

# ***PO.EX***

***ESSAYS FROM PORTUGAL  
ON CYBERLITERATURE &  
INTERMEDIA***

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# THE CRITICAL EXPERIENCE OF POETRY<sup>33</sup>

ANA HATHERLY

## The Critical Experience of Poetry—1

To conclude his essay “Comunicação na Poesia de Vanguarda,” Haroldo de Campos wrote that “the whole present of creation suggests a synchronic reading of culture’s past.”<sup>34</sup> He was stating an often overlooked fact regarding really contemporary poetry that Julia Kristeva had defined as the text’s intertextuality.

As for Portuguese Experimental Poetry, and not only concrete poetry, of which Ernesto Melo e Castro is a major representative, the intertwining of our present/past is one aspect that will receive its due credit as a cornerstone, a national and cultural phenomenon. In fact, in his response to the survey “Vanguarda Ideológica e Vanguarda Literária,”<sup>35</sup> Melo e Castro drew attention to the fact that “the notion of avant-garde can neither be absolute nor static,”<sup>36</sup> while he researched the historical-social framework of Portuguese Experimental Poetry and the process followed for its invention.

But the other aspect that must also be kept in mind when analyzing an avant-garde text is one Abraham Moles defined as “the process of experimentation.”<sup>37</sup> This experimentation—which is parallel to scientific experimentation and highlights the procedure by depersonalizing the work—is the benchmark of all avant-garde art, especially that produced during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Pedro Barbosa paraphrases Moles:

The creator is no longer surrounded by his works, he is only in their origin: in their execution intervene factors and operations that are

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33 Ana Hatherly, “A experiência crítica da poesia I, II e III,” from *O espaço crítico - do simbolismo à vanguarda*, 1979, (originally published in *Colóquio/Letras*, 1975), pp. 113-128. Translation by Isabel Basto.

34 O.P.: “Todo o presente da criação propõe uma leitura sincrónica do passado da cultura.”

35 *Colóquio/Letras*, nr.23, January 1975.

36 O.P.: “a noção de vanguarda não pode ser nem absoluta nem estática.”

37 O.P.: “o processo da experimentação.”

extrinsic to him. For this sort of poetic creation, the most significant factor is the experience itself, with all hesitations and errors, assumed as systematic.<sup>38</sup>

To the Experimental poet, the creative work is no longer exclusively the poem. Most important is the set of rules that the poet imposes upon himself, or rather the creative possibility of such a set of rules: “experimentation on poetic language prepares experimentation on poetic creation.”<sup>39</sup> The rupture of traditional processes, embodied by this decision, must define the foundation of the avant-garde poetry of the postwar period.

After the later (but no less significant) outbreak of Surrealism, Portuguese poets assumed a dual persona that demanded freedom to be and create but also practiced anti-fascist resistance. This was the persona assumed by Experimental Poetry. The avant-garde trends in Portuguese poetry played a substantial role of renewal that their later recognition did not diminish. Periodically, there are small groups of poets that strive for renewal at all levels. A characteristic of the avant-garde is not only action at the textual level but also the willingness to interfere with life, with reality, for life and art are not regarded as separate.

This has happened since the beginning of the century. A magazine is published, and only a few issues are released. A group is formed around a core notion of how art should be understood and practiced, and then the group breaks up, leaving a few survivors who carry their works to completion, justifying themselves and their life principles. Their assimilation by the current society, that they always oppose, is troublesome (naturally and even necessarily so); in the end, integration is achieved and the Movement is surpassed. As a rule, this is the process.

Regarding Experimental Poetry, the process was exactly the same: a small group emerges; a magazine is published; the original group with no authentic cohesion breaks up; and then three or four personalities establish themselves through their works.

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38 O.P.: “O criador já não está rodeado pelas suas obras, está apenas na origem delas, na sua realização intervêm factores, operações, que lhe são exteriores. Neste tipo de criação poética, o mais significativo factor é a experiência em si, com as suas hesitações e os seus erros, assumida como sistemática.”

39 O.P.: “a experimentação sobre a linguagem poética prepara uma experimentação sobre a criação poética.”

Melo e Castro is one of those personalities. When we examine *A Resistência das Palavras*,<sup>40</sup> the first page immediately reveals a sort of explanation of the method followed, a definition of the method, and the implications of the process he employs: submitting words to “semantic, syntactic, phonetic and morphological research,”<sup>41</sup> experimenting with their resistance as materials for “systematic and violent experimentation.”<sup>42</sup> In addition, that process must also be regarded as proof of “resistance to obscurantism and repression.”<sup>43</sup> The relationship between those two forms of “resistance” unleashes the multiple intertextual implications—synchronic and diachronic, experiential and historical—that such texts will embody.

As brilliantly stressed by Maurice Blanchot, one of the great achievements of present day criticism has been its liberation from the obligation of judging the value of literary works. This means that current criticism can no longer (or should no longer) be made from an objective point of view from which the critics consider themselves judges/readers. Critics can no longer project onto the work some sort of beam of light, emanating from an undisputed source which, falling upon an area privileged by the critic, would allow him/her to make a definitive decision on its merit. Present day criticism—a new criticism, let us be clear—no longer implies the aberrant notion of condemnation or praise. Instead, this type of new criticism becomes a creative text in itself, together with the text upon which it reflects. No longer judicative in the moralist sense of the term, it becomes interpretative in the deep sense of the term. To that extent, there will be considerable commonality between the producer of a critical text and the author of the analyzed text. Therefore, the critic, a privileged reader, interprets the work, but within the work’s own field: the work as text is understood through another text. In order to actually be able to assimilate a given text, the public will have to follow a similar process to that of the critic, who has partially provided a path to follow: the public must also become a privileged reader and be able to assimilate the work through interpretation. But in the end, wasn’t this what had always happened?

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40 *Cadernos Sagitário* 2, Plátano Publishing, Lisbon, 1975.

41 O.P.: “pesquisa morfológica, fonética, sintáctica e semântica.”

42 O.P.: “experimentação violenta e sistemática.”

43 O.P.: “resistência ao obscurantismo e à repressão.”

To the extent that criticism, in spite of its tradition, would be a second-degree writing, it is an act motivated by the work as a dynamic enabler of the experience to which criticism belongs. We can say that avant-garde texts for the most part already contain such criticism: they are their own criticism. In avant-garde texts, for instance from the 1960's/1970's, the text and its possible criticism (and criticism is no more than an in-depth form of reading) converge at a core where they identify different forms of intellectual activity, mainly by identifying the forms in themselves. Hence, criticism assumes a specific value, performing a task defined by Blanchot as “one of the most difficult, but important, tasks of our time,” i.e.: “the task of preserving and of liberating thought from the notion of value, consequently also of opening history up to [...] what is taking shape as an entirely different—still unforeseeable—kind of affirmation” (6).

The texts gathered in *A Resistência das Palavras* are an expansion of the author's work, which already extends over a period of about two decades. They bring nothing new, nor was that the author's purpose. In this volume, Melo e Castro readdresses all his previous themes, themes that are common to his contemporaries, as stated by himself, but that are above all our contemporaries. The assimilation of the Portuguese cultural past<sup>44</sup> and its transformation into a really intertextual language are the main features of Melo e Castro's poetry, when not engaged in orthodox Concretism. The assumption of the creative act as a playful act, even in its fatal aspect—it places us at the mercy of chance, a chance that Mallarmé showed us—is a game we are involved in and that is above all the game of history. “In every game, / there is a missing piece. / that is the one playing us / and deciding”<sup>45</sup> also refers to the notion developed by Abraham Moles: “the dream we dream shall be it, / during sleep and awake, / for the being of sleep is to be”<sup>46</sup> and redirects to Goya: “the dream of reason.”<sup>47</sup> Its recurrent themes—love and death—are typical themes from the Renaissance and Baroque that Melo e Castro addresses within that same style in a sort of Iberian dressing of the text. Such a style is a form of transatlantic culture and a nationalist universalism. To sum this up, the multiple cultural references in these texts illustrate what I defined elsewhere as “the antho-

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44 Mostly Baroque, but also other epochs—in Melo e Castro's poetry, for example, Camões' influence is a permanent echo.

45 O.P.: “em todo o jogo / há uma peça que falta. / é ela que nos joga / e que decide.”

46 O.P.: “o sonho que sonhamos será sê-lo / no sono e despertados / que o selo do sono é ser.”

47 Original Spanish: “el ensueño de la razón.”

logical character of contemporary culture.”<sup>48</sup> These authors emerge as great connectors, machines to synthesize and transform, soaked in information and style.

Contemporary writers are submersed in the surrounding world’s intertextuality. Their information is excessive, redundant to the extreme, rendered obsolete. They are aware of that and illustrate that knowledge in their works. In a world worn out by dissemination, communication is increasingly more difficult and no longer concerns expression. Contemporary authors have painfully begun to learn this fact. They no longer express themselves: they merely express the act of expressing, and the act of communicating. As the resistance of materials is tested by poetic art, the resistance of human processing—the resistance of all values concerning humans—is also tested, and there are no values except in that sense:

I ought to make you text / if not that much I  
cannot... substance melts into nothing... here  
the vague in the voice of not hearing ...  
the refusal issued by the sound / of consumed  
speech... the easy speaking meaning... We  
know it’s not to be written... We counter walk  
the encounter... We write to not to write.<sup>49</sup>

## The Critical Experience of Poetry—2

One of the distinguishing features of modern criticism is to consider that true reading is critical reading. This almost undisputed fact presupposes two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, some distance regarding the text and its context; on the other hand, some appropriation of the text and its context, for there is no knowledge except at the expense of recognition and identification. That is why

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48 O.P.: “o carácter antológico da cultura contemporânea.”

49 O.P.: “devo fazer-te texto / se não tanto não posso... a substância desfaz-se em nada... aqui o vago na voz de não ouvir... a recusa emitida pelo som/ da fala consumida... o fácil faleante sentido... Sabemos que não se escreve... Caminhamos no contra o encontro... Escrevemos para não escrever.”  
In *Colóquio/Letras*, nr. 34

critical reading implies, on one side, a temporary or partial objectivity and, on the other side, some amount of inevitable complicity between the critic and the work, or the work's subject. And this is so because if criticism is an experience emerging from another experience, as Georges Poulet puts it, to criticize is also to read and to read is to lend one's consciousness to another subject regarding other objects.

Even though criticism may perhaps not be devoted to an exclusive period or area—and its strength as a new reading method may reside therein—modern criticism and the modern works it addresses are often construed as mutual; that is, they implicate each other. The modern writer, who wrote his/her work for instance since the 1960's (obviously excluding the Modernist movement) has widely exemplified this thesis: that his/her works are to be read according to the new theories of interpretation and literary exegesis; and they are its product and foundation. In that interdependence, and in that intimate relationship—which mutually constrains but also determines them—may be found a new conception of reading texts. There may be found the disruption of the domain Althusser referred to, the change of concern that will allow reading to raise new problems hidden under the flaws of discourse, under the silences scattered through the fields of accepted knowledge.

In Portugal, the so-called avant-garde literature, mostly produced during the 1960's and obviously concerning Experimental Poetry, decisively contributed to the evolution of criticism. This is the case, even though criticism has not duly noted it. Official criticism, with rare exception, has not yet wanted to use the available interpretative elements that would allow correct readings of the works produced within the avant-garde literature of the 1960's and afterwards.

The truth is that Experimental poets had a critical apparatus and theoretical information, in most cases much superior to that of the critics on duty. These critics generally practiced an impressionist or pseudo-neo-realistic criticism that did not allow its practitioners to break from their methods of interpreting towards critical apprehension, identification, and reading of texts. Criticism has since then remained closely attached to a strict set of academic principles (if there ever was such a thing), linked to a historically accepted system of thought and reading that did not allow—without immense risks including its own annihilation—a change of direction.

Yet, the avant-garde poets from the second half of the twentieth century in Portugal and in other countries have shaken the certainties of that thinking appa-

ratus upon which criticism was generally based. Above all, perhaps they defined what came to be known as knowledge as production.

In the 1960's, when Marshall McLuhan, then a popular author, foretold that artists should leave the ivory tower and head towards the control tower, he was referring to something Mallarmé had previously noted when he stated that “reading” as “poetry” was an “operation.” A similar principle was proposed by Abraham Moles, for example, in his conception of poetry as a process in which the creative work results from the importance of the rules to which the creator is bound.<sup>50</sup> That process shifts the role of criticism. Criticism, besides simply studying works, must henceforth study their execution mechanism. Abraham Moles states, for instance, that one of the main points of interest in that shift is in the “demystification” it achieves in artistic creation because the work of art does not appear ready and equipped as Athena from Jupiter's head: “the creator is no longer ‘surrounded’ by his works, he is merely in their origin.”<sup>51</sup>

But there is another distinguishing aspect of our avant-garde literature. In Portugal, as also noted by Melo e Castro, it was a way of proving not only the “resistance of words” but also, implicitly, “resistance through words.” The delimitation and control of discourse referred to by Foucault was an interdiction that weighed upon discourse: upon speech, upon writing, upon the expression of the Portuguese people's existence, an interdiction the 1960's authors knew since birth. Such interdiction meets its other face in the insubordinate resistance of the text and its originating act. The person who “irrupts through worn-out words” and revitalizes them through criticism, through the destruction of their use, rejects in order to recreate. He/she “opened the rupture irrupts and / [...] / the whole mass of my final country. / [...] /Oh! versus varied in me confining/”<sup>52</sup> And afterwards:

I ought to make you text

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50 Assuming that creation is a playful act relying upon gratuitousness, which the creator consciously and deliberately accepts.

51 O.P.: “o criador já não está ‘rodeado’ pelas suas obras, está apenas na sua origem.”

52 O.P.: “/aberta a ruptura irrompe/ [...] / em peso o meu país final/ [...] /Oh! versus vário em mim se confinando.”

if not that much I cannot<sup>53</sup>

The poet attacks through writing that “inaugural senile somnolence.”<sup>54</sup> He knows the “cost of perceiving the toughness of things”<sup>55</sup> that are life. He knows this of life here, at this point in which we must hold it and build it, in which a leap backward is converted into a leap forward, unveiling history as a “cyclic mistake” in the words of Umberto Eco.

This rupture is assumed by avant-garde poets when they refuse tradition as institutional power. By assimilating the cultural past as a reformulation of the concept of history, tradition is no longer a foundation for eternity, and it becomes that absent structure that voraciously revitalizes all forms, constantly awarding and depriving them of meaning.

A new Portuguese poet has to face the depletion of the meaning of forms and rediscover the codes to subsequently abandon them, forget them. Or the poet could use them to saturate the vast operation of style, sophisticated decoration, and violent criticism of our age of recovery and repudiation in which the inevitability of all processes overrules all communication forms.

From *Queda Livre* to *Resistência das Palavras*, the trajectory of Melo e Castro’s work emerges as the perilous leap a man accomplishes when he is launched into the space of the text, in which he resists and must resist.

The poet is alone, but he knows there “is a dark void in memory.”

### The Critical Experience of Poetry—3

The issues concerning the method proposed to interpret the repression of artistic avant-garde don’t affect the possibility of a normative observation: if it is in fact true, as advocated herein, that inside each social framework, characterized by transforming the aesthetic object into commodity, the hidden truth of art lies exclusively in the avant-garde, it’s also true that given that transformation into commodity, any attempt to fight against not just a particular movement but the very artistic avant-garde, generally by cultural-political power, means, in fact, at the limit, not the mere denial of the avant-garde but purely

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53 O.P.: “Devo fazer-te texto se não tanto não posso.”

54 O.P.: “senil somisolência inaugural.”

55 O.P.: “a custo se apercebe a dureza das coisas.”

and simply the denial of each and every authentic artistic operation in general. [...] What the avant-garde expresses is therefore in a privileged manner a general aesthetic truth. It's not even, let's say, a specific sociological interpretation linked to a given method and relative to a particular perspective; it's rather the fact that the avant-garde has been constituted, in its foundations, in the form of struggle and that such struggle, by its very generation in the aesthetic field, immediately challenges the whole structure of social relations.<sup>56</sup> (Sanguinetti)

To these not very recent considerations on the avant-garde by Edoardo Sanguinetti, I would like to add more recent ones, by Jacinto do Prado Coelho, retrieved from the recent publication *Originalidade da Literatura Portuguesa* from the chapter entitled “The Intellectuals—Are They Culpable or Are They Victims?”<sup>57</sup> He writes “Those outstanding persons who are set to reform Portuguese mentality and aesthetic feeling often feel the bitter taste of failure”<sup>58</sup>; and continues, in the chapter “The Moderation of Good Sense”<sup>59</sup>:

If our character is “temperate,” as argued by Oliveira Martins, maybe we could add to emotional discretion the moderation of good sense. It is said that the Portuguese are romantic, the Portuguese are defined by emotiveness, and by impulsivity. But are those the attributes that distinguish them from other southern peoples? Or, rather, do they remain halfway, correcting emotiveness with caution and enthusiasm for novelty with clinging to tradition? To repeat Gilberto Freyre's formula, a mix of “adventure and routine?” At least in the cultural sphere, were we not so often slow and prudent in how we followed the major movements for renewal?<sup>60</sup>

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56 See 7 in appendix for Portuguese translation of the original Italian.

57 O.P.: “Os intelectuais—Culpados ou vítimas?”

58 O.P.: “Esse escol que se propõe reformar a mentalidade e o sentir estético dos Portugueses experimenta muitas vezes o travo do malogro.”

59 O.P.: “A moderação do bom senso.”

60 O.P.: “se é ‘temperado’ o nosso carácter, como pretendia Oliveira Martins, talvez pudéssemos associar à discrição afectiva a moderação do bom senso. Diz-se que o Português é um romântico, define-se o Português pela emotividade, pela impulsividade. Mas serão tais atributos que o distinguem de outros povos meridionais? Ou para ficar antes num meio-termo, corrigindo a emotividade pela cautela e o entusiasmo da novidade pelo apego à tradição? Um misto de ‘aventura e rotina’, para repetir a fórmula de Gilberto Freyre? Pelo menos na esfera da cultura, não fomos tantas vezes vagarosos e prudentes no modo como seguimos os grandes movimentos de renovação?”

These quotations may actually constitute an enlightening background, or rather correspond to the background-environment against which the action of the artistic avant-garde has developed among us. Historical, socioeconomic, and psychological conditions, all intimately interwoven, constitute the spindle sustaining the sticky web of the status quo, the social environment, the cultural situation in our country, the people's needs, and our national idiosyncrasy, etc. Each of these expressions or concepts are an essential part of the whole, for which we are all responsible as authors (often quite helplessly). Some of us feel the sting of a confused or clear awareness of this responsibility, which also explains the feeling of guilt and inferiority that belittles, embarrasses, depresses, and finally transforms us into its worthy representatives.

These grave statements have been made by all who at any time have dwelled on the issues regarding national culture, and they unfortunately constitute to this day a constant in our criticism, literary or any other. Whenever there is a necessity to analyze, this issue inevitably arises. For example, any significant work (a text) with an acutely presented context in which connections between literature and society are made addresses the issue of the artistic avant-garde, which is to say the issue of renewal through struggle.

In fact, the artistic avant-garde, of which the literary avant-garde is a branch, takes that responsibility as its main purpose. This is why its followers become more than simply islands—"essas ilhas que os autores portugueses são" as put by Prado Coelho—becoming isolated, real outsiders by force of their ideas and their work. Both avant-gardes attempt to assault (by refutation) the institutionalized forms (at least in some sectors), which are a means of communication and therefore carriers of history and transformation.

In Portugal, the subject of avant-garde movements since the beginning of the twentieth century is posed in similar ways to that in other countries in which those movements originated. But the difficulty of implantation it found among us is, above all, justified by the lack of information, not from the public but from cultural information disseminators. These people generally may not be called literary critics because they are not the least prepared, accredited, apt, and gifted, as may be verified from the observation of the literary press in the last decades.

There is an important difference between the desired, voluntary marginalization of the avant-garde author and the ostracism imposed upon him by a cultural milieu of ignorance, laziness, and rejection of the effort implied in any attempt at

renewal. It is one thing to refuse on well-grounded opposition; another is to refuse for ignorance, for the accommodating reason that what is known is safer—the routine, the certified past, and the establishment by (someone else's) previous effort.

If Portuguese temperament might be defined as temperate, maybe it should be added that, at least culturally, two other factors intervene to define (and confine) us: fear and laziness. Fear to dare: the avant-garde is daring, the courage to speak out and challenge; and fear of effort: the avant-garde is struggle, persevering through adversity. Through fear (including the renowned, paralyzing fear of ridicule attributed to the Portuguese), we reach situations of absolute impotence and absolute intolerance. Inquisitorial and plotting, our literary criticism in the press was too often (almost always) an arena for defamation, slander and mockery—typical weapons of the invective pasquinade style from which it has gradually been liberated at great difficulty.

This whole preamble intends to frame the new work recently published by Alberto Pimenta (*Ascensão de Dez Gostos à Boca*),<sup>61</sup> an avant-garde poet, therefore an outsider in Portuguese culture. As an outsider, he wasn't even connected to the Experimental Poetry group who among us has faced (and defied) the public and critic alike. In fact, Alberto Pimenta, although included by merit in the selection of the most prominent avant-garde Portuguese poets, has remained an independent, if such is possible regarding Portuguese Experimentalism.

Yet, the marginalization affecting him (certainly illustrated by the fact that all his books to this date are author's editions) is not exclusively his, nor is it due to his independence regarding national or international groups. His marginalization is a fact deriving naturally from his aesthetic options, and on which grounds the quotations at the beginning of the present reading note referred, namely: that avant-garde literature is not easily commodified; that it opposes the stratified structures of power; that intellectuals, guilty or victims, are so mostly because they belong to that whole of moderation and good sense that tempers our character and causes only rare (very rare) lunatics to associate the dashing avant-garde work to the audacity of an Avant-Garde action.

There is no doubt that, despite all, its easier to make an avant-garde work by following others' works already performed than to initiate or actively be part

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61 Lisbon, author's edition, 1977.

of an Avant-Garde action. The latter has to excel and, at the same time, extend what is advocated and exercised in the works.

*Ascensão de Dez Gostos à Boca*, now published, is a fine piece one might call anthological of the tendencies of the Portuguese avant-garde from the 1960's and 1970's, above all by its rehabilitation of the Baroque and of its inclination towards writing, towards the writing game.

Alberto Pimenta is a significant poet for many reasons, as already noted in most of the introductory observations, but above all for the variety and violence of the themes he develops. A scornful and bitter criticism, a fantasy associated with a surprising lyricism (however hidden it may seem), a remarkable erudition, a secure technique, and a truculent and immense verve, are some of the aspects to consider in his works and in this one in particular.

Opening the book we can read on the back cover (in all capitals):

DON'T YOU WANT TO COME WITH ME IN ORDER TO PROBE, ENTER, AND PROBE, PROBE SMELL, PROBE TO LEAN YOUR EAR AND TONGUE, TO ALL THESE THINGS? HOW SHALL I SAY, ENTRANCES OR EXITS? NO? ARE YOU NOT INTERESTED? DO YOU FIND IT BETTER TO USE YOUR TONGUE DIFFERENTLY? YES, SO I FIGURED.<sup>62</sup>

A first provocation may be found in the first taste arising to the poet's mouth. Afterwards, in each page the variety of tastes rising to our tongue (or through our tongue) is an anthology of satire and criticism, the vision of a man who knows the world and hence knows what it tastes like (that taste of failure and that taste of revolt?).

In works like *Os Entes e os Contraentes*, we may find examples of truly magnificent criticism, as in the case of "Simetria", "our principles are: prudence / and boldness, a bold prudence, / a prudent boldness, a prudence / that boldly is so, and also a / boldness with the prudence to / not to be so"<sup>63</sup>; and in the case of "sugestão" in the

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62 O.P.: "NÃO QUERES VIR COMIGO A FIM DE SONDAR ENTRAR E SONDAR SONDAR CHEIRAR SONDAR ENCOSTAR O OUVIDO E A LÍNGUA A TODAS ESTAS COISAS COMO DIREI ENTRADAS OU SAÍDAS? NÃO? NÃO TE INTERESSA? ACHAS MELHOR UTILIZAR A TUA LÍNGUA DOUTRA MANEIRA? SIM EU JÁ CALCULAVA."

63 O.P.: "os nossos princípios são: prudência / e ousadia, uma prudência ousada,/uma ousadia prudente, uma prudência / que ousa sê-lo, a par de uma/ousadia que tem a prudência de / não sê-lo."

present texts: “Have you ever tried doing the good/ by practicing the bad?”<sup>64</sup> and “kill them/ beat them to death.”<sup>65</sup> We may also find it in the three phases/versions depicting the degree of bitterness and revolt in this poet’s satiric and critical texts, which overlap in the almost general climate of deep revolt and subversion that dominates what might seem to the unadvised a merely funny or even decadent work.

Finally, the lyricism, that undeniable source, emerges—and it is an affirmation:

I always end up returning inside me  
only place  
where all that happened is preserved<sup>66</sup>

Even the taste of love (a whole chapter from the book):

Reality is now absence.  
[...]  
My head in the place where the body no longer is  
[...]  
Text: this body: you: in this text: and forever in it.<sup>67</sup>

These are the main coordinates of the work, after all, the constants of all poetry.

But expressions such as “that reality [which] now is the absence; my head in the place where the body no longer is: text: this body: you: in this text: and forever in it”<sup>68</sup> may also be interpreted as referring to another important aspect

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64 O.P.: “já tentaste praticar o bem / fazendo mal?”

65 O.P.: “matá-los / matá-los à pancada.”

66 O.P.: “acabo por voltar sempre dentro de mim  
único lugar  
onde se conserva tudo o que aconteceu.”

67 O.P.: “a realidade agora é a ausência.  
[...]  
minha cabeça no lugar onde já não está o corpo  
[...]  
texto: este corpo: tu: neste texto: e para sempre nele.”

68 O.P.: “essa realidade [que] agora é a ausência; minha cabeça no lugar onde já não está o corpo: texto: este corpo: tu: neste texto: e para sempre nele.”

of Portuguese from Alberto Pimenta's generation, a generation of emigrants and exiled, to whom national language (or culture) may have been a sort of core of resistance, in the physical and political sense of the term.

Regarding this subject, for example, E. M. de Melo e Castro in his work *Dialéctica das Vanguardas* states that “the only way to resist is to recreate what is intrinsic to us.”<sup>69</sup> This also explains the reason why Portuguese resistance poetry from the 1960's and 1970's “is and remains Baroque and Experimental,”<sup>70</sup> because “Baroque and Experimentalism are the creative models of our specific poetic creation.”<sup>71</sup> The “explosion of linguistic materialism and Experimentalism”<sup>72</sup>—that Experimental-Baroque eruption from the 1960's—“should be understood considering what it represented for the Portuguese as dynamic creative manifestation of a world (in this case, a country) undergoing transformation.”<sup>73</sup>

The discussion of the Baroque as a dominant tendency in Portuguese poetry is an issue constantly stressed by Experimental poets, who repeatedly (but not exclusively) pose the question, especially in response to a certain Crocean criticism that deems it done with labeling it with an anathema. This anathema was revived along with the outburst of Experimentalism, as may be verified in many of the studies on Portuguese poetry from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Portuguese Experimental Poetry (and Brazilian, mostly from Minas Gerais, and headed by Affonso Ávila) again poses the issue of the Baroque in an extremely acute manner, supported by the experience of outstanding international critics who attempted to correct a prejudice formed in some sectors regarding the validity, actual consistency, and, most importantly, markedly Iberian nature of the Baroque as expression of a cultural, idiosyncratic and even ecological reality. But current criticism is at a moment of rest—as may be verified in the work of the Baroque researchers such as Helmut Hatzfeld—after many years of debates concerning that issue.

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69 O.P.: “a única maneira de resistir é recriar aquilo que nos é intrínseco.”

70 O.P.: “é, e continua a ser, barroca e experimental.”

71 O.P.: “o barroco e o experimental são os modelos criativos da nossa específica criação poética.”

72 O.P.: “explosão do materialismo linguístico e do experimentalismo.”

73 O.P.: “deve ser entendido pelo que representou para nós de manifestação criativa dinâmica de um mundo (neste caso país) em transformação.”

For the Portuguese, the rediscovery of the Baroque in our poetry and mostly the rediscovery of the Baroque in our idiosyncrasy is apparent, for example, in double contradictions: exuberance and restriction, luxury and indigence, lyricism and pornography, torrential verbosity and careful choice approaching preciousness, lots of satire and few ironies, etc. The rediscovery of the Baroque as our own essential characteristic was for Experimental poets a support. Not for a senile revivalism but rather for a path to extend discovery, because research—perhaps a devotion to poetic language, purified or even complicated by technical knowledge from our own time—has allowed Portuguese Experimental poets to not to fetch elements from the past to justify themselves in the present, as already pointed out, but to follow in the present a work begun in the past and that should be continued in the future.

Besides their specifically contemporary contribution, what Experimental poets did was plainly establish their place in the context of cultural continuity. Unlike what has often been said by poorly informed critics, Portuguese Experimental poets, despite being part of international currents—but which Portuguese literary currents are solely national?—are not in fact detached from Portuguese culture. On the contrary, they are perfectly incorporated in a sort of expression of Portuguese culture that is precisely, characteristically ours: the one that illustrates our dispersion throughout the world or, in other words, the desired universalizing of our vision of the world.

Portuguese Experimental poetry follows in this path that includes the exceptional radiance of Alberto Pimenta.