QUANDO LISBOA TREMEU (WHEN LISBON QUAKED)

Domingos Amaral

Analysis by Sofia Morabito

Historical Novel

Domingos Amaral's *Quando Lisboa Tremeu* reimagines the 1755 Lisbon earthquake as both historical reconstruction and philosophical reflection. Blending documentary realism with fiction, the novel transforms catastrophe into an inquiry into evil, faith, and human fragility. Drawing on Enlightenment debates from Voltaire to Kant, Amaral turns Lisbon's destruction into an emblem of Europe's passage from providence to reason.

Year of Publication	2010
Publication Place	Amadora, Portugal
Editor	Casa das Letras
Entity	1755 Lisbon earthquake

GEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Earthquake 1755 Lisbon earthquake

REAL EVENT

Time	1st November 1755
Location	Lisbon Portugal
Coordinates	37.176168, -10.107297
Impacted Areas	The earthquake affected an area of 10 million square Km and was felt across much of Europe and North Africa.
Seismic Fault	The fault responsible is located in the Atlantic Ocean, in the Torres-Vedras fault zone.
Magnitude	8.5/8.7 on the Richter scale
Typology	Tectonic Earthquake

I was roused from my dream, being instantly stunned with a most horrid crash, as if every edifice in the city had tumbled down at once. The house I was in shook with such violence, that the upper
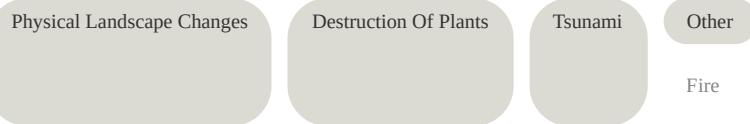
stories immediately fell; and though my apartment (which was the first floor) did not then share the same fate, yet everything was thrown out of its place in such a manner that it was with no small difficulty I kept my feet, and expected nothing less than to be soon crushed to death, as the walls continued rocking to and fro in the frightfulest manner, opening in several places; large stones falling down on every side from the cracks, and the ends of most of the rafters starting out from the roof. To add to this terrifying scene, the sky in a moment became so gloomy that I could now distinguish no particular object (Davy 17)

Anthropization Level	Cities

Staying with the theme of the Lisbon disaster, you will agree that, for example, nature had not gathered twenty thousand six- or seven-story houses in that place, and that if the inhabitants of that large city had been distributed more evenly throughout the territory and housed in less imposing buildings, the disaster would have been less violent or, perhaps, would not have happened at all. Everyone would have fled at the first tremors and found themselves twenty leagues away the next day, happy as if nothing had happened. (Rousseau)

Ecological Impacts	Physical Landscape Changes	Destruction Of Plants	Tsunami	Other
				Fire

Social Impacts	Deaths, Injuries, Destruction Of Goods/Commodities, Resource Depletion
	Destruction Of Dwellings, Destruction Of Public Buildings
	Destruction Of Facilities, Destruction Of Cultural Heritage (Materials And Sites)
	Social Disruption, Trauma, Poverty, Famine, Diseases
	Depopulation

Earthquake 1755 Lisbon earthquake

LITERARY EVENT

Time	1st November 1755
Location	Lisbon Portugal
Impacted Areas	The earthquake affected an area of 10 million square Km and was felt across much of Europe and North Africa.
Emphasis Phase	Disaster (phenomenal and social dynamics), Post-disaster (consequences)
Seismic Risk Ref.	Referenced
Seismic Fault	The fault responsible is located in the Atlantic Ocean, in the Torres-Vedras fault zone.

Typology	Tectonic Earthquake

Anthropization Level	Cities

Ecological Impacts	Physical Landscape Changes	Destruction Of Plants	Tsunami	Other

Social Impacts	Deaths, Injuries, Destruction Of Goods/Commodities
	Destruction Of Dwellings, Destruction Of Public Buildings
	Destruction Of Facilities, Destruction Of Cultural Heritage (Materials And Sites)
	Social Disruption, Trauma, Poverty, Famine, Diseases
	Depopulation

INDIVIDUAL REACTIONS & AFFECTS

Reactions

Name	Margarida
Age	Young
Gender	Female
Native Place	Portugal
Nationality	Portuguese
Reactions	Escape · Loss Of Consciousness · Cooperation · Solidarity · Fear · Empathy · Trauma

Name	Hugh Gold
Age	Adult
Gender	Male
Native Place	Uk
Nationality	British
Reactions	Escape · Fight For Survival · Self-Absorption · Cowardice

Name	Santamaria
Age	Adult
Gender	Male
Native Place	Portugal
Nationality	Portuguese
Reactions	Escape · Fight For Survival · Survival Instinct · Cooperation · Heroism

Name	Muhammed
Age	Adult
Gender	Male
Nationality	Arabian
Reactions	Escape · Fight For Survival · Self-Absorption · Pragmatism · Rationality

Name	The Boy Felipe
Age	Child
Gender	Male
Native Place	Portugal
Nationality	Portuguese
Reactions	Fight For Survival · Solidarity · Heroism · Distrust · Anxiety · Trauma

Name	Sebastião José De Carvalho E Melo
Age	Adult
Gender	Male
Native Place	Portugal
Nationality	Portuguese
Reactions	Rationality

COLLECTIVE REACTIONS & AFFECTS

Affects/Reactions

Name	Nobles
Reactions	Fear Passiveness

Name	Common people
Reactions	Escape Fight For Survival Prayer Fatalism Passiveness Disorder Self-Absorption Loss Of Consciousness Cowardice Fear Terror Panic Anxiety Distrust Unease Discomfort Distress Malaise Rage Sadness Despair Neurosis Trauma Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Survival Instinct Euphoria Madness Helplessness

Group Attitudes

Name	Animals
Reactions	Fear Anxiety Apprehension

LINGUISTIC & STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Keywords	Hell Punishment Dust Death Suffering
Metaphors	"We are Sodom, we are Gomorrah!" (Amaral 126)
Motifs, Topoi, Mythologemes	Apocalypse Hell Prophecy Corrupted Civilisation
Syntax	Parataxis, Hypotaxis

Punctuation	No Peculiarities
Morphology	Preference For Nouns Adjectives, Preference For Verbs Adverbs
Phonetics/Prosody	Relevance of word accent

In the novel, *Quando Lisboa Tremeu* (2011), Domingos Amaral constructs a complex narrative that intertwines the historical reality of the Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755 with the fictional trajectories of individual destinies, situating his work within the established literary tradition on the catastrophe, which includes *O Terremoto de Lisboa* (1874) by Pinheiro Chagas. This interweaving produces a double effect: on one level, the realistic portrayal of a collective trauma foundational to modern Portuguese memory; on another, the creation of a narrative mythology in which natural disaster turns into an instrument for moral, theological, and psychological inquiry.

The novel is divided into four parts – Earth, Water, Fire, and Air – according to a symbolic and thematic principle that reflects both the physical sequence of destruction and the spiritual process of human transformation. Amaral reinterprets the classical elements as existential categories: Earth embodies the collapse of material and moral foundations; Water, the dissolution of life and identity; Fire, the ordeal of purification; and Air, the dimension of survival and rebirth. This cyclical structure evokes a journey of death and regeneration, suggesting that the reconstruction of Lisbon – and, by extension, of Portuguese identity – rests upon a renewed awareness of human fragility. Through this symbolic architecture, Amaral's novel transforms literary fiction into a vehicle for reflection not only on the historical circumstances of the catastrophe, but also on the ways in which the Portuguese people experienced and responded to an event of such unprecedented magnitude.

To fully grasp the resonance of Amaral's narrative, it is essential to recall the historical and spiritual condition of Portugal in 1755. Although the country lagged behind other European powers in certain aspects of modernization, it still occupied a prominent position within the colonial and missionary system, sustained by the ambition to disseminate Christianity overseas. Lisbon, at that time, was one of the largest and most prosperous capitals in Europe, a city of extraordinary wealth and vitality. Enriched by the steady influx of gold from Brazil, the city stood as the financial and political heart of the Portuguese Empire. Its harbour, among the most important in Europe, connected the Atlantic and the colonial world, attracting merchants, sailors, and adventurers from across the continent. Cosmopolitan and bustling, Lisbon represented both the material success and the moral self-confidence of a nation that saw its prosperity as a sign of divine favour. Amaral evokes this atmosphere of opulence and expansion through the voice of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the future Marquês of Pombal, who, with lucidity and pride, describes the city as "one of the most important commercial capitals in Europe" (Amaral 274). The statement, while historically accurate, acquires in the novel a tone of tragic irony: it anticipates the imminent downfall of the very city that epitomized Portugal's imperial power.

Religious devotion permeated every sphere of Portuguese life, and belief in divine providence remained a defining feature of the national consciousness. The prevailing worldview was still grounded in a theological conception of nature, according to which natural disasters signified divine displeasure or served as instruments of moral correction. Within this framework, the earthquake of November 1, 1755, marked an epochal rupture, not only in the history of Portugal, but in the cultural and philosophical evolution of modern Europe. The destruction of Lisbon on All Saints' Day, while thousands of citizens were gathered at Mass, symbolised a profound paradox of faith: God appeared to strike precisely those who worshipped Him. Churches collapsed upon the faithful, and flames consumed the city's most devout quarters. This spectacle of sacred devastation undermined the long-standing conviction that the universe was governed by a benevolent and rational divine order, destabilizing the theological certainties on which early modern thought had relied. The catastrophe, which reduced the capital to ruins and claimed between seventy and one hundred thousand lives, was not perceived as a mere natural event. It became a trauma of civilization that compelled Europe to confront the problem of evil, the meaning of suffering, and the limits of providence itself. The successive waves of destruction – the tremors, the tsunami, and the fire that followed – transformed

the disaster into an emblem of metaphysical collapse: the visible end of a providential cosmology and the emergence of a disenchanted, rational understanding of human vulnerability. In his novel, Amaral underscores the tragic irony of the event. The homodiegetic narrator is the protagonist – a Portuguese man who, having spent many years abroad as a pirate – observes the catastrophe with both intimacy and estrangement. His experience of exile and moral ambiguity gives his commentary a tone that oscillates between empathy and scepticism. As he reflects:

Being English and Protestant, Captain Hugh Gold was naturally quite sarcastic about what he called the 'foolish and mindless piety' of the Portuguese. On several occasions, I heard him caustically and cynically criticise their submission to religious idols and friars. However, and despite there being some truth in those statements, unfortunately for the city of Lisbon and many of its inhabitants, including Gold's wife, the great earthquake occurred on a religious holiday and, worse still, at the time of mass. It was Saturday, a holiday, All Saints' Day, and when the earth shook it was half past nine in the morning and thousands of Portuguese were praying in churches. Many met their death there. Perhaps for believers, dying close to God was beautiful, but for me it was just ironic and sad. (Amaral 14).

The reverberations of the Lisbon earthquake extended far beyond the borders of Portugal, shaping one of the most decisive debates of the European Enlightenment. At the centre of this debate stood the optimistic theodicy formulated by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his *Essais de Théodicée* (1710), according to which humanity inhabited "the best of all possible worlds" (68). This vision, later popularized in Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734) through the maxim "Whatever is, is right" (13, 27, 32) sought to reconcile the existence of evil with divine providence by asserting that every apparent imperfection formed part of a greater rational harmony. The catastrophe of Lisbon, with its indiscriminate destruction and suffering, struck at the very heart of that optimism, forcing Europe to confront the limits of both philosophy and faith. Philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant each responded to the disaster as a challenge to the prevailing confidence in divine and cosmic order, though in profoundly different ways.

Voltaire, in his *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (1756) and later in *Candide* (1759), answered with caustic irony, dismantling the notion of a providential universe and exposing instead the disproportion between human suffering and divine justice. The image of the innocent crushed beneath the ruins became for him the emblem of a world devoid of moral harmony. Rousseau, in his famous letter in which he replies to Voltaire, sought to restore the dignity of human freedom by shifting the question from metaphysics to ethics: it was not divine will, he argued, but human artifice – the crowded cities, the fragile architecture of civilization – that had transformed a natural tremor into a catastrophe. Kant, for his part, approached the event from an entirely different angle. In his three essays on the Lisbon earthquake, he analysed its causes through empirical observation and natural philosophy, thereby anticipating the emergence of modern seismology, and inaugurating a scientific rather than theological approach to the understanding of disaster (Cfr. Ferro Tavares and Amador, et al.; Tagliapietra; Dos Santos).

From these diverse perspectives, the earthquake, then, was not only a geological occurrence but an epistemological rupture: from that moment, Europe began to conceive of evil not as sin to be expiated but as an inherent condition of existence to be examined through reason and the study of nature. The Lisbon disaster thus came to symbolize the end of the age of faith and the beginning of the age of critique.

If Voltaire's *Poème* transformed the catastrophe into a philosophical provocation – an emblem of the collapse of metaphysical optimism – Amaral's book revisits that same event not as allegory but as testimony. His novel translates the intellectual shock of the Eighteenth Century into the sensory and historical immediacy of modern narrative realism. Whereas Voltaire confronted the limits of theodicy through verse and irony, Amaral confronts them through documentation, re-enacting the disaster with the precision of an eyewitness chronicle. In doing so, he reaffirms, on an existential plane, what Voltaire had already discerned on a metaphysical one: that evil is not a logical problem to be solved but a lived experience to be endured.

In Amaral's descriptions, Lisbon becomes once again a stage for the spectacle of innocent suffering. "In front of the church," we read, "there were enormous piles of bodies… piled up in that sinister

funeral monument" (Amaral 107). The imagery recalls Voltaire's "children crushed upon their mother's breast," (1.7) but Amaral replaces the moral outcry with the cold accuracy of record. The repetition of the corpse, the anonymity of the dead, and the grotesque accumulation of bodies convey a collective annihilation that no theology can subsume. Like Voltaire, Amaral situates the reader before the scandal of an unredeemable world. Later, the narrator's lament – "Our Lisbon, which we love so much, has been literally wiped out… it's a vision of hell" (Amaral 137) – echoes Voltaire's refusal to find order in ruin. The city, once a symbol of imperial faith, becomes a material inferno: not the punishment of sinners but the exposure of human fragility. The "vision of hell" here is no metaphysical space but the real geography of disaster, an earthly inferno that denies transcendence. Amaral's language of loss thus continues Voltaire's argument by other means: to describe the destruction of Lisbon is to describe the collapse of meaning itself. As we can read in the passage "Lisbon looked like a blanket of fire and smoke… [with] mangled beings… macabre puppets in a grotesque operetta" (Amaral 139), the imagery captures the descent into materiality. The senses – smell, sight, touch – become instruments of knowledge. Through them, the reader perceives how the experience of evil is corporeal, not abstract, and that suffering resists explanation yet demands witnessing.

As Charles Darwin observed after the Chilean earthquake of 1835, "a bad earthquake at once destroys the oldest associations: the world, the very emblem of all that is solid, has moved beneath our feet like a crust over a fluid; one second of time has conveyed to the mind a strange idea of insecurity, which hours of reflection would never have created"(302). Darwin's testimony captures, with scientific precision, the psychological violence of seismic experience: the abrupt collapse of the world's apparent solidity and the birth of a new, disquieting sense of impermanence. Expanding on this insight, Poggi and Caramel approach the same phenomenon from a philosophical perspective. According to their analysis, the psychological dimension of the earthquake – the sudden dissolution of what the Greeks called ἑστηκυῖα (from ἵστημι: 'that which stands', 'that which is stable') – marks the transition from a merely conceptual awareness of fragility to a lived, embodied experience of precariousness. In an instant, the world ceases to appear as the fixed background of human existence and reveals itself as contingent, unstable, and opaque (146). This brief but radical suspension of stability produces not only cognitive disorientation but also a bodily and moral collapse: a *freezing* of movement and thought, as if consciousness itself were paralyzed by the loss of its spatial and existential coordinates.

It is precisely from this psychological fracture that Amaral's representation of the collective response to the Lisbon earthquake emerges. When the ground is no longer reliable, the ethical and social order collapses with it. The city becomes a theatre of instinctual regression: "Those were terrible days," recalls the narrator, "days when we lost our kinder gestures and thoughts… days when we ceased to be human and became practically animals, without reason or compassion… Although everyone spoke of God, those were the days when God abandoned people and left them totally alone in the face of brutal nature" (Amaral 53). Amaral here transforms Darwin's observation of insecurity into narrative anthropology: the same instant that destroys external stability awakens the primitive self, stripping away the cultural veneer of civility and exposing the biological core of humanity.

This collective panic is not merely social disorder but the existential counterpart to the metaphysical rupture identified by Voltaire. Where the Enlightenment philosopher saw the earthquake as the moment when faith in divine harmony disintegrates, Amaral portrays the parallel collapse of moral coherence. The destruction of the city mirrors the fragmentation of the self: fear erodes empathy, instinct overcomes reason, and divine silence echoes human solitude. In these pages, Amaral's portrayal of chaos is at once realistic and hyperbolic: a naturalistic rendering of collective panic that, despite its extremity, mirrors the breakdown of moral and social order that accompanies real catastrophe. His Lisbon is transformed into a crucible of horror, murder, looting, assault, and even cannibalism erupt in the streets as civilization collapses under the weight of terror. The Lisbon disaster thus appears not only as a historical episode but as an existential limit-experience: an encounter with the abyss of human nature, where, as Darwin first and Amaral later suggest, the distinction between man and animal momentarily vanishes beneath the trembling earth. In these scenes, Amaral extends Voltaire's insight. The catastrophe does not simply destroy cities; it reveals the moral instability of the human condition. The evil that Voltaire located in the disproportion between divine order and human pain becomes, in Amaral, an inner and immanent force, emerging from within rather than imposed

from beyond. The suspension of rules and the perceived absence of God mark the return of humanity to a pre-civilized state, a world "before there was wisdom or courtesy or solidarity" (Amaral 53).

Yet from the chaos and moral collapse that engulf Lisbon, Amaral moves toward the possibility of renewal. Where Voltaire exposes the collapse of metaphysical faith, Amaral reconstructs from the ruins a new, humanist ethic of compassion. The catastrophe, in his vision, no longer signifies divine punishment or meaningless chaos but becomes the ground of moral and communal rebirth, a post-Enlightenment response to the same questions of evil and suffering that first shook Europe in 1755. "For days," the narrator recalls, "we lived with the rotting bodies and piles of corpses… But… the fact that we survived created a special bond between us, which brought us closer and humanised us" (Amaral 23). The infernal landscape that once reflected divine abandonment becomes the matrix of renewed solidarity. Out of the shared experience of horror arises what Voltaire only intuited: a humanist ethics grounded not in divine providence, but on the recognition of a common vulnerability.

Amaral's *Quando Lisboa Tremeu* is thus both a continuation and a correction of the Enlightenment narrative. Where Voltaire halted before the scandal of innocent suffering, Amaral imagines the moral aftermath, the slow reconstruction of meaning through empathy. The survivors' "personal stories of resistance" (Amaral 23) do not deny the existence of evil but affirm humanity's capacity to respond to it, not through theological justification but through mutual care. The earthquake becomes a paradoxical site of revelation: by destroying the illusion of stability, it reveals the possibility of a new, secular form of grace born from compassion among those who remain.

After depicting the collective reaction to the earthquake, Amaral gradually shifts his focus from the many to the few, from the anonymous multitude to the inner lives of individuals. What begins as a vision of collective degradation evolves into an exploration of personal resilience. In the aftermath of destruction, the survivors become the lens through which Amaral examines not only humanity's capacity for cruelty but also its potential for regeneration. Having revealed how catastrophe strips away the illusions of stability and civility, he now turns to those who, amid ruin and despair, rediscover fragments of empathy and selfhood. This transition from the collective to the personal reaches its full expression in a passage where the narrator observes the mourning crowd gathered inside the churches of Lisbon:

Inside the church, we heard Masses and rosaries being prayed, asking for God's protection for the living and blessings for the dead. Almost everyone had lost family members: a son, a husband, a brother, a father or a mother. Many were alone, crying and lamenting their terrible fate: they had lost their possessions, their homes or everything at once. In addition to praying and trying to rest, people needed to talk, to share their individual stories of this monumental tragedy with those around them. (Amaral 93)

Here, the collective experience of loss gives way to a deeply human need for communication. The narrator's description reveals that, in the face of overwhelming grief, people seek not only divine consolation but also the solidarity of shared pain. The catastrophe, initially experienced as a mass event, becomes personal through the act of storytelling: individuals turn to one another to articulate and make sense of their suffering. This dynamic reflects the structure of the novel itself, where the five characters encountered by the narrator recount their personal experiences of the disaster, and the narrator, in turn, relays these stories to the reader.

So, from the ruins of Lisbon, the novel focuses on the personal story of five figures – Santamaria, the narrator; Muhammed, his companion; Sister Margarida; the adolescent Felipe; and the Englishman Captain Hugh Gold – whose intertwined fates lend coherence to the chaos. Each of them embodies a different response to the catastrophe, reflecting the diversity of human experience under extreme duress. As Santamaria recalls: "In the first hours after the earthquake, and long before we met, each of us lived our own story of confusion, pain and survival. Muhammed, the boy, the Englishman, the black slave girl and Sister Margarida and I had been lucky. The whims of fate had spared us, unlike thousands of the city's inhabitants" (Amaral 23). Through this reflection, Amaral articulates a polyphonic vision of disaster: each survivor's story is shaped by personal history, guilt, and desire, yet all are united by confusion, fear, and the instinct to survive. What emerges is a moral microcosm, a fragmented community bound not by virtue but by shared defencelessness. More profoundly, they are

connected by a common condition of moral imperfection: except for Felipe, the novel's emblem of innocence, all those spared by the earthquake bear the marks of transgression, deception, or sin.

Building upon this reflection, one of the central dimensions explored by Amaral in the book concerns the existence of evil and the delicacy of the human condition. The novel does not treat suffering merely as a consequence of the catastrophe but as a constitutive element of human experience. Evil, in this sense, is neither denied nor moralized; it is acknowledged as an inherent aspect of existence that must be confronted and understood in its complexity. Through this lens, Amaral's narrative investigates the psychological and moral responses of individuals faced with loss, fear, and guilt, revealing how the disaster becomes a mirror of inner turmoil as much as of external destruction.

Each character embodies a different articulation of this tension between good and evil, strength and weakness. With the exception of Felipe – a boy who, at thirteen, still inhabits the threshold between childhood and maturity – all the figures in the novel are portrayed with moral and psychological depth. None is entirely virtuous or wholly corrupt; rather, each displays a dynamic interplay of light and shadow, generosity and selfishness, faith and despair. Amaral's nuanced characterization thus refuses moral absolutes, presenting a gallery of complex human beings whose inner contradictions reflect the broader metaphysical uncertainty unleashed by the earthquake itself.

Sister Margarida, the first to appear, is a young nun condemned by the Inquisition for violating her vows. Terrified of fire, she attempts suicide to escape execution, but the earthquake interrupts her death. Her survival becomes both literal and symbolic: destruction turns into deliverance. Though initially portrayed as passive, Margarida gradually emerges as a complex, autonomous woman – capable of deception, desire, and courage – through whom Amaral exposes the hypocrisy of religious morality and the reawakening of female agency amid ruin.

If Margarida represents moral ambiguity, Felipe stands for incorruptible innocence. Unaware of his true parentage, he survives the earthquake that kills his mother and spends days digging through the rubble to save his sister. Guided by instinct and compassion, Felipe embodies the persistence of goodness within a fallen world. As Margarida observes, "There are no good people in this town… except for the boy" (Amaral 144). His purity contrasts with the cynicism of the adults and becomes the ethical centre of the novel, a measure of what remains human in the midst of devastation.

Captain Hugh Gold serves as Filipe's moral antithesis. A disillusioned English sailor, he personifies egoism and opportunism. Obsessed with power and domination, he manipulates others, especially Margarida, reducing love to a contest of possession. However, even in this character, Amaral lets fleeting traces of conscience survive, refusing to portray evil as absolute. Gold's duplicity reveals that self-interest and empathy coexist within the same human heart.

The figure of Muhammed, the loyal Arab sailor, occupies an ambiguous moral space. A survivor of violence and exile, he is both ruthless and capable of profound devotion. His loyalty (and possible love) for Santamaria culminates in self-sacrifice, transforming his ambiguity into tragic dignity.

At the centre stands Santamaria, the narrator and moral conscience of the novel. A former sailor turned pirate, he embodies the conflict between vengeance and redemption. His journey – from bitterness and alienation to the rediscovery of responsibility through the rescue of Felipe's sister – parallels Lisbon's passage from ruin to renewal. As both witness and participant, Santamaria unites the destinies of the others, turning the city's physical destruction into an inner drama of guilt, forgiveness, and moral rebirth.

Paradoxically, the cataclysm that destroys Lisbon becomes, for these five survivors, a path to salvation and renewal. As Santamaria exclaims: "This is our salvation! The earthquake was our salvation, the fires are our salvation!" (Amaral 158). What for the city represents annihilation, for them signifies liberation: a violent yet redemptive turning point that grants each a second chance. The earthquake saves Sister Margarida from the gallows, delivers Santamaria and his companion Muhammed from prison, and kills the cruel stepfather who tormented Felipe and his sister. Even Captain Hugh Gold, though marked by loss, attains the freedom he had long desired from a loveless marriage. The experiences of Margarida, Felipe, Gold, Mohammed, and Santamaria himself mirror, in miniature, the broader trajectory of Lisbon and of Portugal itself: from devastation to recovery, from

moral collapse to the rediscovery of strength. The novel thus enacts a cyclical motion that passes from the collective to the individual and returns to the collective once again, suggesting that the redemption of each person prefigures the regeneration of the entire community. This movement from inner redemption back to collective loss reaches its culmination in the narrator's final meditation on the ruined city:

I felt anguish. So I knelt on the ground and cried, sobbing convulsively… I was crying for the city, for the suffering that this blow of fate had caused it, annihilating it in a merciless and fatal mutilation… Cities are not just spaces filled with buildings, lives, monuments and strangers. Above all, they are part of our being… And now Lisbon had died, and I felt that an important part of me died with it… Like me. Like us. Like Lisbon. (Amaral 187)

Through this confession, Santamaria's personal story merges once more with the fate of Lisbon. His grief transcends the private dimension to become a collective lament, transforming individual emotion into civic mourning. The collapse of the city represents the collapse of the self, yet the recognition of this shared fragility restores a sense of unity between the individual and the community. In the protagonist, Amaral closes the circle that structures the entire novel: from the collective to the individual and back again. The earthquake that first revealed humanity's brutality and then inspired personal redemption now returns, in his tears, to the communal sphere as an elegy for Lisbon itself.

In this passage, Amaral's vision converges once more with that of Voltaire: both writers transform the destruction of Lisbon into a mirror of humanity itself. Yet where Voltaire's poem contemplates the city as a philosophical emblem of suffering, Amaral reimagines it as a living memory, an extension of the individual. Through Santamaria's lament, the Enlightenment meditation on evil becomes an intimate act of remembrance: Lisbon's ruins no longer symbolize divine punishment, but the enduring bond between human beings, their history, and the fragile world they inhabit.

Beyond the five fictional figures through whom Amaral explores the human dimension of the disaster, *Quando Lisboa Tremeu* also reconstructs the catastrophe with remarkable historical realism. The vivid depictions of Lisbon – its dust-laden air, the heaps of rubble, the collapsed churches and burning streets – draw extensively on eighteenth-century documentary accounts of the 1755 earthquake, grounding the novel in the material texture of historical experience (Amador 285-323).

Among the recurring motifs in Amaral's representation, beyond the seismic shocks themselves, is the thick cloud of dust that envelops the ruined city. The novelist closely echoes contemporary testimonies such as that of Joachim José Moreira de Mendonça, who observed: "The light of the sun darkened somewhat, without doubt because of the multitude of vapours emitted by the earth, whose sulphurous exhalations many perceived. [...] The dust caused by the ruin of the buildings covered the city with such a dense fog that it seemed determined to suffocate every living being" (114). Likewise, the English clergyman Rev. Charles Davy described the scene in comparable terms:

To add to this terrifying scene, the sky in a moment became so gloomy that I could now distinguish no particular object; it was an Egyptian darkness indeed, such as might be felt; owing, no doubt, to the prodigious clouds of dust and lime raised from so violent a concussion, and, as some reported, to sulphureous exhalations – but this I cannot affirm; however, it is certain I found myself almost choked for near ten minutes. (Davy 17).

Amaral reproduces this imagery with striking persistence: the "cloud of dust" recurs no fewer than twenty-eight times throughout the novel: "Outside, nothing could be seen but clouds of dust and heaps of debris" (22).

Yet Amaral's realism extends from physical devastation to encompass the broader cultural and intellectual context of the eighteenth century. Rather than merely depicting the aftermath of the earthquake, the novel situates the catastrophe within the ideological and moral transformations it set in motion. Through the opposition between faith and reason, superstition and reform, Amaral captures the shifting foundations of European thought. This tension is embodied in the dialogue between two historical figures: Father Gabriele Malagrida, the Jesuit confessor who interprets the disaster as divine retribution, and Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the future Marquis of Pombal, who responds with rational composure and pragmatic resolve.

At the moment of confrontation before the king, Father Gabriele Malagrida gives voice to the old theodicy, declaring that "God is punishing this city of sinful and vile people," that He wishes to end "the moral disorder, the lust, the baseness of the men and women of Lisbon" (Amaral 72). The priest's rhetoric of divine vengeance transforms the earthquake into an apocalypse of sin, a new Sodom and Gomorrah consumed by corruption and impurity. This image, which recurs throughout the novel as a *leitmotif* of damnation, casts the ruined capital as both a *locus horribilis* and a terrestrial inferno, where physical destruction reflects moral decay.

Opposed to this vision of wrath and guilt stands Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, whose calm rationality embodies the Enlightenment's faith in human reason and civic duty. Confronted by the priest's ecstatic preaching, he replies with composure: "Later we will have time for everything, Father Malagrida… But for now, there are more urgent matters" (Amaral 72). His words, calm but firm, shift the axis of meaning from theology to praxis. When the Jesuit insists asking "Are there things more urgent than God?' If we do not all repent, the earth will continue to shake! The city will be in ruins! Only God can help us, only God, in His infinite mercy, can save us!" (Amaral 72) Sebastião Jose responds irritated:

Fear of God cannot make us forget our obligations… my duty, at this moment, is to help the city of Lisbon." His tone – measured, pragmatic, and devoid of metaphysical panic – shifts the axis of meaning from providence to responsibility, from repentance to reconstruction. For Sebastião José, what matters is not divine forgiveness but the salvation of the living: "Father, organise your prayers, I'll take care of the rest". (Amaral 72-73)

This ideological conflict reaches its most acute and ironic point in a later episode, when Father Malagrida again interprets the earthquake as divine retribution, insisting that Lisbon's destruction is the deserved punishment of a sinful and corrupt city. Amaral undermines this apocalyptic rhetoric through the sharp irony of the Marquis of Alegrete, who, speaking in defence of Sebastião José, replies: "You may be right, Father Malagrida, you may be... But God has a strange sense of humour, don't you think? Almost all the churches were destroyed, yet the street of the harlots, of the prostitutes, on the contrary, was spared" (Amaral 138). The remark, at once sardonic and subversive, exposes the internal contradiction of the Jesuit's theology: if the catastrophe were truly the instrument of divine justice, why should vice survive while virtue perishes? Amaral thus distils Enlightenment scepticism into this brief exchange: through Alegrete's irony, divine providence gives way to chance, and the Lisbon earthquake becomes the stage on which reason confronts faith.

Amaral, however, tempers his portrayal of Pombal with historical realism. Though depicted as the architect of Lisbon's reconstruction and of Portugal's political revival, he is also shown as an opportunist who exploits catastrophe to consolidate power: "Sebastião José was rising by the hour to the status of organiser of the collective future, turning the earthquake into an opportunity to consolidate his power and, along the way, preparing a revolution. … For the king's minister, God was merely an argument, not a will. The only will with the power to determine what was to come was his own" (Amaral 193). Through this passage, the writer reveals both the strength and the ambiguity of Pombal's character. Historically as in fiction, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo transformed the Lisbon earthquake into a political turning point, using the chaos to establish his authority and to shape the city, and the kingdom, according to his vision. The novel captures this duality with precision: Pombal emerges as the quintessential *enlightened despot*, rational, determined, and at times ruthless, a man whose ambition was inseparable from his capacity for leadership.

At the same time, Amaral acknowledges his indispensable role in restoring order: faced with a monarch paralysed by anguish and courtiers divided between superstition and panic, "the king, for his part, trusted him blindly and agreed to everything, relieved that someone knew what to do on that terrible day" (Amaral 72). While others invoked divine punishment or counselled retreat, Pombal imposed reason and action, embodying the Enlightenment's pragmatic ethos in the face of disaster. His famous directive – "Bury the dead, care for the living, and close the ports" (Amaral 71) – symbolises this approach. Beyond its administrative clarity, the order to bury the dead carried profound political and hygienic significance: it was a preventive measure against epidemic disease and an assertion of state authority over ecclesiastical ritual. In defying the Church's reluctance to abandon funerary rites, Pombal affirmed the primacy of reason and public health over religious custom (Cfr. Kenneth and Carnota).

Amaral also acknowledges what history itself has confirmed: that without Pombal's lucidity, administrative skill, and composure in the face of disaster, Lisbon and the whole of Portugal might never have recovered. While others saw only divine punishment or despair, he imposed order, organised relief, and initiated one of the earliest examples of urban reconstruction guided by scientific principles, including anti-seismic architecture. The Lisbon we know today is, in large part, the city he rebuilt from the ruins.

If the opposition between Father Malagrida and the Marquis of Pombal embodies the human and ideological dimension of the eighteenth-century debate between faith and reason, Amaral also extends this dialectic beyond the sphere of human action, attributing meaning to the reactions of non-human beings. A particularly revealing aspect of *Quando Lisboa Tremeu* is, in fact, the attention given to the animal world, to those creatures whose instinct seems to anticipate what human reason cannot foresee. Paradoxically, while the earthquake strikes humanity unprepared, animals appear attuned to the tremors of nature, as if endowed with a pre-rational form of perception. "There are no dogs, no cats, no birds in the city. It's been several hours. They fled... They know before we do, Abraham said" (Amaral 64). Earlier, their silence had already signalled the imminence of disaster: "During the early hours of the morning, the barking of the city's stray dogs could not be heard. It was as if they had all agreed to remain silent at the same time. This was unusual, as there were many dogs in Lisbon and they spent their nights howling, roaming the streets in search of food scraps" (Amaral 15).

When the earthquake finally strikes, Amaral extends this sensitivity to the royal menagerie, transforming the convulsion of the earth into a spectacle of shared vulnerability: "Birds flew away, screeching; monkeys fled from falling trees; lions and pumas roared, probably as terrified as the few humans who were there; and even the elephants and rhinos seemed stunned by the fury of the earth's tremors" (Amaral 137). In this vision, the distinction between human and non-human failures, all living beings participate in the same cosmic disorder. Yet animals also emerge as mediators between destruction and survival: Felipe's dog, for instance, becomes the instrument of revelation, guiding the boy to the place where his sister still breathes beneath the rubble. Through these scenes, Amaral reconfigures the problem of theodicy in broader terms: the natural world, far from being merely a backdrop to divine punishment or rational inquiry, becomes an active agent of perception and moral intuition, bridging the limits of both faith and reason.

From a linguistic perspective, Q*uando Lisboa Tremeu* constructs its realism not only through historical accuracy but also through a meticulous representation of linguistic variation across diaphasic, diastratic, and diatopic dimensions. The narrative voice alternates between a neutral descriptive register and dialogic sections that foreground linguistic heterogeneity. Each character is endowed with a distinct idiolect that indexes their social identity, geographical origin, and degree of linguistic competence.

At the diatopic and diastratic levels, Amaral differentiates his characters' speech through nonstandard morphosyntax, phonological deviation, and lexical interference. Captain Hugh Gold's utterances display systematic code-switching and intrasentential alternation between Portuguese and English ("Deus curioso, your God! Todo dia, everyday, padres everywhere! Today, terramoto, sofrimento, not one priest! Nem um, damn! Where are eles, quando we need?" (7)), reflecting both his foreign provenance and his bilingual habitus. Sister Alice's northern origin is conveyed through the orthographic transcription of regional phonetic variation, specifically the phenomenon of betacism – the neutralization of the phonemic opposition between /b/ and /v/ ("Estou belha de mais para uma biagem tão longa. Bão bocês os dois" (44)), a feature characteristic of several northern Portuguese dialects. Muhammed's speech, by contrast, is marked by morphosyntactic simplification, non-finite verb forms, and nonstandard clitic placement ("Pedras ir cair em cima deles"; "Muhammed não ir ver eles ir bater em Santamaria!"; "Eu ir no pátio, ir jogar dados com franceses!" (34-35)). These traits reproduce the linguistic interlanguage of a non-native speaker and index a process of structural interference between Arabic and Portuguese. The frequent use of the infinitive in place of conjugated verbs exemplifies a pidginized verbal system, in which tense and aspect are inferred contextually rather than morphologically encoded.

Through these linguistic strategies, Amaral achieves a high degree of realism, reproducing with precision the linguistic diversity of eighteenth-century Lisbon. The city's multilingual and socially stratified population – sailors, merchants, slaves, clerics, nobles, and foreigners – is reflected in the

speech of its characters. In this way, language functions as a mirror of Lisbon's historical and social heterogeneity, portraying the capital as a cosmopolitan port where multiple voices and identities coexisted within the same urban space.

In *Quando Lisboa Tremeu*, Amaral achieves a remarkable synthesis of history, philosophy, and fiction, offering readers not merely a retelling of the 1755 earthquake, but also a reconstruction of the intellectual and social landscape that surrounded it. By weaving together historical documentation, Enlightenment thought, and literary imagination, Amaral restores to the event its full epistemological and cultural magnitude. His novel does not simply recount a disaster; it revives the debates, anxieties, and transformations that the catastrophe unleashed across Europe: questions of faith, reason, and human responsibility that reshaped modern thought. The author's note at the end of the novel reinforces this purpose. By declaring that "the facts in this book are based on a real event… any resemblance to reality is not a coincidence. That is precisely the intention"(5), Amaral situates his work at the intersection of fiction and historiography. His narrative, while explicitly fictional, is grounded in a rigorous reconstruction of real places, figures, and voices – among them Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Father Malagrida, and the king – whose actions and words are drawn from historical accounts. This deliberate interplay between invention and documentation reveals the writer's conviction that literature can serve as a form of historical inquiry, capable of restoring the past in all its complexity. Through this fusion of historical realism and fictional narrative, Amaral provides a faithful and immersive portrait of both the physical devastation of Lisbon and the spiritual and philosophical upheaval it engendered, reminding contemporary readers that the Lisbon earthquake was not only a geological calamity but a turning point in the history of European consciousness and in humanity's understanding of nature itself.

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