

## **GLOBAL REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH UNITS ON LITERARY STUDIES**

### **Coordinator s General Report**

This was the third triennial evaluation of research centres for Literary Studies in Portugal, and the second one I chaired. I understood this my second appointment as coordinator of the Evaluation Team as the desire of the President of FCT, Professor Ramôa Ribeiro, to build on previous experience, refine evaluation criteria, compare the units commitment to improvement, discuss progress in the field, and assess the evaluating process itself. I therefore invited the same group of specialists to work with me: Professors Nancy Armstrong, English and American Studies, Women s Studies, and Cultural Studies (Brown University, USA), Ziva Ben-Porat, Comparative Literature and Literary Theory (Tel Aviv University, Israel), Page duBois, Classics (University of California, San Diego, USA), Helder Macedo, Portuguese and Renaissance Studies (King s College London, UK), Hugh Ridley, German Studies (University College Dublin, Ireland).

This report should be read in conjunction with my previous one, submitted in January 2000. From my vantage point as Coordinator, I observe that this repeated experience has enabled the Evaluation Panel to have a fair idea of the scope, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the literary research conducted in Portugal. As the individual reports show, they are alert to gaps to be covered and possible overlapping to be avoided. Their assessment is solidly based on their own knowledge and wide reviewing experience, and on a deep understanding of the research policies of FCT. They value the units scientific coherence and their capacity for rigor, innovation, dialogue, internationalization, and commitment to adequate training of junior researchers.

The Evaluation Team reviewed 15 established units and 7 new proposals. Of the 15 established units, 11 had already been reviewed by a previous panel in 1996. My Evaluation Team reviewed these same 11 in 1999; 4 were evaluated for the first time ever, after their creation in 1998.

As Coordinator, I am pleased to conclude that, with a few exceptions, the units

committed to literary studies in Portugal are doing well and, in some cases, steadily improving their performance. Of the 15 established centres under evaluation, two were rated Excellent (Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, Universidade de Lisboa; and Centro Interuniversitários de Estudos Germanísticos, Universidade de Coimbra); five were rated Very Good (Centro de Estudos Clássicos and Centro de Estudos Anglísticos, Universidade de Lisboa; Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa, Universidade do Porto; Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos, Universidade de Coimbra; and Centro de Estudos Humanísticos, Universidade do Minho); five were rated Good, and only two were rated Fair. As the individual reports suggest, all the five very good centres are approaching excellence and should soon reach that goal. One of them, in fact, twice rated Excellent previously, had unfortunately to be downgraded, for reasons that the individual report leaves quite clear as well; the Team believes that they can easily return to their former level of excellence by attending to the suggestions of the review panel. Of the two units previously rated Fair (Centro de Línguas e Culturas, Universidade de Aveiro and Centro de Estudos de Culturas Lusófonas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa), the former showed enough improvement to be now rated Good, while the latter failed to meet the requirements for continuation, and the Evaluation Team could not but recommend that it be terminated. In three other cases, in accordance with FCT requirements and standards, the Team was compelled to lower the original ratings. The individual reports explain clearly why the Instituto de Estudos Ingleses, Universidade do Porto dropped from a Very Good to a Good, and the Instituto de Estudos Norte-Americanos, Universidade do Porto went from a Very Good to a Fair. These two units, previously assessed on the basis of research projects only, were included in this year's evaluation as research Centres proper, and as such reviewed by the Panel. The Centro Interuniversitário de Estudos Camonianos, Universidade de Coimbra also dropped from a Good to a Fair. As Coordinator, I have no doubt that were any or all of the three Centres to take seriously the Team's recommendations, they could easily improve and regain their former ratings. The Team was particularly disappointed with the poor performance, in the three-year period under review, of such an important unit in the Portuguese context as Centro Interuniversitário de Estudos Camonianos. Given the special national interest of this Center, as well as its responsibility in promoting the networking of scholars in Estudos Camonianos, both in Portugal and abroad, I dare to suggest that FCT pay particular attention to its current

predicament, to which I shall return later in this report.

The Team found that the three remaining units deserved a rating of Good: Centro de Literaturas de Expressão Portuguesa, Universidade de Lisboa; Centro de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses, Universidade Nova de Lisboa; Centro de Literatura e Cultura Portuguesa e Brasileira, Universidade Católica Portuguesa. The individual reports suggest that improvement is well within reach of these units as well. This is particularly true of Centro de Literaturas de Expressão Portuguesa, which needs to concentrate more on its internationalization. The volume and quality of this unit's production, some of it touching on such important topics as postcolonial studies, as yet under-researched in Portugal, deserves and needs to have a much wider international circulation.

For the most part, the seven new proposals testify to the dynamism and research commitment of literary studies in Portugal. Of these new proposals, only one was turned down for total lack of merit (Centro de Estudos Clássicos, Universidade Nova de Lisboa). In the case of another one (Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Linguagem Literária, Universidade dos Açores), the Team felt that the proposal suffered from faulty information and lack of experience on the part of the proponents. After consulting with the President of FCT, the Team recommended that the proposal be revised along the lines suggested in the individual report, with the assistance of more experienced researchers, and resubmitted in the very near future; given the importance of its location, the number of researchers involved, and the concerned engagement and seriousness of purpose of its proponents, the Team didn't want resubmission held up until the next competition. The Team considered all of the five remaining proposals worthy of support. One was rated Excellent (Instituto de Estudos de Literatura Tradicional, Universidade Nova de Lisboa); another Very Good (Centro de Literatura Portuguesa, Universidade de Coimbra); two others Good (Centro de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários, Universidade de Faro; and Núcleo de Estudos Literários Texto, Crítica, Mentalidades, Universidade do Porto); and, finally, the seventh one was rated Fair (Centro de Estudos Alemães e Europeus, Universidade de Lisboa).

As a Portuguese scholar of literary studies, with some international experience in the field, and with the vantage point of having chaired both this Evaluation Panel and the previous one, I am pleased to report that much of the research being conducted in Portugal is of very high quality indeed. The new proposals indicate

a greater variety of new scholarly work. Although the majority of the new proposals intend to pursue literary research of a more traditional kind, two stood out in the estimation of the Panel for promising more innovative work. The glaring need for studies in traditional literature and folk culture in Portugal should be met by the very fine proposal presented by Instituto de Estudos de Literatura Tradicional. Although the Team rated as Fair the proposal for a Centro de Estudos Alemães e Europeus, for reasons the individual report explains, it is clear that such a centre would go a long way toward addressing the recent crisis in German studies, as it would open up and diversify interdisciplinary research topics and opportunities in that field.

Next, I list some other specific problems and suggestions that I discussed at length with my team of specialists during the two-week evaluation process.

1. The forms used for the evaluation process might be improved, in order to avoid misunderstandings, repetitions, and redundancies. Moreover, what is a report about the work accomplished up until the date of the evaluation should be clearly distinguished from what is a statement of purpose for the next cycle.

2. Analysis of the reports and particularly exchange with researchers during the site visit showed that not all the research units have the same ideas about what the research policy and funding regulations of FCT are (for instance, the proponents of the A ores Centre could have used a lot more information and expertise). Annual meetings of Centres that include both Directors and leaders of the lines within each Centre would correct this uneven distribution of knowledge and variability of grantsmanship. Such meetings would also encourage the Centres to learn more about each other, positively emulate one another, and perhaps even inspire them to cover gaps and avoid overlapping.

3. A major concern is the need for internationalization and how to implement it. We believe that FCT should make mandatory the selection of a truly international editorial board for the Centres journals and require external refereeing of contributions for the Centres publications. This is not to say that what is foreign is best, but it is crucial to get Portuguese scholars used to a much broader exchange of ideas and perspectives. A good way to begin would be to have more national exchange and cross refereeing among the Centres themselves. Soliciting more collaboration from outstanding scholars should also be encouraged. International listing for articles in Centres journals would gradually be gained. Furthermore, considering how difficult it is to publish in major

international journals and presses, the international publication of Portuguese scholarship (including competent translations) should be financially supported by FCT.

4. As I mentioned three years ago, there are many problems affecting the relationship between research units and hosting institution (see my January 2000 report). The Evaluation Team actually had the impression that this relationship was largely responsible for the demise of Centro de Estudos de Culturas Lusófonas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa. On the other hand, perhaps a clearer distinction between research unit and hosting institution might have worked more positively in the case of Centro Interuniversitário de Estudos Camonianos. We urge FCT to take a closer look at the structural basis and networking potential of its research Centres. Centro Interuniversitário de Estudos Camonianos, for example, should be strongly encouraged to broaden its scope and goals by redefining itself in conjunction with other disciplines and in collaboration with other research Centres.

The financial dimension of the centre's organization is also very important. In Portugal as elsewhere, the field of literary studies is the poor relative of scientific research. It is simply not true that the field doesn't require a lot of money to thrive, and, as I argue below, we feel that more financial support for these Centres of literary studies is both necessary and justified.

1. It is true that literary scholars don't require huge sums of money for expensive equipment, but they do desperately need books and audio-visual materials, which tend not to be adequately factored into the financial section of the FCT application.

2. The field requires a lot of travelling for library research abroad, participation in conferences, and consultation with similar Centres with a view to protocols. Often, the mobility of scholars is inadequately funded. This mobility is especially important for young scholars just embarking on their careers, and they tend to have more difficulty having papers accepted and hence acquiring funding for trips to conferences and libraries abroad. Outside funding (e.g. by the Gulbenkian Foundation) is out of the question in this case. Centres should have the funding to support the travel needs of their junior affiliates.

3. With rare exceptions, Centres for literary studies also lack the necessary

funding for secretarial assistance, and such tasks often fall in the hands of the researchers themselves, who have teaching jobs at their home institution to carry out. The Centres daily life and bureaucracy should be taken care of by competent staff.

4. In contrast with the situation in the hard sciences, funding for full-time researchers, including M. A., Ph. D., and post-doctoral fellowships, has been notoriously lacking in Centres for literary studies. To mitigate this deficiency, this year the Evaluation Panel specifically recommended programmatic funding for all units rated Excellent and Very Good. They could all use competent secretarial help, and are all well positioned to host and train junior researchers at the undergraduate, M. A. or Ph. D. level. I hope this move is duly considered and honoured by FCT.

5. One measure that would go a long way toward improving the situation of literary scholars in Portugal would be for the government to agree that advanced research in literary studies is important to the future of Portugal. I urge the President of FCT, who has promoted several successful protocols between the Ministry of Science and Higher Learning, on the one hand, and the Ministries of Industry, Economy, Environment, etc., on the other, to make a similar agreement with the Ministry of Education. Most graduates of Schools of Letters end up in secondary school teaching. Many would like to engage in research, but find it very difficult to do so. The Ministry of Education rarely honours requests for leaves of absence that would allow secondary school teachers to do advanced research outside the Sciences of Education. I respectfully suggest that the opportunity to do research in other fields of the humanities can contribute even more decisively to the advancement of higher learning and culture in Portugal. Establishing a protocol between FCT and its own Ministry of Science and Higher Learning and granting many more fellowships for M.A. and Ph.D. students in various fields throughout the humanities would be the logical place to start.

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