argentina.

Furthermore, dislocation is at the heart of the narrative, along with the processes of deterritorialisation and re-territorialisation, of individual and collective loss. As one of the protagonists states in *Fado alexandrino*: 'Não conheço esta casa. Não conheço estes cheiros, estes sabores, estas vozes. Não conheço estas mulheres nem estes homens. Não conheço estes cães de madrugada na rua lá fora, os ruídos, a manhã …'; this is an individual who is unable to decode what was, and is home.[28] The connection with that extent, of not being able to relate to even a range of view or sounds of and in the motherland, is absent. In these two novels, the protagonists experience an identity crisis, determined by their experiences of war and of returning to the motherland. The obstacles faced by the protagonists are immense. The displacement they feel is determined by a difficulty in recognising urban space, in communicating and exchanging their thoughts and impressions with other people. Thus, the significance of the phrase 'não conheço' clearly illustrates what they experience: an ability to perceive or understand the difference between truth and lies, a lack of a clear understanding of the urban space they inhabit, even if that seemed something fixed in their mind or memory, but appeared hazily in their eyes. Likewise, the character Quinn is not acquainted with that urban space and society: 'Ya había pasado bastante tiempo desde que habíamos vuelto. Vivíamos en democracia, pocos

recordaban Malvinas, más bien se trataba de olvidarlas, de ocultar la guerra y a nosotros. Por lo general se hablaba poco y nada del tema.'[29] Hence, both novels portray the difficulty of the transition for conscripted soldiers returning to civilian life in the motherland. For that society forgetting was easy whereas for the former soldiers it was not. For the veterans, their difficulties mainly stem from not being able to find or regain the space they had formerly occupied in society. This gap and/or clash constitutes the common core experience for the group. Back in the motherland, their memories, their accounts of war and post-war experiences establish the fictional thread of this 'has-happenedness'. Thus, memory, the recollection of those events, illustrates the difficult transition for soldiers returning to civilian life. In their memories, the characters alternate between different spaces in Buenos Aires or Lisbon, the Falklands/Malvinas Islands or Mozambique, in flashbacks to the characters' pasts which reveal that space of war as the clear and unique turning point in their lives. The characters find themselves recollecting moments and events of those past wars, and try to grasp some form of answers to their queries and uncertainties. These narrative devices allow Ronnie Quinn and Lobo Antunes interpret and reveal these characters' current lives, and the events they have experienced, which were previously unknown to their fellow Argentines and Portuguese. Nevertheless, the bonds between the army veterans are shown to be the vital elements for them; the writers are voicing the characters' own pasts, so that 'fictional writing emphasizes the specific fiction of particular events experienced by individuals.'[30] Thus, fiction is a sphere in which specific issues and topics, such as war and returning to the motherland, can be explored, and through this exploration the tone and voice of the individuals involved in the war can emerge. Thanks to this, both Lobo Antunes and Ronnie Quinn's characters respectively inhabit common spheres; each group has a collective identity that is emphasised by the intermingling of experiences and voices.

The specific events experienced by the individuals lay emphasis on that collective group identity. For the characters, their personal connections with contemporary Argentina and Portugal are rather weak, as they have not met many people after the war, and the only ties they have with members of their societies are with social outcasts or their own relatives. The fictional representation of the group of army veterans' interactions with society leaves the reader dissatisfied. The army veterans' breathing space is

the group of soldiers. The account they voice is only shared between them, just known to a few people. Their striking thoughts and memories of the horror of war illustrate their disgust at those wars; all the more so since they realise that the administration, the same force that sent them to fight, has never supported them. In both novels the characters are shaped by their experiences of war. The psychology of the army veterans plays a significant role, depicting the clashes they encounter in their transition to civilian life. The war was a time of horror, but also of humour and absurdity, a bright ingredient in such a dark landscape. In his case, this absurdity comes from the fact that the character Quinn speaks English, which for him was nothing unusual, but part of his everyday life:

> ¿Estábamos en guerra con Inglaterra? … En ese momento mi cabeza no paraba de darme vueltas. Yo había estudiado en un colegio inglés, mi vieja era anglicana. Por el lado paterno éramos descendientes de irlandeses católicos. Hace siglos que peleaban con los ingleses. Existen grandes diferencias entre irlandeses e ingleses. Para la mayoría de los argentinos son imposibles de distinguir. A nadie le importa y es lógico. En realidad sucede así en general, es difícil distinguir a un armenio de un turco o a un judío de un ruso. No son pocos los que desconocen hasta que son dos islas distintas. U2 ayudó mucho a diferenciarlos aunque la música en inglés, era siempre inglesa.[31]

In addition, the character Quinn reveals his unique perspective, since even though both the English and the Irish spoke the English language, only the character Quinn's relatives were aware of his privilege, not his fellow Argentines. 'Mi única cualidad era saber hablar inglés. Algo no tan valioso antes de la guerra. ¿Qué chances había de que entráramos en conflicto con una nación angloparlante?'[32] However, the fact of being a witness to the war, which most Argentine citizens had not been, constitutes a subsequent privilege. As mentioned before, the war was particularly relevant since the end of the Argentine Junta closely followed the Falkvinas war. In Ronnie Quinn's experience of war, the reader sees how the character Quinn could reach territory that few Argentines have been to, which both allowed and forced him to interact with the Kelpers, as he was culturally not that distant from them.[33] The character Quinn also translates silly things as 'Made in the United Kingdom' on a manual, which his general considers to be relevant, and shares some humour with the reader when the general interprets this

as meaning that the manual is not English.[34] The character Quinn also has to witness the horror of raids and the uncertainty of not knowing what was going on during the war. In the character Quinn's experience of the narrative present, the reader sees how this character's privilege is connected to his war experience. However, this period of time will have unexpected consequences in the life of the character Quinn. In *El raro privilegio*, Ronnie Quinn reveals the connections between arms trafficking, money laundering and the police as a side-narrative, to underline that many aspects of the sociopolitical landscape are not fully visible to mainstream Argentine society; and to show how the Argentine claim to the Falkland Islands is made with other purposes in mind. Only the character Quinn and his colleagues witness these offences and this landscape, which is evidence of their privilege. The epilogue in the book is a turning point, since it reveals that things do not always turn out to be as initially believed or expected. Ronnie Quinn shows the reader that sometimes a different ending can be found, and faced. These novels go beyond a mere memoir of the narrators' lives and experiences. As underlined in *El raro privilegio*, the character Quinn realised how, being back in Argentina, as it happened to the Irish, sometimes you may have enemies on both sides. While at war, the character Quinn has to translate some sentences and phrases for his army superiors:

> Revisaban los folletos. Yo hacía flexiones. Cuando se cansaron de no entender, me llamaron para que les tradujera.
> - Hecho en Reino Unido- señalé.
> - ¡Ja! ¿Ve que no es inglés? ¡Burro!- dijo el Cabo. El General estaba a punto de pegarle.
> …
> y escuché:
> - Apple, apple, banana, chicken …
> - ¿Qué dice?
> - Manzana, manzana, banana, pollo- traduje rápido.
> - ¿Qué significa?
> - No lo sé.
> - Soldado, ¿sabe inglés o no?[35]

The list of nouns, 'Apple, apple, banana, chicken' articulate the level of irrationality humans face in any war, where superiors are not always

smart enough to grasp certain things. Along with the absurdity of war and of some of those involved in it, the superior officer's reaction also exemplifies a lack of trust. In his privileged situation, the character Quinn has more insight into the types of generals who were leading the war. He also meets the Kelpers and perceives that his army, the Argentines, is not welcome. Nonetheless, the character Quinn sees the Kelpers as human beings and remembers how one Kelper 'me advirtió ahora que éramos amigos'.[36] Furthermore, in this novel the Irish experience of diaspora is exemplified by the situations that the character Quinn finds himself in: for the Argentine army, he is a type of Other, who has a privileged status as he can speak English; on the other hand, for the Kelpers, although he is an Argentine, an invader, he is also a friend. This is shown, for example, when the character Quinn arbitrates some small conflicts between the Argentine army and the Kelpers: a bag of carrots is stolen by some Argentine soldiers and the character Quinn returns it to the Kelper it was taken from. He is a descendent of Irish settlers, who attempts to settle a dispute between two opposing sides. This experience is a good example of his status as an individual with a unique and privileged perspective on society, in the context of irrational times and events.

Back in the motherland, as in *Fado alexandrino*, the character Quinn experiences the redefinition of his space in the motherland but also of himself as an individual. War and defeat, going and coming back and experiences of war are key elements in the lives of the veterans. This redefinition of self is associated with the continental limits of each nation. Thus, in the eyes of both societies, those who were involved in these two wars are seen as in some degree as responsible for the current situation of each nation. As both Quinn and Lobo Antunes recall, army veterans were marginalised by both societies; for example, 'a nadie le interesaba recordar el sufrimiento de los que fueron a Angola …'.[37] Both writers underline how those soldiers, once back in the motherland, failed to find a channel of communication with their respective societies, experiencing a level of rejection of their voices as 'Others'. They were left on their own and with only one bond: to the other members of their group of 'Others', people with various backgrounds, but who shared the experience of war and homecoming.

6 Conclusion

The question in these two novels is not how much of the novels should be assumed as factual or not. As proposed by Ronnie Quinn and António Lobo Antunes, the fictionalisation of the war and the aftermath regards to imagination as the arrangement of memory for the imagined community: these former soldiers back in the motherland. In these novels, Antunes and Quinn relate to the power of reproducing images and experiences stored in the protagonists memory under the suggestion of associated events in the present. The clash between the present and the past is palpable. Both writers embody the power of recombining former experiences in the fictional breathing space where to voice those experiences and the clash back in the motherland. This is a 'has-happenedness' of piercing voices with a shared tone. Ronnie Quinn had to go to war over a remote tiny territory and wrote this book, fermenting his memory in fiction, as António Lobo Antunes did. For that reason, Quinn does present some striking images of war and of the literary present of being back in the motherland, evoking the experience of finding one's way around Buenos Aires and looking for answers to questions. However, this novel also allows Quinn to make the men who fought that war visible to Argentine society— to shed light on those who lost the war against a European navy. The narrative voice is a transformed one that allows him to describe events and to portray a wider Argentine society through the prism of the detective/spy novel genre, in which secondary plots can turn into more significant ones. In two parallel situations presented in the novel, the reader sees how in both cases Ronnie Quinn, the character, left the Falkvinas and is about to leave Argentina, as he feels there is not room for him.

In *Fado alexandrino*, the army veterans are unable to fully adapt to the new political and social landscape brought on by the Carnation Revolution. The intermingling of the characters' voices and stories emphasises the collective identity of those who went to Angola and Mozambique, of those men shaped by their common experience in the war and who can never become part of normal society again. 'Não conheço esta noite. Não conheço esta casa. Não conheço este cheiros, este sabores, estas vozes … os ruidos lá fora.'[38] In this quote, the characters do not recognise the night, house, odours, flavours, voices; in that space they can no longer sense or hear noises out and about, as they are in a society where they cannot locate themselves anymore.

Both in *Fado alexandrino* and *El raro privilegio* the narrative driving force is vivid, presented with flashbacks that alternate between different spaces, including their narrator's striking thoughts and memories of the horror of war, and depicting their disgust at those wars and at the lack of prospects faced by those who fought in them. By voicing these common spaces in individual silence and mutual conversations, both writers underline the difficulty of the process of adaptation and the relevance of their bond. Homecoming is presented as that difficult process of adaptation, of being listened to.

To conclude, without a doubt, in these two novels the '"has-happenedness"' reproduces voices that find a limited space in which to reverberate. The war was a time of horror, but also provides a humorous ingredient in this dark landscape. Even if superficially the characters are from different social classes and backgrounds, different ranks and political views, they all share similar overall experiences before and after the war; they are unable to fully adapt to the new political landscape of post-dictatorship Argentina and Portugal. These novels seem to suggest that the characters have been fundamentally shaped by their common experience in the war and can never become a part of normal society again. However, war also emerges as the first privileged time in the life of these army veterans, because it afforded them the opportunity to witness events that were not visible to most Argentine or Portuguese citizens. Those events have particular relevance, since these defeats meant the end of the Argentine Junta and the Portuguese Estado Novo, respectively. This element allows the characters to interpret and understand what they are living through in contemporary Argentina and Portugal, where some years after those events certain things have not changed that much.

The centrality of memory, both personal and fictional, in which war is a common narrative constituent, is voiced in recollections and as an account as presented by Ronnie Quinn and António Lobo Antunes in the analysed novels. As in a 'fado' song, in these novels some of those war veteran voices are being made perceptible, just by a kind of fermented imagination. This is where war surfaces as a mutual experience for the imagined community of voices. In these descriptions of the difficult transition for soldiers returning to civilian life, a plurality of voices is portrayed and mirrored by a historical memory, even though there is not much room left for them, neither in Buenos Aires nor in Lisbon. The veterans' reunion

is the breathing/listening space in which they find a space where their voices echo. An echo is always limited by a given space; those limits, in these two novels, include the groups of army veterans and their families, but do not extend beyond these. Representatives of the Irish diaspora, in the case of Ronnie Quinn, and of the Portuguese returnees, in the case of António Lobo Antunes, conjure a highly charged atmosphere voiced in the narrative present. Both Quinn and Lobo Antunes provide portrayals societies—Argentina and Portugal—undergoing great change. The perspective offered by the group of former army members who met up some time after the war is a decisive aspect. This is just the time for an exercise of memory about where they are in society, a process of organisation of their individual and group memory. This is the inner voice of the group's right to be heard and to reflect on the disconnection between society and those who fought during the Colonial Wars. Fiction, imagination and memory merge in these two novels, in which literature articulates Portugal's and Argentina's past and present, allowing António Lobo Antunes and Ronnie Quinn to reflect the failures of those times, of the nationalist rhetoric and discourse promoted by Salazarism and the Argentine Junta Militar, and also by giving voice to those who had been denied one in those societies.

Notes

1. A. Lobo Antunes, *Fado alexandrino* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1983); and Ronnie Quinn, *El raro privilegio* (Buenos Aires, Dunquen, 2012).
2. Unlike other European nations after the post World War II period (1945–1962), Portugal had still not granted independence to its colonies (Angola, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea, Macau, Mozambique, Santo Tomé and Principe). The Portuguese Colonial War or War of Liberation (1961–1974) was fought between the nationalist movement in Portugal's African colonies and mainland Portugal.
3. For many years, Argentina and the United Kingdom have argued over the Falkland Islands or Malvinas. In April 1982 Argentina took over these islands. The war between these two countries ended in June 1982.
4. Maria Alzira Seixo, 'Still Facts and Living Factions: The Literary Work of António Lobo Antunes, an Introduction', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 19–43.

5. This translates as 'the Turkish man'. In American Spanish, even though Turks are not Arabs, this term is used to describe people of any Arabian or geographically close background.
6. Susan Bassnett, 'Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century', *Comparative Critical Studies* 3, no. 1–2 (June 2006): 9.
7. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Portugal: Tales of Being and Not Being', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 407.
8. Between 1926 and 1974 a corporatist authoritarian regime ruled Portugal, which from 1933 was known as *Estado Novo*. Led by Professor António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), this dictatorship was opposed to communism, socialism, liberalism and anti-colonialism, and sought to retain the Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. The 1974 Carnation Revolution, which overthrew the Estado Novo, brought this regime to an end. The new Portuguese regime withdrew from East Timor and the African colonies.
9. In Argentina in March 1976 the so-called Proceso de Reorganización Nacional or National Reorganization Process, a military dictatorship, seized power, pursuing a 'Dirty War' against any opposition. After losing the Falkland/Malvinas War, the Junta faced public opposition and handed over power in 1983.
10. Eduardo Lourenço, 'Portugal and Its Destiny', trans. Kenneth Krabbenhoft, in *Chaos and Splendor, and Other Essays*, ed. Carlos Veloso (Dartmouth: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, 2002), 156.
11. 'I was sick of listening to the same reactions over and over again. For the majority, what happened to us was an anecdote. They spoke about it as if it were a World Cup football match' (Ronnie Quinn, *El raro privilegio*, 3).
12. S. Bassnett 'Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century'. Comparative Critical Studies 3/1–2 (2003): 9.
13. Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, 'Empire, Colonial Wars and Post-Colonialism', *Portuguese Studies* 18 (2002): 187.
14. Ibid., 186.
15. 'Since we returned' (Ronnie Quinn, *El raro privilegio*, 23).
16. Felipe Cammaert, '"You Don't Invent Anything": Memory and the Patterns of Fiction', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011). 272.
17. Felipe Cammaert, '"You Don't Invent Anything"', 275.
18. Mª Luisa Blanco, *Conversaciones con António Lobo Antunes* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2005), 49.
19. 'When everything was over, we came back to our ordinary lives and we were responsible for the defeat' (Ronnie Quinn, 'Ronnie Quinn y el

"raro privilegio" de combatir en Malvinas,' http://jujuyalmomento.com/?ronnie-quinn-y-el-raro-privilegio-de-combatir-en-malvinas&page=ampliada&id=17475. Accessed 3 April 2013).

20. As mentioned earlier, in the narrative of crime stories which include a murder investigation a corpse functions as the element that rips open the lives of the living and the dead, bringing up questions in the search for an answer, going beyond the actual 'whodunit' crime mystery.
21. 'Does it annoy you me asking you about the Malvinas?' (Ronnie Quinn, *El raro privilegio*, 3).
22. P. D. James, *Talking about Detective Fiction* (Oxford: Faber and Faber, 2009), 126.
23. Maria Alzira Seixo, 'Still Facts and Living Factions', 30.
24. P. D. James, *Talking about Detective Fiction*, 126.
25. V. P. Costa, 'A Perda do Caminho para Casa em *Fado alexandrino* de António Lobo Antunes.' Unpublished M. A. Thesis. Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. http://www.letras.ufrj.br/posverna/mestrado/CostaVP.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2014, 31.
26. Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, 'Post-Imperial Performativies: Sexual Misencounters and Engendering of Desire in António Lobo Antunes's *Fado Alexandrino*', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 102–03.
27. 'What are we doing with the corpse? … in three hours … the stink in here will be unbearable' (A. Lobo Antunes, *Fado alexandrino*, 519).
28. 'I do not know that house. I do not know those smells, those flavours, those voices. I do not know these women, these men. I do not know these night dogs in the street, the noises, the morning …' (ibid., 436).
29. 'It was long since we had returned. We were living in a democracy, few remembered the Malvinas, it was rather about forgetting the islands, hiding the war and us. Overall, little was spoken and nothing was said about the topic [Falklands/Malvinas War]' (Ronnie Quinn, *El raro privilegio*, 39).
30. Maria Alzira Seixo, 'Still Facts and Living Factions', 20.
31. 'We were at war with England? … At that moment my head was going round non-stop. I had studied in an English school, my mother was an Anglican. On my father's side, we were descended from Irish Catholics. They had been fighting the English for centuries. There are huge differences between the Irish and the English. For most Argentines these are impossible to distinguish. Nobody cares and that is logical. That is normal; it is difficult to distinguish an Armenian from a Turk or a Jew from a Russian. Most people don't even know that they are different islands. U2 were a big help

in differentiating the two even if music in English was always seen as English' (Ronnie Quinn, *El raro privilegio*, 16)

32. 'Speaking English was my only asset. What were the chances of starting a war with an English-speaking country?' (ibid., 11).
33. Falkland Islanders, also known as Falklanders, are nicknamed 'Kelpers'. In the novel, Ronnie Quinn refers to them as 'Kelpers'.
34. Ibid.
35. They were checking the leaflets. I was doing push-ups. When they got tired of not understanding, they called me to translate.

    - Made in the United Kingdom— I translated.
    - Ok, Don't you see it's not English? Stupid!- said the Corporal. The General was about to beat him.
    …
    and I heard:
    - Apple, apple, banana, chicken …
    - What is he saying?
    - Apple, apple, banana, chicken– I quickly translated.
    - What does it mean?
    - I do not know.
    - Soldier, do you speak English or not? (Ibid.)

36. 'He warned me that now we were friends' (ibid., 6).
37. 'No one was interested in remembering the suffering of those that went to Angola [to war]' (Mª Luisa Blanco, *Conversaciones con António Lobo Antunes*, 49).
38. See endnote 27.

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