



# Trauma and the Fictional Self-Portrait in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and Ana Teresa Pereira's *As Rosas Mortas*

RESEARCH

ANA BRÍGIDA PAIVA 

]u[ubiquity press

## ABSTRACT

Found at the crossroads between aesthetics and referentiality, portraiture is a hybrid form of painting conflating inner and outer references. Although the perceived connection and 'likeness' between work of art and the subject being depicted seems to differentiate portraiture from other kinds of paintings, this relationship to a perceived reality is far from linear, particularly so when portraits or other works of art are represented in literature – a longstanding literary device known as ekphrasis. The present article will demonstrate how literary representations of portraiture (more specifically, of self-portraiture) can be used to symbolise a narrative's underlying themes and motifs, namely, in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1988) and Ana Teresa Pereira's *As Rosas Mortas* (1998). Elaine and Marisa, Atwood and Pereira's first-person narrators, are both painters creating and describing a variety of self-portraits inspired by childhood trauma, fragmented memories, and the subconscious mind. Artistic self-expression becomes, in these novels, the distorted and indirect medium through which Elaine and Marisa question, integrate, and accept the traumatic and, at times, the monstrous within. This article will compare Atwood and Pereira's use of ekphrasis and examine how fictional self-portraits can be used to explore the relationship between subject and self-representation – an essentially fragmented and unstable relationship, especially so for survivors of trauma.

## CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

**Ana Brígida Paiva**

CETAPS, PT

ana.brigida.mpaiva@gmail.com

## KEYWORDS:

Ekphrasis; Portraiture;  
Trauma Studies; Comparative  
Literature; Comparative Arts

## TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Paiva, Ana Brígida. "Trauma and the Fictional Self-Portrait in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and Ana Teresa Pereira's *As Rosas Mortas*". *Anglo Saxonica*, No. 20, issue 1, art. 10, 2022, pp. 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/as.74>

Elaine Risley, the narrator of Margaret Atwood's 1988 novel *Cat's Eye*, is a middle-aged painter who returns to her hometown to attend a retrospective exhibition of her work. This return to Toronto prompts Elaine to reflect upon life experiences and people that inspired her paintings, making *Cat's Eye* a fictional memoir in both the narrative and the figural sense – what Coral Howells calls a “double figuration of the self” (204–205). As Elaine's past is progressively unveiled, detailing the traumatic influence of certain tormenting figures (her childhood friend Cordelia in particular), as well as her struggles in the path to becoming a respected painter, readers become privileged observers of her artwork, aware of the references coded into them. Similarly, readers of Ana Teresa Pereira's 1998 novel *As Rosas Mortas*<sup>1</sup> observe Marisa's fictional self-portraits as insiders, recognising visual references both to her destructive romantic relationships, and to Marisa's fragmented childhood memories of her dead parents and twin brother. Set in the island of Madeira, *As Rosas Mortas* is a tumultuous, circular narrative with an unreliable first-person narrator compulsively drawn to destruction, repetition, and death, not only in her personal life, but also in her artistic expression and self-narration. The present article<sup>2</sup> will compare the ways in which *Cat's Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas* (whose female narrators are fictitious painters creating, interpreting, and describing imaginary canvases) explore the relationship between subject and representation through the mediation of the visual arts – more specifically, through the literary representation of the art of self-portraiture.

According to Wendy Steiner (1977), the art of portraiture is found at the crossroads between aesthetics and referentiality. Considered a hybrid form of painting conflating both inner and outer references, portraits typically set themselves apart by virtue of the connection, or ‘likeness’, between artwork and depicted subject (111–112). This relationship to a perceived ‘reality’ through the visual medium of portraiture is, however, far from linear, especially as we depart from more traditional forms of portraiture to more inventive interpretations of the genre (116). Understanding the issues at the heart of portraiture can contribute to a better understanding of its role in literature, in which the interplay between the visual and the verbal may serve a variety of thematic and stylistic purposes. As we shall observe throughout this essay, the verbal description of visual works of art – a literary device known as ekphrasis – is frequently employed by Atwood and Pereira to problematise the relationship between the verbal and the pictorial, between perceivable reality and representation (Dvorák 304).

Far from its early days of an exclusively literary interpretation, the concept of ekphrasis has broadened its scope to include a variety of interdisciplinary, intermedial and multimodal approaches (Armstrong and Langås 1–2). An academic field that has recently explored this concept in an interdisciplinary perspective has been the field of Trauma Studies: in the introduction to *Trauma and Ekphrasis in Contemporary Literature* (2020), editors Charles I. Armstrong and Unni Langås argued that “the visual element of ekphrasis essentially connects with the traditional conception of trauma as associated with particularly harrowing mental images” (5). Adding mental images to the range of possible subjects of ekphrastic description, until recently limited to media and artistic images, further consolidates the role of ekphrasis as “the literary mediation for the act of witnessing” (5).

As we shall see, Atwood and Pereira's novels make use of three types of ekphrasis, relying predominantly on the description of imaginary artworks created by their narrators and whose existence is circumscribed to the narrative space (what John Hollander calls “notional ekphrasis”) (209). These purely fictional paintings serve as visual metaphors that help translate ‘real’ experiences, events and people into a textual canvas, acting as visual metaphors for both novels' underlying themes and motifs. The ekphrastic description of real artworks (what Laura M. Sager calls “depictive ekphrasis”) and brief references to works of art that contribute to the overall signification of the text (or “attributive ekphrasis”) (Sager 45–47), although less frequent, are also significant, an intertextual element that adds layers of signification to both narratives by helping create meaningful visual references. Given how both *Cat's Eye* and *As*

1 To facilitate reading, all cited passages from *As Rosas Mortas* have been translated by the author of this article. Each translated passage will refer to an endnote with Ana Teresa Pereira's text in Portuguese.

2 This article was originally presented as a conference paper in the international conference *Portraiture: Representations and Ways of Being*, held in the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon on November 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

*Rosas Mortas* use ekphrastic descriptions of artworks to convey the harrowing phenomenon of trauma, this essay will also compare Atwood and Pereira's portrayal of the traumatic and its repercussions on both narrators' perceptions of time, memory, and themselves. We shall observe that by emphasising the visual through the act of self-portraiture, both novels address the unrepresentability of trauma both thematically and stylistically (Luckhurst 87–88, Nadal and Calvo 3, 8).

## 2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ART GALLERY AS NARRATIVE SPACE

The art gallery holds great symbolic significance in both *Cat's Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas*, serving simultaneously as setting and narrative thread. The museum or the art gallery often feature in narratives engaging thematically with the art of painting, representing, as Armstrong and Langås put it, “a crucial motif in literary texts dealing with the visual arts” (4). In *Cat's Eye*, Elaine's return to Toronto to attend a retrospective exhibition of her life's work provides the framework from which she retrospectively observes her own life experiences and comes to terms with her traumatic past. The art gallery also symbolises Elaine's compartmentalised mind, built around major events and influential figures, most notably that of Cordelia, her childhood friend and tormentor (Howells 206–207; Schönfelder 268; Osbourne 98, 102). In addition to Elaine's earlier work and middle period, the exhibition displays five new paintings for the first time – the main subjects of John Hollander's “notional ekphrasis” (209), as they are extensively described, reflected on, and play a pivotal role in terms of the novel's plot and characterisation. As we shall see throughout this article, portraiture in *Cat's Eye* is a medium that allows information to be visually condensed, resulting in textual images which are, in turn, verbally contextualised and elaborated.

Scholars such as James Heffernan (1993), John Hollander (1988) and Claus Clüver (1997), have mapped the use of ekphrasis throughout the history of literature: while Heffernan defines it as “the literary representation of visual art” (1), Clüver considers it “the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system” (26), expanding the range of objects of ekphrastic description to include architecture, musical compositions and even forms of dance. Early subjects of ekphrastic description usually fell into one of two categories: they were either real, observable, or recognizable artworks, or, on the contrary, lost or imaginary works of art whose existence depended exclusively on their written description (Hollander 209). These imaginary works of art (such as Homer's description of Achilles' shield in book 18 of the *Illiad*) have long since served the purpose of symbolising and expanding on the narrative's underlying themes (Heffernan 9), a visuality that allows for a certain indirectness and through which “literature can escape the confines of its own medium” (Armstrong and Langås 2).

The art gallery holds similar symbolic significance in *As Rosas Mortas*, serving as the narrative's starting point. At the gallery exhibiting her artwork, Marisa meets Paulo and Miguel, two ill-fated connections that constitute the novel's main storyline. Pereira's novel is divided into four parts, alternating between two narrative voices: that of Marisa, the first-person narrator of parts one and four, who blames Miguel, a middle-aged psychiatrist (and subject of the limited third-person narration of parts two and three), for the death of her younger lover, Paulo. During their brief affair, the younger man gradually succumbs to severe mental illness, eventually committing suicide after being subjected to electroshock therapy, carried out per his psychiatrist's recommendation. Paulo's downfall is mirrored in the novel's second and third parts, during which Miguel, Paulo's psychiatrist, takes Marisa on as a patient, unaware that she considers him responsible for the untimely death of her ex-lover, whom she intends to avenge. Thus begins a perverse process of seduction whereby Marisa gradually tears Miguel away from his established work and family life, causing his social death. Paulo and Miguel's first encounter with Marisa in the art gallery can, in this sense, be thought of as a form of foreshadowing, seen as how their first meeting was mediated by her monstrous self-portraits, which both men see prior to meeting Marisa in person.

Unlike Elaine, whose paintings are autobiographical but mainly feature people other than herself, Marisa exclusively paints self-portraits, exploring their thematic complexity through obsessive, almost Freudian, imagery. The obsessive, recurring self-images that Marisa produces fall in line with the circularity that characterizes Pereira's fiction, as the Portuguese author is known for reusing settings and character names, as well as for the tendency to make

intertextual references to paintings, films, and other works of literature. Pereira's literary work is likewise characterised by recurring themes such as identity and doubling, as well as that of loneliness and fragmentation (Pinheiro 25, 32–33). According to scholar Duarte Pinheiro, desire and death walk hand in hand in Pereira's novels and short stories, and Marisa materializes this in painting herself as a hazy presence surrounded by, and morphing into, monstrous hybrids of reptiles, birds of prey, and thorny flowers (19). These self-portraits are variations on a theme, appearing here and there throughout the novel in brief, yet powerfully symbolic, descriptions:

And in the middle of the night, I would often leave him and go to the atelier, the most spacious room in the house, the most personal, where *the self-portraits with monsters and birds* were; I have always enjoyed *duplicating my body* in the arms of monstrous beings. (Pereira 28) (emphasis added)<sup>3</sup>

### 3. DISTORTED MIRRORS AND ELUSIVE DOUBLES

Elaine's early years were densely populated with disquieting characters: as a child, Elaine felt like an outsider, particularly when it came to the unfamiliar "customs and rituals of young girls", a microcosm mirroring society's restrictions and strict gender roles (Osbourne 102). Wishing to conform, Elaine copied her friends' behaviour, losing her own voice and identity in the process. As the eldest in the group, Cordelia made Elaine feel alienated, treating her, we later learn, as she herself was treated by her own family – criticising Elaine's appearance and behaviour, and enacting punishment when contradicted. Elaine later reversed this treatment, becoming a tormentor to Cordelia herself (Osbourne 102). Elaine's only portrait of Cordelia is called *Half a Face*, a title Elaine herself admits is "odd" because Cordelia's entire face is visible on the canvas:

This is the only picture I ever did of Cordelia, Cordelia by herself. *Half a Face*, it's called: an odd title because *Cordelia's entire face is visible*. But behind her, hanging on the wall, like emblems in the Renaissance, or those heads of animals, moose or bear you used to find in northern bars, is *another face, covered with a white cloth*. (Atwood 243) (emphasis added)

By presenting Cordelia's entire face in juxtaposition with this negating title, this fictional painting "[lures] unsuspecting readers, or viewers, into the story presented by the author" (Yeazell 3). In *Cat's Eye*, Elaine's titles are generally "imprecise, capricious and subjective", at once depending on the reader's understanding of the narrative but also relying on "essential information for the proper comprehension of the text" (Bobadilla-Pérez 117, 124). By confronting the image, title and previous knowledge of Elaine's personal experience, the reader is naturally confronted with a variety of questions: whose half-face does the title refer to? Does Cordelia represent Elaine's other face, a dark double, an absent other she needs to accept and integrate? Or is the title a reference to the veiled figure in the background, a metaphor for Elaine's self-effacement at the hands of Cordelia, as well as her guilt surrounding their eventual role reversal (Howells 206–207)?

The doubling and mirror motifs are the main strategies used in both *Cat's Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas* to problematize the concept of artistic representation in portraiture and to further expand on both narrators' compulsive search for their respective counterparts. In *As Rosas Mortas*, Marisa is a Medusa-like figure, an unkempt, wild-haired artist living alone in a decrepit house, surrounded by cats, wild roses, and the monsters she paints. Marisa's journey, as symbolized by her artwork, suggests that looking towards others to find completion in the face of loss brings no closure, and certainly no relief – instead, there is only loneliness, unconscious repetition, and a pattern of self-projection onto other people, who are inevitably consumed in the process (Sardo 91–92; Magalhães 63). Throughout the novel, Marisa experiences different types of loss: that of a mother who passed away before Marisa was old enough to remember her; of a twin brother who died in an unspecified, but emotionally impactful, traumatic event when Marisa was four years old; of a father who died after a long period of illness as Marisa was entering adulthood; lastly, of a lover who committed suicide after undergoing electroshock

---

3 "E a meio da noite eu deixava-o muitas vezes para ir para o atelier, o compartimento mais amplo da casa, o mais pessoal, onde estavam os autoretratos com monstros, pássaros, sempre gostei de duplicar o meu corpo nos braços de seres monstruosos" (Pereira 28).

therapy for his hallucinations. In different chapters, Marisa states that she sees herself in the faces of others, including the reptiles and birds of prey she paints. Marisa feels cursed to infinitely self-represent, unable to fully perceive herself:

It is my face the thing I am troubled by, the thing I cannot capture, the woman in the arms of monsters only recognizable by the eyes and hair, by her body (...) Sometimes *other people's faces resemble mine*, sometimes *the monsters resemble me* (...) As if I were doomed to infinitely create self-portraits, imperfect ones, as if I could never see my face. (Pereira 43) (emphasis added)<sup>4</sup>

Monstrosity is a central theme in Pereira's first works of fiction, an early period which, according to scholars such as Duarte Pinheiro, ends with *As Rosas Mortas*: in this novel, Pereira explores the idea of the monster within to its full extent, the double representing the 'unfolding' and inherent fragmentation of the self (138, 172). In addition to the compulsive self-portraits and their symbolism, the novel has the structure of a recurring dream, the characters reliving and unconsciously repeating the same moments and patterns. The last time Marisa sees Paulo mirrors the last interactions she has with Miguel after following through with her revenge: both visit her house, only to realize she is in bed with someone else – incidentally, the same man –, and both leave after letting out a pained scream in her garden (Pereira 67–68, 214); both Paulo and Miguel bring her a bouquet of roses, both of which are described as dead and wilting (Pereira 68, 221); both men want Marisa to leave her childhood home and move in with them (Pereira 39, 136) and at a given point, even utter the same words and share the same hallucinations (Pereira 35, 201, 220). This mirror-effect is characteristic of Pereira's literary universe, the same places, character names, and themes reappearing in several of her novels (Sardo 64, 78–79; Pinheiro 146; Magalhães 100).

An equally significant motif in Margaret Atwood's novel, the mirror is typically presented alongside another important symbol: that of the cat's eye marble. The titles of both novels parallel the relationship between title and portrait, and like the ambiguous and highly allusive titles in Elaine and Marisa's paintings, add layers of signification to the narrative by highlighting its central themes. The cat's eye marble Elaine keeps with her as a protective talisman "symbolizes Elaine's dissociative attempts at self-rescue" (Vickroy 132) and "encapsulates both the text's literariness and its emphasis on visuality" (Schönfelder 271). It is an element Elaine includes in many of her paintings to represent her own subjectivity and perception – the distorted eye through which she perceives the world. During her most self-negating period at the hands of Cordelia and her other girlfriends, Elaine kept her cat's eye marble within reach inside her pocket: in her own words, "[i]t rests in my hand, valuable as a jewel, looking out through bone and cloth with its impartial gaze" (Atwood 166). The limitations of flat mirrors and the artist's "impartial gaze" are the main themes behind Elaine's self-portrait, also titled *Cat's Eye*. This painting borrows elements from Jan Van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Marriage*, a painting that captivates Elaine for the pier glass depicted in the centre:

[W]hat fascinates me is not the two delicate, pallid, shoulderless hand-holding figures, but *the pier glass on the wall behind them*, which reflects in its *convex surface* not only their backs but *two other people who aren't in the picture at all* (...) the round mirror is *like an eye*, a single eye that sees more than anyone else looking (...) (Atwood 347) (emphasis added)

Here, we can observe an example of what Laura M. Sager calls "depictive ekphrasis", whereby a real work of art is "discussed, described, or reflected on more extensively in the text (...), and several details or aspects of images are named (...)", playing "a central role for the plot or a characterization in a narrative text or film, or constitute the main subject of a poem" (47). Van Eyck's pier glass shows, in addition to the depicted subjects, the artist observing and painting the scene – an element that "problematizes reflection" by introducing a convex mirror that depicts the artist while simultaneously distorting him (Nikolić 114). Elaine's description of *The Arnolfini Marriage* is the only instance of depictive ekphrasis found in Atwood's novel, her

---

4 "É o meu rosto que me inquieta, é ele que não consigo captar, a mulher nos braços dos monstros é reconhecível pelos olhos e pelo cabelo, pelo corpo ... Por vezes os rostos dos outros parecem-se com o meu, por vezes os monstros parecem-se comigo... Como se estivesse condenada a fazer auto-retratos, infinitamente, auto-retratos imperfeitos, como se nunca pudesse ver o meu rosto..." (Pereira 43)

fascination with the pier glass on the wall behind the two figures in Van Eyck's painting inspiring her to include a reference to it in her self-portrait, *Cat's Eye*:

*It's a self-portrait, of sorts. My head is in the right foreground, though it's shown only from the middle of the nose up: just the upper half of the nose, the eyes looking outward, the forehead and the topping of hair (...) Behind my half head, in the center of the picture, in the empty sky, a pier glass is hanging, convex and encircled by an ornate frame. In it, a section of the back of my head is visible. But the hair is different, younger.*

At a distance, and condensed by the curved space of the mirror, *there are three small figures*, dressed in the winter clothing of the girls of forty years ago. They walk forward, their faces shadowed, against a field of snow. (Atwood 430) (emphasis added)

Elaine's untraditional self-portrait features only half of her face, unlike Cordelia's portrait, where her whole face is visible but is paradoxically titled *Half a Face*; this self-portrait shows Elaine from the middle of the nose up, focusing on the eyes. Behind her, the pier glass reflects the back of her head, showing a younger version of herself; the convex mirror also reflects the figures of the three girls whose influence still affects Elaine's self-perception, her interpersonal relationships, and her artistic expression. The title adds another layer of signification: the cat's eye marble, at once talisman, all-seeing eye and mirror that represents her innermost self and her artistic subjectivity, makes the self-portraits really about self-representation: according to Milena Nikolić, Elaine opts for convex surfaces (the cat's eye, the pier glass) because they are better suited to represent the inherently complex subjectivity of the self's, and the artist's, perception of reality, celebrating the "openness and distorting qualities" that go beyond "the limitations of flat mirrors" (Nikolić 113–114). In this sense, self-representation goes beyond surface-level resemblance, the symbolism in *Cat's Eye* revealing Elaine's truest, innermost self. By discarding the pursuit of accuracy or of a more direct referentiality, this self-portrait "of sorts" provides a window into the artist's mind, a visual metaphor for the reinterpretation of the past experiences that permanently transformed her (Cewart 130).

Although *As Rosas Mortas* does not present similar examples of depictive ekphrasis, it does, however, rely heavily on what Sager calls attributive ekphrasis, namely "a mere allusion [to a work of art] without explicitly specifying the source, [or] explicit and direct naming but without descriptive elaboration" (45–46). Several Portuguese scholars have examined the importance of intertextuality in Pereira's fiction, references that significantly contribute to each narrative's overall signification. *As Rosas Mortas* weaves an intricate web of references, from cinematic (with allusions to Ingmar Bergman and Andrej Tarkovsky, or to Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Suddenly Last Summer*) to literary (with references to poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke or to Tennyson's *The Lady of Shallot*), creating a highly symbolic, sensual, and dream-like ambiance (Sardo 79). Other novels and short stories by Ana Teresa Pereira specifically mention poems by preRaphaelite painters and display reproductions of some of their famous paintings on their covers. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's influence is especially prominent in *As Rosas Mortas*, his painting *The Day Dream* figuring on its front cover, as well as references to his poem *Sudden Light* being made throughout the narrative (Sardo 77). Pereira's intertextual references create, according to scholars like Duarte Pinheiro, an excess of signification (Pinheiro 19), a web of recurring images integral to the circularity and obsessiveness that characterizes Pereira's characters, narrative arcs, and overall body of work (Sardo 91).

In both novels, art is a mirror that reflects the artist, and what is reflected represents the shifting meaning of identity, as well as both the conscious and the unconscious mind (Cewart 125). This distortion acts as a form of defacement, which, in *Cat's Eye*, takes the form of veiled, half-faces and the altogether replacement of the face by a mirrored object, and, in *As Rosas Mortas*, is represented by monsters and dissolved boundaries between the self being depicted and her surroundings. It is no coincidence that Elaine's retrospective exhibition is held at a gallery called "Sub-Versions", since these paintings actually subvert reality while attempting to represent it (Howells 211–212); similarly, it is in the art gallery that Marisa meets the men that trigger her monstrous metamorphosis, acting as mirrors through which she is able to fully perceive herself (Sardo 78–79). As previously mentioned, both Elaine and Marisa are aware of

the unfinished and distorted aspects of self-representation precisely because of their artistic sensibility, through which the unconscious mind is unveiled. In a rewording of Paul De Man's final statement on his essay "Autobiography as De-Facement", in both novels, self-portraiture "veils a defacement of the mind of which it is itself the cause" – so much so that, in seeking to represent the self, Elaine and Marisa's self-portraits disfigure as much as they restore (De Man 930).

## 5. CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND THE STRUGGLES OF (SELF-) REPRESENTATION

There is an additional layer of interpretation present in *Cat's Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas* that furthers the complexity of their portrayal of self-representation: the fact that Elaine and Marisa's fragmented sense of self is also inextricably tied to the complex, and pervasive, effects of their negative past experiences, reflecting the elusiveness of trauma (Schönfelder 257; Vickroy 130). Throughout both novels, Elaine and Marisa present physical and psychological symptoms that derive from the overwhelming traumatic experiences they went through as children, making both narratives pertinent examples of trauma fiction. Not only do *Cat's Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas* explore the main issues at the heart of trauma (such as repetition, fragmentation, and resistance to representation), but also stylistically recreate the "structure of trauma" by focusing on erratic temporalities and placing a strong emphasis on visuality (Nadal and Calvo 7–8).

As a child, Elaine felt disconnected from her past, as well as from her family and peers, possessing a low sense of self-worth, often dissociating, and at times engaging in self-harming behaviours, such as skin pulling (Vickroy 131); as an adult, Elaine is still haunted by her lingering past, mentioning vivid dreams and intrusive "visions" which keep affecting her personal relationships, contributing to a fragmented and damaged sense of self (Vickroy 133). This persistent re-experience of traumatic events in the form of intrusive thoughts, dreams, flashbacks, and repeating patterns is common in survivors of trauma (Luckhurst 1, 9, 83), symptoms that adult Elaine, haunted by memories of Cordelia, experiences throughout the novel. It is impossible to "walk down a street without a glimpse of her", a fear which turns to obsession, even paranoia, as Elaine sees "fragments of her – a shoulder, beige, camel's hair, the side of a face, the back of a leg – [on] women who, seen as a whole, are not Cordelia" (Atwood 6). Elaine fears Cordelia while obsessively searching for her, attempting to understand her tormentor and, therefore, herself – a paradox that, as we have previously mentioned, becomes the theme of both *Half a Face* (a portrait in which Cordelia's whole face is visible while Elaine's remains veiled) and *Cat's Eye* (a self-portrait which shows only half of Elaine's face, focusing on her eyes) (Vickroy 135–136).

Similarly, Marisa experiences intrusive thoughts connected to her brother's death, an insinuation of guilt that she experiences repeatedly and struggles to keep buried. Immediately after Marisa first tells Paulo about her long-lost twin, she hastily retreats to her house, haunted by "a sentence that [she] had almost forgotten [and that] resounded bitterly, accusingly, inside [her]: *What have you done with your brother?*" (Pereira 39);<sup>5</sup> after Miguel tells Marisa he believes her sexual preference for younger men is connected to her obsession with her brother's death, the same words "came out of her mouth, wild, unexpected: *What have you done with your brother?*" (Pereira 136);<sup>6</sup> at a later point in the novel, when Miguel tells her he believes her relationship with Paulo, whom she loved as a brother, was somewhat incestuous, Marisa once again "felt the words escaping [her] mouth, those monstrous words that [she] never understood, that never abandoned [her] for very long. *What have you done with my brother?*" (Pereira 218)<sup>7</sup> (emphasis added).

The ramifications trauma produces on memory and, consequently, identity, further complicates the process of self-narration, making trauma especially resistant to representation – for this

---

5 "Uma frase que quase esquecera soava dentro de mim, amarga, acusadora: «Que fizeste do teu irmão?»" (Pereira 39).

6 "As palavras saíram-lhe da boca, inesperadas, selvagens: «Que fizeste do teu irmão?»" (Pereira 136).

7 "Senti que as palavras me fugiam da boca, aquelas palavras monstruosas que nunca compreendi, que nunca me abandonaram por muito tempo: «Que fizeste do meu irmão?»" (Pereira 218)

reason, the idea that trauma is impossible to represent is central to most trauma narratives (Nadal and Calvo 2–3; Luckhurst 5). As Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo state in their introduction to *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation* (2014), “trauma constitutes the realm of the unspeakable and the unrepresentable” (5), an inaccessibility that, ultimately, suggests an absence; in other words, “representation of the traumatic entails inadequacy or incompleteness – loss (...)” (7). Since trauma continuously disrupts linear notions of time, the subject who experiences a traumatic stressor or event vacillates between the present and a past that, for its painful emotional intensity, cannot be fully understood or told. This compulsivity is markedly present in *Cat’s Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas*, where “the peculiar temporal structure of trauma involves unfinishedness and repetition” (Nadal and Calvo 3).

Elaine’s most impactful traumatic memory relates to “the point at which [she] lost power” (Atwood 113) – the moment when, during a game, Cordelia and the other girls buried Elaine in a hole and abandoned her, a traumatic event that became, to Elaine, a “time marker that [separated] the time before it from the time after” (Atwood 113). “When I was put into the hole, I knew it was a game,” Elaine explains, “now I know it is not one. I feel sadness, a sense of betrayal. Then I feel the darkness pressing down on me; then terror” (Atwood 112). As Laurie Vickroy puts it, “Elaine’s burial in a hole by her friends (...) represents the death of her innocent and trusting self” (135), further enhanced by the fact that Elaine herself later becomes a tormenting figure to Cordelia, a turn of events she feels enormous guilt over. In this sense, her evasive, highly symbolic self-portraits providing a safe distance from which Elaine can observe her pain and attempt to come to terms with it by expressing it artistically.

The same can be said of Marisa’s paintings, especially *You can’t pray for demons*, a deeply personal painting she does not consider a self-portrait. On it is “a long-haired naked woman, lying on the floor of an empty room with a single window. Outside are birds, attacking the glass with their beaks and white wings” (Pereira 35).<sup>8</sup> The depicted scene echoes a vivid memory of Marisa’s, one that is described at a later point in the novel:

When my twin brother died, there was no longer someone sleeping beside me. In the middle of the night, I began to wake up alone in a dark, empty room. The monsters didn’t scare me, but the emptiness did. (Pereira 193)<sup>9</sup>

The bird imagery and the painting’s title also relate to Marisa’s connection to Paulo, who often hallucinated with birds trying to find their way inside, frantically hitting and pecking at the bedroom window. As Paulo spirals further into religious fervour, Marisa asks him if he still prays for her: Paulo’s response became the title of this painting, a sentiment later uttered, word for word, by Miguel in the aftermath of being pulled away from his family, his work, and his social circle because of his romantic and sexual involvement with Marisa. Towards the end of the novel, Miguel, like Paulo, also hears the birds at his window, and, like Paulo, answers Marisa’s insincere request for him to pray for her with the curt remark “you can’t pray for demons” (Pereira 201, 220). Much like Elaine, Marisa avoids her main traumatic stressors, an extreme avoidance that turns into active repression, inevitably leading to increased impulsivity, aggressiveness, and destructive behaviours. When Paulo, a brotherly figure, commits suicide after an intense emotional exchange with Marisa, her guilt surrounding her brother’s death is mirrored in her repressed guilt regarding Paulo’s death, which, in turn, led to the displacement of this ‘blame’ towards Miguel, Paulo’s therapist, who was treating his mental illness and medicating him to help with his hallucinations.

Elaine and Marisa’s artistic indirectness, along with their difficulty remembering their pasts and their fraught interpersonal relationships, also reflect the belatedness, avoidance and fear that are among the most common manifestations of trauma (Caruth 60). While *Cat’s Eye* shows a more self-aware narrator with a more detached, whole-picture view of her past traumas and ensuing guilt, *As Rosas Mortas* presents a circular, unfinished narrative in which we are never

---

8 “(...) perguntei-lhe um dia se ainda rezava por mim. Disse-me com gravidade «Não se reza por demónios» e eu usei a frase como título de um quadro, uma mulher nua, de cabelo comprido, deitada no chão de um quarto vazio, uma janela e do outro lado pássaros que atacavam a vidraça com os bicos e as asas. Brancas” (Pereira 35).

9 “Como quando o meu irmão gémeo morreu e deixei de ter alguém na minha cama, e passei a acordar de noite num quarto vazio, escuro, não era dos monstros que eu tinha medo, nunca tive medo dos monstros mas do vazio” (Pereira 193).



truly told what took place in Marisa's past. Marisa's fragmentary perception is emphasized when, in parts two and three of the novel, the narrative shifts into third-person narration. It is Miguel who, in this third person perspective, provides information on Marisa's past that she had thus far omitted, namely another impactful absence in her childhood – her mother's. Until Miguel's professional diagnosis, references to motherhood in Marisa's self-narration were evasive, archetypal rather than concrete: in the beginning of the novel, Marisa remembers offering her body to the moon when she was seven years old (saying "I am yours, you are my mother, take care of me..."), a memory that returns to her as "an image as clear as a painting" (Pereira 33).<sup>10</sup> Throughout the novel, Marisa refuses to move out of her childhood home, a decrepit house on a cliffside overlooking the ocean (Pereira 26–27, 33); in addition to the moon, Marisa associates her house and the elements surrounding it – such as the ocean and the cliffs – with motherhood and the womb: the sea caves under her childhood home, according to Marisa, "are where I came from, I believe, not from the body of a woman; I cannot have been born out of the body of a woman" (Pereira 33).<sup>11</sup>

As trauma usually surfaces through visual images or through sense memory, trauma memories are "highly visual or sensory, and in any case decidedly non-narrative" (Schönfelder 268). For this reason, Robert Luckhurst affirms in his volume *The Trauma Question* (2008) that trauma fiction – particularly in the form of novels – represents "an important site for configuring (and therefore refiguring) [the] traumatic" (87), since it addresses the paradoxes of trauma not only thematically, but stylistically (5). As we have mentioned, the unspeakable nature of trauma, the impossibility of fully understanding or capturing it, and its disorienting repercussions, have continuously inspired authors of trauma literature to employ different narrative strategies (e.g., recurring motifs, fragmented narratives, non-linear timelines, emphasis on the visual, etc.) to evoke the poetics of trauma (Nadal and Calvo 5; Schönfelder 258). Elaine and Marisa's distorted subjectivities, repetitiveness, as well as their fictional canvases, all point to the paradoxes of self-representation, illustrating the disruptive effect trauma has on memory and how it leads to a sense of fragmentation and incompleteness (Schönfelder 271). The repetitive and compulsive act of painting self-portrait after self-portrait "illustrates how the fragmenting, isolating, and dissociative elements of traumatic experience problematize identity and find unconscious expression in [Elaine and Marisa's] artistic vision and works" (Vickroy 129–130).

## 6. SELF-PORTRAITURE AS (FRAGMENTARY) SELF-PERCEPTION

Elaine and Marisa are elusive subjects not only in the eyes of others, but especially their own. It is in the art gallery that the personal and public life of their portraits conflate: the exhibits becoming the "informing principle" of the novels, according to Coral Howells, the paintings presenting "a riddling version of the truth" whose references are already familiar to the reader (205–206). Above all, as a symbol, the art exhibition represents what Marta Dvorák calls a "struggle for wholeness": the reader, familiar with the events that inform the fictional paintings, cannot, in fact, 'see' them; the fictional viewer attending the exhibition, however, can 'see' the paintings at a surface level but cannot fully understand the codes they hold (Dvorák 304–305). The reader and the fictional gallery viewer's perceptions of Elaine and Marisa's paintings are, in this sense, partial representations, underscoring language's, and literature's, inability to fully represent or capture reality, particularly when this reality is violent, deeply painful, or traumatic. In Atwood and Pereira's trauma narratives, while "writing elaborates on and expands on the vision of the painting, (...) the painting synthesizes the mixture of sensations created by the writing" (Dvorák 308). At Elaine's retrospective exhibition, this dichotomy is perfectly captured by the gallery catalogue, which contains interpretations of her paintings that contradict what the narrator and the reader know to be true (Howells 213); Marisa also believes only she – and, by extension, the reader – knows what the references coded into her self-portraits truly mean (Pereira 211), both narrators emotionally distancing themselves from the people around them, even the ones they are closest to.

---

10 "É uma recordação antiga mas a imagem tem a limpidez de um quadro, uma menina de pijama e braços abertos, «Sou tua, és a minha mãe, toma conta de mim...»" (Pereira 33).

11 "(...) aquele rumor que parece vir de dentro do nosso corpo e é o som da água nas cavernas (e eu acho que foi delas que eu vim, não do corpo de uma mulher; eu não posso ter nascido do corpo de uma mulher)" (Pereira 33).

This partiality in perception and emotional distancing is further explored in Elaine's *Life Drawing*, a painting featuring two romantic partners from her past, one her age and one older – another similarity she shares with Marisa. In this portrait, Josef, an older professor from her time as an art student, and Jon, her colleague and first husband, are both painting Elaine, who sits in the middle of the painting like a model in a life drawing class. Elaine uses *Life Drawing* to demonstrate that neither man can see her for who she truly is: while Josef paints “a voluptuous but not overweight woman, sitting on a stool with a sheet draped between her legs, her breasts exposed; her face is Pre-Raphaelite, brooding, consciously mysterious”, Jon uses his trademark abstract style, painting “a series of intestinal swirls, in hot pink, raspberry ripple red and Burgundy Cherry purple”; between them, Elaine is “clothed in a white bedsheet, wrapped around her below the breasts”, hands folded on her lap with a bluish cat's eye marble in place of her head (Atwood 387–388). As Carol Osbourne notes, what Elaine communicates with *Life Drawing* is that she is “capable of seeing but not of being seen” (107), showing Elaine's perception of herself as inherently fragmented and divided between relationships (Nikolić 111–112).

Likewise, Marisa's self-portraits mediate her relationships with both Paulo and Miguel, who, after seeing the paintings, are tragically drawn to Marisa – however, neither lover is allowed access to Marisa's art studio, nor are they privy to the thought process informing her artwork. The fictional self-portraits, acting as the lens through which both men perceive her, become an incomplete medium characterized by tension: Pereira makes this evident by having Paulo and Miguel act in similar ways at different stages of the novel, increasingly pressuring Marisa to move out of her childhood home and change her appearance, behaviour, and artistic preferences. As Marisa's therapist and lover, Miguel becomes intensely invested in Marisa's self-actualization, the painter inspiring him to write an article about the intersections between painting and psychoanalysis (Pereira 88). As is typical in Pereira's fiction, the artistic process is equated with mysticism, madness, and the idea of motherhood. In the psychiatrist's office, Marisa explained that the reptilian and bird-like figures in her self-portrait were torn from within: “she spoke naturally of monsters that inhabited the chaos, of *giving form to monsters* that came from chaos, of *ripping birds and serpents from inside herself*; she would put her hands on her belly as if all it was *in her womb asking to be born*” (Pereira 75) (emphasis added).<sup>12</sup> Although compulsively drawn to paint her likeness onto the canvas, Marisa confesses to Miguel she does not want to be a mother because she dislikes the idea of others resembling her (Pereira 170). Having suffered through her mother's absence from her life, along with the deaths of her brother and father, seems to have made Marisa reluctant to accept motherhood in the traditional sense – yet in her artistic pursuits, Marisa still feels “like an enormous mother, always with child” (Pereira 185).<sup>13</sup>

Readers of the visual text in these novels can simultaneously imagine and interpret the fictional canvas in relation with the message encoded underneath. Atwood and Pereira's use of ekphrastic description exposes the multifaceted relationship between subject and representation, particularly the distorted, elusive “I” that is the subject of self-representation. As Elaine and Marisa come across and come to terms with their traumatic pasts, their paintings visually convey what is narratively left unsaid; these paintings are, in turn, observed and interpreted both within the text, by other characters, and outside the text, by us, the readers – an exchange whereby their narration contextualizes and explains the paintings, while the paintings symbolically and visually represent the events and emotions expressed by their narrative voices (Dvorák 308). As narrative devices, Elaine and Marisa's self-portraits highlight that the function of art in general, and portraiture in particular, is not simply to mirror but to reveal the self as an ever incomplete, fragmented subject (Barros 130). In these novels, portraits and self-portraits do not seek to imitate or produce likeness, but to create a fictional space that reflects how art, as a work of fiction, distorts – and through this distortion, reveals. Moreover, the role played by self-portraiture in these novels demonstrates the importance of visuality when memory (and therefore, identity) is disrupted as a result of the profound and complex psychological ramifications of trauma (Vickroy 130), an effect further enhanced, as

---

12 “... falava com naturalidade de monstros que viviam no caos, de dar forma a monstros que estavam no caos, de arrancar de si mesma pássaros e serpentes, pousava as mãos no ventre como se tudo isso estivesse no seu útero a pedir para nascer” (Pereira 75).

13 “Sinto-me como uma mãe enorme, sempre prenha” (Pereira 185).

we have ascertained, through the allusive quality of symbols such as mirrors, doubles, and monsters, used by Elaine and Marisa to question the very concept of self-portraiture and self-representation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

By the end of *Cat's Eye*, Elaine seems somewhat at peace with not having obtained the closure she anticipated: although her retrospective exhibition shows her artistic and life stages in neat progression, Elaine is aware that life is not as straightforwardly mapped out. As Coral Howells points out, by looking back at these paintings, Elaine questions her memory, sees figures from the past in a different light, and recognizes childhood trauma and how “crucial [it was] to the development of her artistic powers” (214215). To an extent, the same could be said of Marisa, who abandons self-portraiture altogether once her destructive actions force her to interiorise her own monstrosity (“I grew tired of monsters,” she explains. “In the end, I didn’t even need to paint them. In those last canvases, I simply represented myself”) (Pereira 185).<sup>14</sup> Instead, Marisa takes an interest in ceramics, moulding “clay figures, barely formed babies, unopened flowers, unborn things” (Pereira 168),<sup>15</sup> realising that she can continue to self-represent in ways that are not necessarily self-referential (“I will let my hands do it,” she concludes, “let them create self-portraits that only I can recognise (...)”) (Pereira 211).<sup>16</sup> Although Miguel, her psychiatrist and lover, assumed Marisa had stopped painting self-portraits out of fear of facing her inner demons, the reader is told the real reason: by the end of *As Rosas Mortas*, Marisa has learned how to live “with her own face,” her artistic endeavours reflecting a desire to turn a new page, an attempt to break the cycle of compulsive repetition (Pereira 168).

As we have so far ascertained, in *Cat's Eye* and *As Rosas Mortas* the path towards identity and ‘wholeness’ is expressed mainly through metaphors associated with Elaine and Marisa’s aesthetic affinity towards mirrors and doubles, monsters and unconscious imagery, and mist and dissolved boundaries, elements which point to a common theme: that representation – and particularly, self-representation – is, in essence, fragmented and unstable (Howells 216), especially so for survivors of trauma. Artistic self-expression is, in this sense, revealed as more than a coping mechanism, more than a talisman guarding both narrators from corruptive forces: it is a medium allowing Elaine and Marisa to question, integrate, and accept what is traumatic and monstrous in both others and themselves.

In its closing chapters, *Cat's Eye* shows Elaine coming to terms with her past, reintegrating her more traumatic memories and attaining a semblance of peace regarding her abusers, particularly her childhood friend Cordelia – an acceptance that is conveyed without forcing the idea that Elaine has reached a complete, and resolved, sense of self. In this sense, Atwood acknowledges Elaine’s “desire for wholeness, unity, and consistency” while remaining aware that “autobiographical visions of the self will, ultimately, remain fractured, incomplete, or distorted” (Schönfelder 270–271). Atwood’s *Cat's Eye*, a well-established narrative within the trauma literature canon (Luckhurst 87), thus presents a complex depiction of trauma and its insidious ramifications. Framed as a fictional autobiography, “*Cat's Eye* [further] highlights how trauma tends to push processes of self-narration and self-representation to its limits” (Schönfelder 271). The same applies to *As Rosas Mortas*, since by the end of the novel, Marisa seems more comfortable with the fragmentary, distorted, and harrowing aspects of trauma, having embraced monstrosity and ‘madness’ as part of herself and finding a healthy outlet for these emotions in her artistic expression. Throughout the present article, it has been argued that Pereira’s thematic and stylistic depiction of the complexities of trauma also makes *As Rosas Mortas* an example of trauma literature: compared to Elaine, however, Marisa embodies the more violent and overwhelming traits of trauma response, being generally more self-destructive, presenting more exacerbated emotional responses such as angry outbursts, hypervigilance, and loss of control. This novel succeeds in recreating the paradox of trauma

---

14 “... cansei-me dos monstros. No fundo, já nem era preciso pintar os monstros, nas últimas telas limitava-me a representar-me a mim mesma” (Pereira 185).

15 “Umas figuras em barro... como bebés ainda mal formados... ou flores ainda por abrir... coisas que ainda não nasceram...” (Pereira 168).

16 “(...) deixarei que as minhas mãos o façam, que criem auto-retratos que só eu sei que o são” (Pereira 211).

(i.e., the simultaneous drive towards compulsivity and avoidance), presenting the reader with an unreliable narrator who lies, omits elements of her traumatic past, and is stuck in obsessive relationship patterns. By presenting this first-person narrator alongside a third person limited narration in parts two and three that contradicts and fills in the gaps in Marisa's self-narration, Pereira demonstrates how "trauma is (...) a crisis of representation, of history and truth, and of narrative time" (Luckhurst 5).

While it can be said that, in the strictest sense, the art of portraiture is dependent on the connection established between itself and the subject of representation (Steiner 112), the process of visual self-representation extends beyond limiting notions of 'accuracy', or mere referentiality – this is particularly true for literary descriptions of portraits. As we have observed throughout the present article, artists that engage in self-portraiture in literature equate the artistic process with the search for self-awareness that inevitably leads to transformation. Portraiture and other forms of self-representation create an "illusion of reference" that makes the final image something else altogether, "something more akin to a fiction" (De Man 920). The ekphrastic description of fictional self-portraits in Atwood and Pereira's novels reveal alternative ways of seeing, particularly through the artist's sensibility and vision, the distortive quality of these self-portraits ultimately representing the redemptive power of art and the imagination.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

This article was written with the support of CETAPS – Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies and FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology (grant reference: UI/BD/151107/2021).

## AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Ana Brígida Paiva  [orcid.org/0000-0003-3876-5861](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3876-5861)  
CETAPS, PT

## REFERENCES

- Armstrong, Charles I. and Unni Langås. "Introduction: Encounters Between Trauma and Ekphrasis, Words and Images." *Terrorizing Images: Trauma and Ekphrasis in Contemporary Literature*, edited by Charles I. Armstrong and Unni Langås, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 1–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110693959-001>
- Atwood, Margaret. *Cat's Eye*. Bantam Books, 1989.
- Barros, Pedro Luis da Cruz Corga de. *Os lugares em ruína em Ana Teresa Pereira*. 2010. Aveiro University, Master's thesis.
- Bobadilla-Peréz, María. "Relevance and Complexities of Translating Titles of Literary and Filmic Works." *Huarte de San Juan – Filología y Didáctica de la Lengua*, no. 9, 2007, pp. 117–124.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Clüver, Claus. "Ekphrasis Reconsidered: On Verbal Representations of Non-Verbal Texts." *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations between the Arts and Media*, edited by Ulla-Britta Legerroth et al., Rodopi, 1997, pp. 19–33.
- Cowart, David. "Bridge and Mirror: Replicating Selves in *Cat's Eye*." *Postmodern Studies 6: Postmodern Fiction in Canada*, edited by Theo D'Haen et al., Rodopi, 1992, pp. 125–136.
- De Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." *MLN*, vol. 94, no. 5, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, pp. 919–930. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2906560>
- Dvorák, Marta. "Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*: or the trembling canvas." *Études anglaises*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2001, pp. 299–309. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/etan.543.0299>
- Heffernan, James A. W. *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Hollander, John. "The poetics of ekphrasis." *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1988, pp. 209–219. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.1988.10436238>
- Howells, Coral. "Cat's Eye: Elaine Risley's Retrospective Art." *Margaret Atwood: Writing and Subjectivity*, edited by Colin Nicholson, Palgrave Macmillan, 1994, pp. 204–218. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-23282-6\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-23282-6_11)
- Luckhurst, Robert. *The Trauma Question*. Routledge, 2008.

- Magalhães, Rui. *O Labirinto do Medo: Ana Teresa Pereira*. Angelus Novus, 1999.
- Nadal, Marita and Mónica Calvo. "Trauma and Literary Representation: An Introduction." *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation*, edited by Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo, Routledge, 2014, pp. 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315880501>
- Nikolić, Milena. "The mirror motif in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*." *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2017, pp. 107–122. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18485/bells.2017.9.7>
- Osbourne, Carol. "Constructing the Self through Memory: 'Cat's Eye' as a Novel of Female Development." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1994, pp. 95–112. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3346682>
- Pereira, Ana Teresa. *As Rosas Mortas*. Relógio d'Água, 1998.
- Pinheiro, Duarte Miguel Carvalho. *Além sombras: Ana Teresa Pereira*. 2010. Fernando Pessoa University, PhD dissertation.
- Sager, Laura M. *Writing and Filming the Painting: Ekphrasis in Literature and Film*. Rodopi, 2008.
- Sardo, Anabela Oliveira Naia. *A Audácia de Ser Diferente: a Escrita Obsessiva de Ana Teresa Pereira*. 2013. Aveiro University, PhD dissertation.
- Schönfelder, Christa. "(Re-)Visions of the Buried Self: Childhood Trauma and Self-Narration in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*." *Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma*, edited by Gabriele Rippl et al., University of Toronto Press, 2013, pp. 257–274. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442664197-018>
- Steiner, Wendy. "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting". *Semiotica – Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies/Revue de l'Association Internationale de Sémiotique*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1977, pp. 111–119. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1977.21.1-2.111>
- Vickroy, Laurie. "Seeking Symbolic Immortality: Visualizing Trauma in *Cat's Eye*." *Mosaic – An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2005, pp. 130–143.
- Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. *Picture Titles: How and Why Western Paintings Acquired Their Names*. Princeton University Press, 2015. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvc779dd>

**TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

Paiva, Ana Brígida. "Trauma and the Fictional Self-Portrait in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and Ana Teresa Pereira's *As Rosas Mortas*". *Anglo Saxonica*, No. 20, issue 1, art. 10, 2022, pp. 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/as.74>

**Submitted:** 12 November 2021

**Accepted:** 20 September 2022

**Published:** 14 October 2022

**COPYRIGHT:**

© 2022 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

*Anglo Saxonica* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiquity Press.