

ANTÓNIO TORRADO

(Lisbon, 21/11/1939 – Lisbon, 11/06/2021)

António Torrado is most widely recognised for his considerable body of work in the area of children and young people's literature. However, as one of the contemporary authors with the most books published in the area of dramatic texts, it is important to emphasize the importance of his work as a playwright and scriptwriter. Mention should also be made of his contribution as a poet (also evident in his theatre writing), as well as his writings as an essayist in the area of education and research.

A graduate in philosophy from the University of Coimbra, he started out as a teacher, but lost his position in 1966 for political reasons. However, his commitment to education continued with his involvement in the founding of a pioneering college in Portugal based on the principles of the Modern School Movement.

In 1974, he applied and was accepted for a post as main producer at the national television broadcaster - Radiotevisão Portuguesa (RTP), where he also acted as head of department for children's programmes until 1976. For a decade (1972-1982) he was literary and editorial director of the publishing houses Plátano Editora and Editorial Comunicação. In 1987 he returned to RTP, where he was coordinating scriptwriter for the coproduction of «Rua Sésamo» (1st series of 130 programmes). Then, as head of the scriptwriting department, he became a member of the consulting team for the Directorate of Programmes – Channel 1 (1990-1992), and head of services for scriptwriting projects for RTP's Department of Fiction Programmes (1993-1994).

Having studied scriptwriting and dramatic writing with important names in this field, he went on to work as an instructor for different institutions. He taught at the Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema and directed courses, seminars and workshops in Narrative Strategies and Theatre Writing for masters and degree students in the areas of Communication and Expression at the Escola Superior de Psicologia e Ciências de Educação, Escola Superior de Educação João de Deus and at the University of the Algarve. From 1995 to 2003, he directed the annual course in Poetic Expression and Theatre Writing - Expressão Poética, Oficina da Palavra e Escrita Teatral - at the Centrinho (the Children's Art Centre at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), which for eight years was attended by dozens of teachers, educators, professionals working in cultural entertainment and librarians.

He is also the author of scripts for various television series and feature films such as: *André Topa Tudo no país dos gigantes* (1992, directed by Luís Lança); *Pós de Bem Querer* (1992, dir. Fernando Ávila); *Hotel Bon Séjour* (1998, dir. Ferrão Katzenstein); *Macau, as duas faces de Cláudia* (1999, dir. Ferrão Katzenstein); *Garrett* (2000, dir. Francisco Manso, as part of the 2nd centenary commemorations of the birth of Almeida Garrett). In film, he is most noted for having written the script for: *A ilha dos escravos* (2008, dir. Francisco Manso); *O último condenado à morte* (2009, dir. Francisco Manso); *O cônsul de Bordéus* (2011, in co authorship with the directors João Corrêa and Francisco Manso in a joint Portuguese, French, Belgian production, nominated for the first edition of the Sophia Awards).

Between 1996 and 1998, as part of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's programme supporting Portuguese Dramaturgy, he was guest resident playwright in the companies, Teatro do Noroeste (Teatro Municipal Sá de Miranda), of Viana do Castelo, and Comuna-Teatro de Pesquisa, of Lisbon.

He was a founding partner of the Portuguese Writers' Guild - Associação Portuguesa de Escritores – and the children's charity - Instituto de Apoio à Criança. He is a working member, and on the Board of Directors of the Portuguese Author's Society - Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores - and he is part of the International Association of Literary Critics.

Most of his books are in the genre of children and young people's literature, and he is one of the most important Portuguese authors in this area, having received various awards and nominations. Most notable of these have been: the Calouste Gulbenkian prize for the book *Como se faz-cor-de-laranja* in 1980; the Secretary of State for Culture's Children's Theatre Prize for *O adorável homem das neves* in 1984 and for *Zaca Zaca* in 1986; the Calouste Gulbenkian Grand Prize for Children's Literature in 1988 for the collection of his work. In 1974 and in 1996 his books were included in the Honours List of the IBBY – International Board of Books for Young People; he was also nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for the year 2000. His books and short stories have been translated into various languages: Castilian, Galician, Basque, French, Italian, English, German, Bulgarian, and Hungarian, and some of his books have been published in Brazil.

Whilst he may be more widely recognised for his work as a children's writer, António Torrado has an extensive and diverse body of published works. Even though directed towards different readers, there are some common elements in his books: writing characterised by a strong poetical dimension that frequently acquires unexpected nuances articulated with a sharp sense of humour. Values of freedom – of being, thinking speaking – stand out in the whole of his work, as well as a permanent concern with justice and respect for difference.

Theatre has been one of the most defining aspects of his writing, which has taken many different paths, both in relation to themes, and in the challenges presented by theatre directors and companies that he has responded to. He has always displayed great command of theatre performance and the dramatic effects that can be constructed from a story and its characters, regardless of whether it is written for a young audience or for adults. His plays have thus been a frequent presence on various stages, including radio theatre, for which he wrote around twenty texts between 1999 and 2002, whilst working on the programme «Teatro Imaginário» (RDP Antena 2), directed by Eduardo Street.

It should also be noted that the performance of his play *A casa da lenha*, which opened at the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the composer Fernando Lopes Graça, received the Bernardo Santareno Prize for best performance of 2006. More recently in 2015, the Fórum Permanente de Teatro, the forum for amateur theatre groups in Portugal, paid tribute to him for his contribution as a playwright in elevating theatre arts in Portugal.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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Glória Bastos

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