THE "BUTLER" SYNDROME: ACADEMIC CULTURE ON THE SEMIPERIPHERY

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Abstract

Discussions about the geopolitics of academic writing frequently make use of the terms "centre" and "periphery" to compare scientific practices and attitudes in different parts of the world. However, there are some countries that do not slot easily into either category, being positioned geographically and economically between the two and sharing features of each. This paper borrows the term semiperiphery from world-systems theory to refer to those second-division players, and outlines some of the characteristics that they have in common. Focusing on the specific case of Portugal, it looks at how semiperipherality both determines and reflects researchers' productivity within the broader geopolitics of academic practice.

Key words: semiperiphery, geopolitics, academic discourse, Portuguese, "butler" syndrome.

Resumen

Debates sobre la geopolítica de la escritura académica con frecuencia hacen uso de los términos "centro" y "periferia" para comparar las prácticas científicas y actitudes de diferentes partes del mundo. Sin embargo, hay algunos países que no se colocan tan fácilmente en ninguna de estas dos categorías, yaciendo geográficamente y económicamente entre las dos y compartiendo rasgos de cada una. Este artículo toma prestado el término semi-periferia de la teoría de sistemas mundiales para referirse a los participantes de segundo rango y describe algunas características que tienen en común. Centrándose en el caso específico de Portugal, se examina la forma en que la semi-periferalidad determina y también refleja la productividad de los investigadores en el contexto más amplio de la geopolítica de las prácticas académicas.

Palabras clave: semi-periferia, geopolítica, discurso académico, portugués. síndrome del 'mayordomo'

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the practice of modern science has traditionally been sustained by the myth of *universalism*, according to which it is supposedly unaffected by questions of place or identity (Merton), studies since the 1970s have repeatedly shown how scholars' publishing success is conditioned by factors relating to geographic loca-

tion and/or culture. These include not only linguistic and rhetorical factors arising from the dominance of English in academic publishing (Lillis and Curry; Uzuner; Salager-Meyer; Ferguson; Flowerdew) but also non-linguistic constraints such as unequal access to material resources and disciplinary networks, and differences in institutional infrastructure and academic culture (Canagarajah).

Some of these analyses (notably Canagarajah; Lillis and Curry; Uzuner; Salager-Meyer) have been conducted in terms of the framework laid down by world-systems theory, which divides the world up into *centre* (or *core*) and *peripheral* countries on the basis of economic, social and political criteria. This has proved to be an extremely effective model for discussing academic practices in different parts of the globe as there seems to be a clear correlation between national wealth and scientific achievement as measured by parameters such as published research papers and citations (May; King; Lee et al). However, as these bibliometric studies show, there are countries that fall between the two camps, being neither in the "premier league" (King) nor properly of the "third world". Hence, it is suggested that the term *semiperiphery* be used to refer to second-division players, those that are neither centre nor periphery but have characteristics of each (see Bennett, *Semiperiphery*). In Europe, this would mean the countries on the southern and eastern borders of the European landmass (i.e. the so-called "PIGS" countries,[1] along with most of the new and aspiring members of the European Union).

The term is useful for a number of reasons. Firstly, it can account for some of the inconsistencies that inevitably arise if we attempt to use the categories of "centre" and "periphery" to explain phenomena occurring in countries such as these. Semiperipheral universities, for example, tend not to be wholly meritocratic institutions committed to the pursuit of excellence, but neither are they organised entirely as "minifiefdoms" where academic progress can only be achieved through the cultivation of influential relationships (Canagarajah). The reality is somewhere between the two, as it also is on issues such as material resources, academic culture, attitudes to intellectual property, and epistemological orientation.

Secondly, by emphasising how a community that is peripheral on the continental scale becomes an intermediate one on the global, this terminology highlights an important function that may otherwise remain invisible. In the world system, the semiperiphery also *mediates* in the transmission of economic and cultural assets between centre and periphery (Wallerstein; Santos). Hence, in the domain of knowledge production, its publications and conferences serve communities for whom the more prestigious international ones may be inaccessible for different reasons (Lillis and Curry), and its centres offer a way into the system for scholars from the outer rim who might otherwise be completely excluded. Indeed, they are often the

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[1] The "PIGS" acronym refers to Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain—the countries of Southern Europe most at risk of defaulting on their sovereign debt (in some analyses, Ireland is included instead of or as well as Italy, though as an English-speaking nation, it is obviously less relevant in this context).

hubs of subsidiary networks that disseminate knowledge back and forth across the language barrier: for example, Portugal and Spain produce scholarly journals in their national languages for distribution amongst the countries of their former colonies, and in some cases translate knowledge produced in those languages into English for wider circulation.

Finally, the notion of the semiperiphery may also go some way towards explaining the tendency for uncritical emulation some countries display towards centre scholars and practices (Gizycki; Nunes and Gonçalves), often resulting in a lack of originality and general derivativeness. Gizycki (480), who applies world-systems theory to scientific production without ever using the term "semiperiphery", nevertheless distinguishes between the far-out periphery, which does not have the power to be competitive, and the nearer periphery, which is "close enough to eminence to be impelled to compete with the leading centres in the hope of justifying a claim to equal eminence". This would suggest that the excessive deference results from an identity instability provoked by this in-between status. Like the butler in a stately home that emulates his master and despises members of his own class, semiperipheral scholars and institutions may become more precious about centre values than the core countries themselves, leading them to reject markers of their own identity in favour of imported ones that are perceived to carry more status. This has important implications for many aspects of academic practice, as I hope to show over the course of this paper.

However, my main aim here is to explore how semiperipheral status affects researchers' output in the particular case of Portugal, which I do by focusing on a set of material and social conditions that, according to Canagarajah, both reflect and determine global status in the academic context. The paper begins with a review of world-systems theory in the context of scientific research, which is followed by a brief introduction to Portugal as a semiperipheral country *par excellence*. It then goes on to look more closely at some of the dimensions of the material and social context of science production in Portugal, suggesting how each of them might effectively impede or restrict researchers' output.

2. THE GEOPOLITICS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

World-systems theory developed in the 1970s in the social sciences to take account of long-term shifts in patterns of power and culture that could not adequately be explained on the level of the nation-state. Though primarily economic in orientation, its terminology and basic premises were soon being applied to all kinds of social, political and cultural phenomena, thus emphasising the intricate interconnections between these various dimensions.

In the early 1970s, it was already being used to analyse the social dimension of science by figures such as John Ziman, Joseph Ben-David and Edward Shils. Many of the general conclusions reached at that time are summed up in the introduction to Gizycki's article, which describes how scientific centres generate new theories and techniques ("a centre is a place from which influence radiates"),

which are then diffused to the periphery by means of publications and learned societies (476). Peripheral science communities are, he says, constantly engaged in a game of catch-up, manifested through "patterns of emulation" (Gizycki 475) which operate in the choice of problems to study, hypotheses and techniques and also in the replication of institutional structures and procedures. However, it is also on the periphery that major paradigm shifts originate, particularly when the centre has exhausted its innovatory potential. Interestingly, it is the "absence of the incentive of emulation" (Gizycki 476) which effectively causes this stagnation.

As for the term *semiperiphery*, this was coined by Wallerstein within a predominantly economic framework. According to this analysis, semiperipheral countries are positioned, geographically and economically, between the core and the periphery of the world system and have characteristics of each. Thus, they are essential to the functioning of the world system, providing a buffer zone between rich and poor, and mediating change across the global system as a whole.

The concept has since been thoroughly explored within the Portuguese context by researchers at the Centre for Social Studies in Coimbra, headed by the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Following Santos' seminal paper of 1985, in which the concept was used to explain Portugal's economic and social condition in the decade after the Carnation Revolution of 1974, it has been applied in fields as diverse as law, literature, commerce and medicine. For our purposes, the most relevant is probably a collection of articles about science on the semiperiphery (Nunes and Gonçalves), evocatively entitled *Enteados de Galileu: a semiperiferia no sistema mundial da ciência* [*Galileo's Stepchildren: The Semiperiphery in the World System of Science*]. In their introduction to the volume, the editors describe semiperipheral science as being characterised by "low productivity, resistance to innovation, inefficiency and lack of organization" (19),[2] and stress the subservience of the semiperiphery towards the centre: the unequal involvement in transnational partnerships, extreme dependence upon European funding, and the importance given to international networks for building scientific reputations. However, they also point out that semiperipheral science tends to be very "heterogeneous", with "fluid or fluctuating frontiers between disciplines and research domains". That is to say, the semiperiphery, less constrained by the need for "rigour" (which defines and sustains the centre's superiority), is much more open to outside influences and can therefore afford to engage in "boundary work"[3] of both the demarcating and transgressive variety (22). This, I argue, may prove to be important for the long-term evolution of the system as a whole.

In the next section, I discuss Portugal's semiperipherality, first in general terms and then with reference to specific academic attitudes and practices.

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[2] All quotations from this volume have been translated from the Portuguese by me.

[3] This term was coined by the sociologist Thomas Gieryn to refer to activities that define, redefine or dissolve the frontiers between different domains of knowledge.

3. PORTUGAL:
A SEMIPERIPHERAL COUNTRY *PAR EXCELLENCE*

Portugal has many distinctive characteristics that make it an extremely good example of a semiperipheral country, as originally defined by Wallerstein. It is situated on the extreme Western edge of the European landmass, a geographical accident which meant not only that it was remote from the main European centres of economic and political power for much of its history, but also that it was ideally placed to develop a vast seaborne empire in the 15th and 16th centuries. This enabled it to become an important transporter of economic and cultural assets in the 17th and 18th. The fact that it failed to fix the vast wealth that flowed into the country at that time may be both an effect and a cause of its semiperipheral status; for instead of industrializing, as the Northern European countries did, Portugal (like its larger neighbour, Spain) used the gold that it imported to acquire manufactured goods from those countries, which were flaunted as superficial markers of superiority. It was this fixation with the symbolic dimension of status that caused it to slide back into relative poverty in subsequent years – a pattern which seems to have been repeated in the latter decades of the 20th century with the vast sums that it received from the European Union for development purposes.

Max Weber, for whom the development of modern capitalism was driven by the Protestant work ethic, would no doubt have found a link between the country's economic decline and its Catholicism. Certainly, the centrality of the Catholic Church in Portugal was largely responsible for the persistence of an academic culture that seems to have more in common with the periphery than the centre. That is to say, the Catholic Church's hostility to modern science and to Enlightenment values in general meant not only that Portuguese schools and universities continued to employ Scholasticism as the official teaching method long after it had been abandoned in Northern Europe, [4] but also that these institutions proved resistant to democratizing tendencies, retaining a rigidly hierarchical organization to the modern day. Both of these have had profound effects upon academic production, as I describe below.

As regards its attitudes towards the outside world, these have oscillated between closed-door inward-looking policies and excessive subservience to foreign powers (Nunes and Gonçalves 21). There was a great deal of intellectual repression at various phases in its history, most recently during the 48 years of dictatorship in the 20th century (1926-1974), when education was subordinated to ideology, and foreign influences were discouraged. Largely as a result of these policies, in 1970, 25.6% of the population was still illiterate, 52.2% had only 4-6 years of schooling, and only 1.6% of the population had attended higher education;[5] consequently, after the over-

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[4] The Index of books forbidden to Catholics contained, alongside Copernicus and Galileo, names such as Francis Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Rousseau, Voltaire, John Stuart Mill, Locke, Hume and Comte. The list was only abolished in 1966.

[5] From the 1970 Census (qtd. Loff and Pereira 148).

throw of the dictatorship in 1974, one of the main priorities of the new democratic governments was to build schools and train teachers. This policy was furthered by Portugal's accession to the European Union in 1986 and the influx of funds destined for developmental purposes, and between 1985 and 1995, growth was so rapid that public institutions of higher education were unable to cope with the demand, leading to the establishment of many private universities and colleges (Gomes). [6]

As regards research output, this has seen a dramatic growth in the last two decades,[7] following the creation of a network of state-funded laboratories and research centres in the 1990s. However, despite this, Portugal's scientific production per thousand inhabitants continues well below that of other European countries, and by 2006 was only half of Spain's and less than a sixth of Holland's.[8]

In recent decades, Portugal has also undergone an important reorientation away from the French model that it had followed for years towards an Anglo-Saxon one. This began with the Educational Reforms of the 1980s in which the role of science and technology was reassessed, resulting in the ascendancy of the "empirical experimental Anglo-Saxon" method of inquiry at the expense of the "typically deductive Latin" model (Nóvoa 51). However, it was the Bologna Accord, legislated between 2005 and 2007,[9] that caused the biggest shakeup of the university system in Portugal, with consequences upon all aspects of the academic culture. Designed to boost the competitiveness of the higher education system and increase academic mobility throughout Europe and beyond, this was manifested in Portugal, first and foremost, by the re-structuring of the degree system to bring it into line with the British model, bringing important consequences upon teaching and examination systems used in the country. Other measures taken include: the implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the adoption of an academic recruitment system based on meritocratic principles, and an overhaul of institutional organization to improve efficiency and productivity.

One of the main consequences of this attempt to bring Portuguese higher education into line with the rest of Europe was an increased attention to English at all levels of the system. In higher education, this was reflected by the provision of courses in English for academic purposes, the creation of language centres for the translation, revision and proof-reading of academic papers, and the translation of course syllabi and promotional material into that language. There are some departments that now teach their postgraduate courses in English, with a view to attracting

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[6] Many of these were forced to close down later when demand declined as a result of demographic shifts and economic contraction (Gomes).

[7] In 2009, Portugal was the country in Europe with the fastest pace of growth in scientific production (Gomes).

[8] Figures from the OECD (qtd. Gomes).

[9] All information about the Bologna Process in Portugal is taken from the website of the Direction-General of Higher Education, "O Processo de Bolonha." Web. 27 Nov. 2011. <http://www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/Estudantes/Processo+de+Bolonha/Processo+de+Bolonha/>.

students from abroad, though the phenomenon is by no means as widespread as it is in the North of Europe (Ferguson 10-12).

Having undergone such a profound transition so recently, Portuguese universities are still experiencing a considerable tension between traditional practices and attitudes, and the more modern, imported ones. What is more, these changes have not occurred everywhere at the same time. Today there are considerable differences between the universities located in the prosperous coastal strip (particularly in the main cities of Lisbon and Porto) and those in the interior of the country, which are much more conservative. Even within the same university, there may also be large disciplinary differences, with faculties of science and technology generally taking a more progressive attitude to knowledge production than their counterparts in the arts and law.

Let us now look at how semiperipherality affects Portuguese academic life in the various areas identified by Canagarajah as playing an important role in research success: i) material resources and academic networks; ii) institutional organization and academic culture; iii) academic careers and recruitment policies; iv) attitudes towards intellectual property and research quality; and v) epistemological orientation and discourse.

i) Material Resources and Academic Networks

One of the most compelling sections of Canagarajah's analysis of the geopolitics of academic discourse concerns the constraints placed on researchers in some parts of the world by a lack of material resources. Drawing upon his own experiences in Sri Lanka in the 1980s and early '90s, he describes how peripheral researchers may not have access to library facilities or even to basic equipment such as computers, photocopiers and durable stationery, which not only makes it difficult to physically produce and send articles to centre publications, but also limits participation in scholarly networks.[10] For without access to scholarly journals or the funds to participate in international conferences, peripheral researchers are effectively off-network, unable to keep up with the latest developments in the discipline. Thus, it is not surprising that much of the work submitted by them to mainstream academic journals is dismissed as "parochial" (Flowerdew; Lillis and Curry; Ferguson).

In the mid 1990s, Portuguese universities were still very under-resourced by centre standards, and the worst cases were not so different from the situation Canagarajah describes. There was a general lack of computers and other equipment (though, ironically, not photocopiers, given the widespread and entirely institu-

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[10] Some of Canagarajah's precise complaints are now redundant, given the current policy of electronic manuscript submissions. However, as Salager-Meyer points out, this development has produced new inequalities, discriminating against researchers in parts of the world where phone lines are limited and internet host penetration rates are very low.

tionalized practice of photocopying textbooks instead of buying them), and library resources were limited, badly-organised, antiquated and/or oriented more towards Lusophone and Francophone debates than to Anglophone ones. However, in the last decade or so, the desire to become competitive and to attract international students has resulted in a great deal of investment at this level. Institutions have been re-equipped and new laboratories founded, and today the major public universities are not lagging too far behind comparable countries in other parts of Europe.

Consequently, although the lack of material resources was for a long time a major impediment to research in Portugal, this is no longer the case for most disciplines. Far more inhibiting would seem to be the intangible constraints imposed by an academic tradition which, for years, was not really oriented towards productivity in this domain, as we shall see.

ii) Institutional Organization and Academic Culture

While no one doubts that adequate funding is fundamental for research success, there is disagreement amongst some authors as to the influence of particular institutional settings. For example, Nunes and Gonçalves imply that Portugal's low productivity is due at least in part to the fact that most researchers work in universities or in university-connected research units, "there is an overlap between the world of science and the world of the university" (22), while May suggests that the USA, UK and Scandinavian head the league tables precisely *because* their research is done in universities as opposed to research institutes, as in France and Germany. However, the discrepancy between these two positions may not be as great as appears at first sight. In each case, the main point is not so much the nature of the institution hosting the research as the *academic culture* in that institution. For Nunes and Gonçalves, the real problem appears to be that Portuguese researchers are unable to devote much time to research because they have heavy workloads as lecturers—indeed, the subordination of research to teaching would seem to be another important characteristic of peripherality (Canagarajah 225). May, however, stresses a quite different quality—the need for a culture of open debate and constant questioning:

> The non-hierarchical nature of most North American and northern European universities, coupled with the pervasive presence of irreverent young undergraduate and postgraduate students, could be the best environment for research. The peace and quiet to focus on a mission in a research institute, undistracted by teaching or other responsibilities, may be a questionable blessing. (796)

Indeed, it may well be that "non-hierarchical" is the key word in this analysis; for not only is critical debate impossible in cultures where there is excessive deference to authority, rigid hierarchies also offer little motivation to produce research. Such situations seem to be particularly characteristic of the periphery, where "feudal and patriarchal values" (Canagarajah 196) may prevail in many universities, as in society at large, restricting the possibilities for vertical mobility.

In Portugal, the general academic culture is still very formal and hierarchical, and a great deal of deference is shown to people of higher standing. This is manifested in many aspects of academic life: by an excessive attention to formal titles, which are used even on a daily basis between colleagues of the same institution; through dress codes (students often wear their gowns to class, while male lecturers frequently don suits and ties); teaching methods (there is an emphasis on the formal lecture rather than on more student-oriented techniques); and even classroom architecture (the lecturer is typically raised above the level of the students on a dais or platform). However, in recent years, things have begun to change. Not only have mobility programmes such as Socrates/Erasmus brought Portuguese students into closer contact with less hierarchical academic cultures in other countries, partnerships with foreign universities for both teaching and research have prompted significant shifts in attitude at the institutional level too.

Canagarah also suggests that *embedment in the local culture* may be an important marker of academic peripherality, in that the university, in such contexts, tends to accommodate influences from the local community in its policies and practices, and "earns status and sustenance by serving society", rather than "leaning towards detachment and autonomy" (225). Once more, Portugal seems to fall between camps on this score. There are universities in the interior of the country that largely comply with this description in that they seem to exist solely to serve the educational needs of the immediate community: their student catchment areas are very local; teaching staff are mostly recruited from the student body and are therefore also local; and institutional activities are often integrated into the civic life of the town or city where they are based. On the other hand, the larger universities in the main cities along the coastal strip are much more cosmopolitan in outlook, with students and staff drawn from around the country (and, increasingly, from abroad). These universities are also more likely to have active research centres, which means that they produce as well as reproduce knowledge.

However, as already mentioned, research has traditionally been considered secondary to teaching in most Portuguese universities, with the effect that relatively little time is devoted to it and until recently, it counted for less for the purposes of career advancement. This has naturally had effects upon productivity.

III) Academic Careers and Recruitment Policies

One of the points made by Canagarajah in his description of the academic culture in the University of Jaffna is that departments are effectively "minifiefdoms" (195), run by senior professors with their own students and associates. Consequently, success depends less upon publication record than upon systems of patronage and membership of an influential clique.

In such a system, seniority is determined by age and date of academic appointment rather than through achievements (Canagarajah 196), and there is practically no horizontal/geographical mobility as scholars usually prefer to stay in the same university to be close to family and friends (Canagarajah 197). The system does

provide job security, however, as tenure is effectively achieved at entry level provided that proof is given of enrolment in a postgraduate degree course (Canagarajah 191). Thereafter, annual promotions and salary increases are almost automatic, based upon required years of service rather than merit points earned, and the individual track record merely serves to confirm the new rank (Canagarajah 190). Even here publications count for very little. More important is teaching experience (though there is no practice of student and peer evaluation) and institutional service, such as membership of committees and appointment for office (Canagarajah 192).

Twenty years ago, the academic career system in Portugal was almost identical to that described by Canagarajah. Lecturers would be recruited from the student body and would usually spend their whole lives in the same institution, moving from rank to rank fairly automatically without competition or obstacles. In such situations, there was little incentive to publish, with the result that many senior academics today have a pitiful research record compared to what would be expected in centre countries.

This situation has now changed, however, and as a result, competition for jobs has become intense. In 2009, new legislation (Decree-Law No. 205/2009 of 31st August) came into force which abolished automatic career progression and imposed meritocratic recruitment criteria at all ranks. In an attempt to avoid "corruption" (i.e. recourse to the traditional system of patronage) in job appointments, the system used for ranking candidates is now highly quantified. Merit points are allocated to each kind of contribution, with research record (and particularly international publications) now counting for more than teaching experience or institutional service.[11] Candidates are then ordered by means of a complex mathematical formula.

This excessive quantification, which precludes the possibility of qualitative assessments, offers a good example of the phenomenon that I have termed the "butler" syndrome. That is to say, in its drive to emulate the centre and become accepted by it on equal terms, the semiperiphery may sometimes err on the side of excess, becoming even more precious about centre values than the centre itself. Though we have yet to see the consequences of this policy, it is reasonable to assume that it might encourage researchers to privilege quantity over quality, a situation which would bring further repercussions upon the community as a whole.

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[11] For example, an announcement published in the state gazette in October 2011 ("Edital" no. 1008/2011 in *Diário da República*, 2nd Series, No. 201) for a job opening in the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, stipulated that candidates would be ranked strictly according to merit, with research record counting for 60%, teaching ability for 25% and other relevant activities (such as institutional office and membership of committees) for 15%. Each of these categories was then subdivided (for example, within the first category, publications would count for 35%, participation in research projects for 15%, conference participation for 5%, and supervision and examining of dissertations for 5%).

iv) Attitudes towards Intellectual Property and Research Quality

Much has been written about the cultural dimensions of plagiarism and of the problems that peripheral students appear to have with the centre's notions of intellectual property. Most of the early studies (Matalene; Sherman; Deckert; Bloch and Chi; Scollon; Pennycook; Myers) suggested that there was a whole different attitude to intellectual property on the periphery, a perspective endorsed by Canagarajah, who claims that it is common practice in Sri Lanka to quote the works of others without critical engagement:

> Borrowing from other texts, like borrowing freely from others' words in the communal stock of oral knowledge, is unrestricted. The ownership of knowledge is fluid, just as copyright laws are hardly in operation. Local scholars see themselves as freely borrowing from and contributing to the pool of available knowledge. (131)

However, a more recent survey of foreign students' attitudes to plagiarism in a Canadian university (Abasi and Graves) suggests that things might be changing. Instead of expressing bewilderment at the whole notion that copying could be wrong, these students seemed to share the same basic moral framework as the host culture, claiming only a difference of degree (in the sense that such offences were treated as less serious in their home countries and punished less harshly).

A similar change seems to have taken place in Portugal over the course of this period. In the early 1990s, copying was still being tacitly encouraged by an education system that valued deference to authority over originality and critical reasoning: students at all levels of the system were expected to absorb the words of their masters and other authorities and then regurgitate them verbatim in examinations, while practices such as collusion were not only tolerated, they were viewed as an entirely normal part of the learning process. However, growing internationalization has brought an increased awareness of the opprobrium with which such practices are viewed elsewhere. A number of high-profile scandals (involving, amongst other things, the expulsion of Portuguese students from Erasmus programmes and the termination of collaboration agreements) forced the authorities to take these matters more seriously, so that, today, no student in most higher education establishments can claim not to understand the rules of the game.

Despite these changes, Portugal's semiperipheral status is evident in the patchiness with which standards are enforced. In some traditional departments, the authorities often turn a blind eye to cheating, either because the modern ethos has not properly penetrated or because it suits them to take a more lenient view (perhaps to maintain student numbers or because the perpetrator is protected by influential connections). However, in the more progressive universities, and particularly those involved in prestigious partnerships with important international institutions, all efforts are now made to ensure that standards are strictly maintained—the costs of doing otherwise are of course too great to contemplate.

Similarly, Portuguese publications vary tremendously as to the extent to which they uphold the centre's standards with regards to the quality of the articles they publish. Though peer-reviewing procedures are now being increasingly implemented in journals with wider circulation, there are still many cases where editorial decisions are taken by an internal committee, or even by a single individual, without recourse to any form of quality control. One of the consequences of this is that social status still plays a large role in determining who or what gets published. An editorial board is unlikely to refuse an article by a prominent figure in the community, even if it does not come up to the desired standard, while work by individuals from communities deemed to be culturally inferior (such as countries on the outer periphery) may often be rejected outright without due consideration of their merits.

Perhaps the greatest sign of semiperipherality in this domain is the extent to which the Portuguese academy fails to acknowledge its own fragilities. That is to say, the centripetal pressure is so strong that the official discourse on quality is now identical to that of the centre, despite the fact that these norms have not yet been fully assimilated throughout the national system.[12] This sometimes results in the vociferous condemnation of more peripheral cultures for practices that have by no means been eradicated from the Portuguese system.

v) Epistemological Orientation and Academic Discourse

According to Canagarajah, one of the most significant differences between core and peripheral academic cultures has to do with epistemological orientation. That is to say, the scientific paradigm that is so taken-for-granted at the centre of the world system[13] does not always have quite the same status on the periphery, where it may have to compete with other forms of knowledge based on different ideological premises—at the University of Jaffna, for example, a great deal of research activity is carried out within the framework of the Saiva Siddanthu religious tradition (189). One of the ways in which this instability is manifested is on the level of clashing textual conventions. Canagarajah (137-155) lists a number of ways in which the conventions traditionally employed in his home country of Sri Lanka differ from

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[12] For example, the Portuguese research funding body, the Fundação de Ciência e Tecnologia, has as one of its strategic objectives the implementation of "rigorous and transparent evaluation processes through peer-assessment with national and international experts" (FCT, "Sobre a FCT: Linhas orientadoras e objectivos estratégicos," No. 3. 30 Oct. 2014. Web. <https://www.fct.pt/fct. phtml.pt>), yet its own 2014 evaluation of the research centres under its jurisdiction has been widely criticized as profoundly flawed, including by the Council of Rectors (cf. Firmino; De Rerum Natura).
[13] According to Halliday and Martin, the scientific paradigm and the discourse that it spawned are so overwhelmingly dominant in Anglo-Saxon culture that even the humanities subscribe to it: there is "an essential continuity between humanities and science as far as interpreting the world is concerned" (220).

those of the centre,[14] demonstrating how they make sense within a conception of knowledge that is "contextualized, personal, intuitive, tradition-confirming and collective" (142). However, when local scholars write for centre journals, he says, they have a tendency to hypercorrect, moving to "the diametrical opposite of the discourse adopted for the local audience" (145). That is to say, aware that the centre conceives of knowledge as de-contextualised, transcendental and value-free, they often produce a stereotype of what they think centre discourse sounds like, without the subtler modulations that in fact occur in texts produced by centre-based disciplinary communities.

To some extent, the situation in Portugal is not unlike that described in Sri Lanka, in that the scientific paradigm is a relatively recent import and is still competing with an older humanistic tradition that was culturally dominant until the last decades of the 20th century. But the problems that the Portuguese experience with English academic discourse are, if anything, more severe than those described by Canagarajah, simply because, for them, English is an entirely foreign language.[15] The discourse traditionally used in the Portuguese academy is so different from English academic discourse that it is practically incommensurable[16]—very elaborate and literary, with long complex sentences and a preference for poetic or high-flown diction (Bennett, "Academic"; *Academic*). Thus, Portuguese researchers wishing to publish in English will not only have to make adjustments at the rhetorical level; they may also be forced to undertake a massive reconceptualization that can have deep-reaching consequences on the level of personal identity (cf. Ivanič).

However, the scientific paradigm is now clearly in the ascendancy in Portugal, supported by government funding policies that are oriented more towards wealth creation than to the cultivation of ethical or aesthetic values. This has meant that a "modern" style of discourse, calqued on English and identical to it in almost all respects, is now gaining ground in Portuguese academia, not only in the sciences but also, increasingly, in the social sciences and humanities as well (Bennett, "Erosion"). Thus, it is possible that, in coming years, the traditional style will disappear

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[14] They include: a linear author-centred rhetoric as opposed to the dialogic object-centred approach used in centre research articles (137); an ethos of humility rather than contentiousness when making claims (139); a preference for "end-weighted" argumentation strategies (that is, the tendency to develop a thesis gradually rather than explicitly defining it at the outset) (147), and the use of "patterned language" (literary devices to create aesthetic effects) (151).

[15] In the linguistic domain, Kachru's circles may offer a more appropriate model than the centre/semiperiphery/periphery approach that I have been using until now. This divides the English-speaking world into an *inner circle* (countries like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia etc, where English is the mother tongue), an *outer circle* (typically countries of the former British empire where English is the language of education and official transactions) and the *expanding circle* (countries where it is learned as a foreign language). This would put Sri Lanka closer to the centre than Portugal.

[16] It embodies a completely different paradigm of knowledge that values the aesthetic, emotional and ethical dimensions of knowledge as much as or more than the capacity to make truthful observations about the outside world.

altogether, rejected by younger researchers as archaic and incompatible with the needs of modern democratic society.

This too may be considered as a manifestation of the "butler" syndrome, in the sense that it involves a repudiation of the traditional Portuguese worldview in favour of the values transported by English academic discourse. This subservience contrasts with the more contestatory posture evident in some parts of the outer periphery in the postcolonial context, where there have been attempts to challenge and subvert the hegemonic discourse through the creation of hybrid discourses (eg. Ngugi wa Thiong'o) or the use of deconstruction techniques that intervene in the language in order to call attention to underlying assumptions that might otherwise have gone unnoticed (eg. Bhabha; Spivak).

4. CONCLUSION

As these examples show, semiperipherality seems to represent a transitional phase in a country's economic and social development, which is ultimately the main determinant of research success (May; King; Lee et al.). Indeed, for Wallerstein and Santos, the category of "semiperiphery" is defined precisely by the fact that it contains features of both centre and periphery rather than by any particular characteristics of its own.

However, in this text, I have argued that the semiperiphery does have one defining feature—a peculiar propensity for emulation (the "butler" syndrome), which causes it to uncritically assimilate centre values while rejecting all that is peripheral, including aspects of its own identity. This conservative tendency is what causes it to function as a "buffer zone" (Wallerstein), dampening the impact of radical innovation and protecting the system as a whole from potentially destructive change.

Yet this unqualified identification with the centre seems to be more posture than fact; for, as we have seen, the semiperiphery is actually quite tolerant of non-standard practices and procedures, whether this is expressed negatively as a lack of stringency or positively as a propensity for "boundary work". Unlike the centre, it is not in the grip of an epistemological monopoly nor is it constrained by its own status to uphold rigid procedures in the interests of "rigour". Instead, it can accommodate conflicting epistemological frameworks, which permits not only a broad range of vantage points, but also greater flexibility and adaptability.

According to world-systems theory, major power shifts in scientific production, as in other fields, tend to result from a growing staleness or loss of innovative energy at the centre, largely due to the absence of competition— "The centre [...] has to go on initiating and making discoveries without having the pattern of another superior centre to guide it. It has only its own traditions to draw on and these also have a decelerating stagnating effect" (Gizycki 494). The semiperiphery, on the other hand, has every incentive to compete, something it does by emulating the centre and professing a commitment to its standards. This enables it to be accepted as a (junior) partner in joint ventures, which in turn permits it to learn from the centre and absorb everything it has to offer.

At the same time, however, the semiperiphery may be surreptitiously undermining that hegemony by giving a platform to alternative practices and non-standard forms of knowledge. These activities generally take place in the shadows, out of the limelight, because they are considered unworthy of the centre's attention. But they nevertheless contribute to a build-up in pressure that may one day bring about a major paradigm shift that drastically alters the balance of power.

As Gizycki says, "the periphery has an advantage over the centre because the time-lag of imitation causes the centre to become exhausted while it still believes it is the centre" (494). In this sense, the butler's unwavering deference towards his master seems almost like a diversionary tactic designed to hide the fact that subversive elements are being ushered in through the back door.

The semiperiphery should not, therefore, be underestimated. It clearly plays an important role in the geopolitics of academic practice, and any major shifts occurring in the system as a whole may well have their epicentre in one of its tectonic plates.

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