

Portuguese Modernism Unbounded: a Poetics for the "Border Identity"

Maria José Canelo

I. Strongly attached to the idea of space and territory, the notion of 'border' appears as one of the basic denominators in the negotiations of meaning attending the construction of a national identity. In a nation undergoing several processes of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, as the Portuguese, from the 'Discoveries' to the gradual loss of the empire, to the admission in the EC or the recent creation of the CPLP,¹ the malleability of the 'Portuguese identity' has, if nothing else, confirmed at least how much the nation is indeed an imagined community (Anderson). The invented communities of nations are delimited also by imagined lines, in Portuguese called "fronteiras," a term that comprises both the English 'border' and 'frontier.' Although these lines are usually used to map the nation, recent theories in social studies have been pointing toward larger definitions than that of the thin fixed line: instead of that simple separator between territories, the border has come to be described as an inhabitable *territory* itself, a place of sharing and exchange and in which cultural life is particularly simmering.

In recent studies, the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has defended the application of the concept of border to Portuguese identity, paving the way for new readings and articulations of identities in the context of Portuguese cultural studies ("Modernidade, Identidade e a Cultura de Fronteira"). Following the theory of the "semiperiphery" first proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein to analyze nations that occupy an intermediate position between central and peripheral nations in the world system (*The Politics of the World Economy* 7), Boaventura de Sousa Santos has been developing it by means of its application to the Portuguese case.² It is as part of the semiperipheral condition of Portugal that Santos suggests an understanding of the Portuguese identity as "uma identidade de fronteira." Deprived of a content or a root, in view of its specific position between the center and the periphery, he

argues that the border is the form and condition of Portuguese identity (31). Still, according to Santos, that experience of hybridity and coexistence has a clear representation in the period of the first modernism, as it informs the aesthetics of Fernando Pessoa and Almada Negreiros (34).³ Working as a scaffolding for these poets' cosmopolitan defense of the erasure of national borders, this first attempt to conceptualize the border identity must however be understood in its own context, just like the uses to which Pessoa and Almada put it.

Pessoa and Almada indeed saw Portuguese cultural life - or cultural territory - as a blank space awaiting to be filled in and accordingly represented Portuguese identity as an ever open identity, a natural capacity to be everything and everyone. "Portugueseness" was a position, rather than a root, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos also describes it and as Pessoa/Álvaro de Campos himself declares: "[Eu] acho que não faz mal não ligar à pátria / Porque não tenho raiz" (*Poesias de Álvaro de Campos*, 227). In a development of that thesis, and admitting how much Pessoa's aesthetics announced the multi-identity debates we are nowadays so familiar with, M. Irene Ramalho S. Santos has called Pessoa the inventor of the semiperiphery ("A poesia e o sistema mundial" 96-7).

Bearing in mind those previous analyses and combining postmodern and post-colonial theories, the present study attempts to locate the modernist poetic proposal of the border identity within the post-colonial debate, taking as a standpoint that, although Portugal was itself a colonial power and never a colony in the technical sense, it experienced a long period of economic subjection to Great Britain which in fact disempowered Portuguese rule over the colonies and in many ways followed patterns we would nowadays consider neo-imperialist. Particularly after the British "Ultimatum" of 1890 had made public the Portuguese effective political powerlessness in the international scene, popular anti-British reaction confirmed that people knew that British political and economic influence was too strong and particularly contradictory over a nation that was used to seeing itself as a center.

It is the interstitial position derived from that situation that I try to follow here, in particular how some intellectual circles reacted to it, and thenceforth relate border thinking and constructions of the nation. I assume that it is in Pessoa's and Almada's pedagogical and performative cultural enterprises that one finds evidence of a divided positionality within Western culture, which gives voice to an identity split between an Atlantic/American margin - or Other - and a European center, or Self. Namely Pessoa's aesthetics of disinte-

gration opened up alternative spaces, whereas Almada (re)affirmed the Self, thus stating a position of in-betweenness which the former Portuguese history had left as a legacy. Throughout the discussion it will be very difficult to avoid touching the obvious contradictions resulting from the fact that the modernist border identity, while refusing border thinking, was based, on the one hand, on a deconstruction of national borders, but, on the other, on the pretext of national superiority. The ambivalence of sharing traits of both the center and the periphery allows for a reading of Portuguese modernism as a subaltern response which resorts to discursive positions and strategies we identify as post-colonial. Indeed, just like in many nationalist projects, although modernism was primarily led by a counterhegemonic intent against foreign influence, it ended up being caught in the same traps of homogenization and inequality it resented. In Pessoa's and Almada's projects, national emancipation ultimately worked toward internal homogenization and external imperialism.

II. Boaventura de Sousa Santos ascribes the development, in the Portuguese case, of the border identity to a particular historical progression: he points out that even in the heyday of the empire Portugal had acted as a driving-belt between its colonies and the developed countries of northern Europe, in particular its oldest ally, Great Britain. Portugal supplied Britain with the raw materials it went to fetch in the faraway territories, instead of investing in the development of a processing industry in Portugal itself, so that ultimately it would have to resort to Britain again for the importation of industrial goods. This position conveyed two opposite images of the nation abroad: one of authority and one of subjection; for the colonies, it was the center, for Britain it was the periphery; for the colonies, it was the European, for Britain, it was the most backward people in Europe, its primitive savage. To understand itself, Portugal was therefore forced to look at itself in a double mirror: that of *Prospero* and that of *Caliban*, in none of them getting a full image but rather “tendo a consciência de que o seu rosto verdadeiro estava algures entre eles” (“Modernidade, Identidade” 32-33). For a better understanding of this ambivalent positioning, and considering also that the modernist project comes largely as a response to that particular condition, I will try first to provide a broader, though brief, historical contextualization, and then I will focus on two instances of an atypical relationship with the center and the periphery: Britain and Brazil.

After the first strong blow to the empire with the loss of Brazil (in part already facilitated by troubles in the metropolis - the liberal revolution of 1822), it was the British 'Ultimatum' of 1890 that indeed left no doubt about the decaying power and prestige of Portugal in the arena of international politics. The Ultimatum put a definite end to Portuguese territorial ambitions in Africa, forbidding the expansion of Portuguese colonial rule over the territories between Angola and Mozambique. The British decision resulted in a national humiliation that triggered a wave of nationalist feelings throughout the country and would reemerge in the period around the First World War (into which Portugal was dragged also due to the alliance with Britain). The years following the British Ultimatum saw a rise in internal political upheaval, as the loss of centrality contributed to a growing dissatisfaction with monarchical rule. In 1891, there was a republican revolt in Oporto, followed by the bankruptcy of the State in the following year, the brief dictatorship of João Franco, already after the turn of the century, and, finally, the regicide of D. Carlos I in 1908. Although the republic was finally established in 1910, it revealed its inability to guarantee domestic order as the monarchy had done. Political and social unrest continued throughout the 1910's and the 1920's, and there were several attempts to establish an authoritarian regime. In 1918, Sidónio Pais emerged briefly as a powerful figure who seemed to ensure law and order and, although a dictator, received much popular support, including Fernando Pessoa's. Sidónio Pais was assassinated shortly thereafter, but the vision of a strong State for some people would come true in the thirties, with the beginning of the forty-year authoritarian regime of António Oliveira Salazar. All this turmoil in political life and civil society reflected a general loss of direction and meaning which the modernists tried to solve through a cultural regeneration. Modernist discourse renovated the national identity and the mission of Portugal in the world in order to adapt the nation to a changing world order in which it could not anymore have the central role it had had in the past.

As already mentioned, political instability in the country could not be contained after the public humiliation of the British Ultimatum. The document forced the Portuguese to face the evidence of national subjection to Great Britain. Indeed, the roots of economic dependence can be traced as far back as 1703, with the signature of the Treaty of Methuen. A treaty of exclusivity in foreign trade, it enforced the importation of textiles from Britain in return for the British importation of Portuguese wine. However, it turned

out that by that time the British were already in control of the wine market in Portugal, too, and the balance of trade grew gradually to the disadvantage of Portugal. In order to pay its debts to Britain, Portugal relied heavily on colonial goods, in particular on the gold coming from Minas Gerais in Brazil. Some historians indeed argue that the metropolis soon came to be fully dependent on its Brazilian colony.⁴ A symbolic instance of this unexpected relation was the move of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil and the establishment of the whole body of courtiers in Rio de Janeiro by the time of the French invasions in Portugal. Fleeing from the French, D. João VI ended up inverting the identities of center and periphery, as for some years he ruled Portugal from Brazil. All this accounts for the lack of a firm politics of centrality in Portuguese imperialism which became clear not only for the people at home, but also in the eyes of foreigners. The case of Britain is particularly interesting. The disseminated image of the Portuguese in Britain shared the same negative attributes as the Blacks and the Jews. The Portuguese, like other Mediterranean darker-skinned groups, were ascribed a rampant sexuality, laziness and cunning, as George Mosse describes in his study on sexuality in Europe (*Nationalism and Sexuality* 89). The Portuguese intellectuals, on the other hand, did not ignore this subaltern representation of the national identity in European centers. Giving way to his resentful awareness of the peripherization of Portugal, Almada Negreiros addresses the question directly in his "Manifesto Anti-Dantas," urging the Portuguese to rediscover their cultural life, or else the country would remain as "[a] África reclusa dos Europeus," "[o] paiz mais atrazado da Europa e de todo o mundo! O paiz mais selvagem de todas as Áfricas!" (*Textos de Intervenção* 23).

Yet, the mechanics of Portuguese modernism would not engage in a full rejection of peripherization; on the contrary, it came to be assessed as an integral component of a renewed national identity which tried hard to distinguish itself from other European identities. This strategy should not be disconnected from the beginning of World War I, which tranverses modernism in Portugal (*Orpheu*, the literary magazine which was the first herald of that cultural revolution, appeared in 1915). Evincing the decadence of the old European centers, the war thus influenced indirectly the reconstruction of the Portuguese identity. As the Portuguese modernists, such as Pessoa and Almada, assumed peripheral traits as constituent of the Portuguese nationality, they tried to reassess the negativity associated with subalternity. It is exactly this task that positions modernist discourse in a range of strategies usually

identified as post-colonial in the sense of recovery of agency by means of reassessing the negative traits of subalternity.

In his theories of the border identity, Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls attention precisely to this concomitant assumption of characteristics of both the center and the periphery ("11/1992. Onze Teses" 100). He defines the Portuguese society as one of intermediate development whose identity manifests what Santos calls "uma perícia de extraterritorialidade," by which he means a superior capacity to move amidst identity references, both native and other ("Modernidade, Identidade" 35). That skill ultimately develops into a higher capacity for identification with other identities rather than creating a strong identity nucleus of its own. This nomadic location has led Portugal to assume "uma função de intermediação no sistema mundial, servindo simultaneamente de ponte e de tampão entre os países centrais e os países periféricos," and therefore to combine representations of both power and subjection ("11/1992" 104). Thus an agent of two identities, it becomes a border territory, which is neither one nor the other, but a part of both, a moving space Fernando Pessoa represented very effectively in the image of the quay, in Álvaro de Campos's "Ode Marítima": that border place with foreign ships always arriving and "Nation-Ships" always departing.

III. Fernando Pessoa was the most outstanding representative of that instability of identity references Sousa Santos ascribes to the border identity. Given his own experience of exile, having lived part of his childhood and adolescence in South Africa, Pessoa's look over the Portuguese reality is a divided look one can conceive of as the border itself - because he is as much Portuguese as he is foreigner. To a large extent, he is the Other who comes back and, confronting the now unfamiliar Portuguese society, perceives what is foreign in it. Pessoa's perception of Portugal in 1908 is that of an uncharacterized nation, stale and abiding to foreign standards. It is accordingly in order to 'renationalize' the nation, to bring back what he considers to be the genuine characteristics of the Portuguese, that he works out a full project to renovate the Portuguese culture.

Pessoa's perception of the condition of the Portuguese nation he encounters when he returns from South Africa is that of a void, a blank space ready to be (re)filled in once the scattered references are given a direction. This idea coincides with Santos's definition of the border territory as one that is conceived on *this* side of the line, thus considering the emptiness within and not

beyond the line (“Modernidade, Identidade” 33). Almada named this stage ‘denationalization’ (“Ultimatum às Gerações,” *Textos de Intervenção* 37), and the second part of Pessoa/Álvaro de Campos’s “Ultimatum” provides the (pedagogical) prescription against what he defines as the “desadaptação da sensibilidade ao meio.” According to Almada and Pessoa, this situation was to blame on the inadequacy of the foreign political and cultural systems applied to Portuguese reality, which had created an artificial social model unable to stimulate Portuguese creativity. Pessoa/Campos’s directions aim at the reconstruction of that sensitivity, taking as a fundamental standpoint that anything that was fixed was to be rejected. Pessoa/Campos is thus acknowledging that the hallmark of authenticity of Portuguese identity is to be movement, instead of rootedness.

The consented imposition of foreign models, however, had had a positive reverse: they believed the national void had freed the nation from all contingents of nationality. It was naked as in the beginning and thus all open for the rebirth and remoulding of its sensitivity and imagination (Pessoa, *Revista Portuguesa* 19). The most urgent necessity at this point was a leading intellectual elite able to carry out such reform, to construct and disseminate a new understanding of the Portuguese identity aimed at overthrowing any territorial borders. The construction of this elite was complementary to the consolidation of an emerging cultural authority opposed to the former high culture which was considered a slave of foreign taste and models.

“Sensationism” is the first stage in that project. It consists of the synthetization in artistic terms of what he understood to be the Portuguese major contribution to modernity: the ideal synthesis of locality and universality as it resulted from a Portuguese identity with universal appeal. As Pessoa/Álvaro de Campos would state in the “Ultimatum,” the Portuguese identity ought to attain the stage of “Somma-Synthese,” that is, it had to form itself as an exercise of inclusion and harmonization of opposite references - or differences: “a somma-syntese-interior do maior número d[as] opiniões verdadeiras que se contradizem umas às outras” (“Ultimatum” 38, 33). Sensationism appears as the formula for that national predisposition, that tendency to assimilate and combine disparate identity references, or, still in Pessoa’s words, “to be everything in every manner” (“ser-tudo-de-todas-as-maneyras”). Accordingly, to be Portuguese meant to have an ‘open nationality’, as it were; and it meant to contain all nationalities in one (-self): “Sentir tudo de todas as maneiras, / Viver de todos os lados, / Ser a mesma coisa de todos os modos possíveis ao

mesmo tempo, / Realizar em si toda a humanidade de todos os momentos” (*Poesias* 220-1).

Pessoa’s and Almada’s conception of the hybrid nature of Portuguese identity is coincidental: while Almada defined Portugal as “uma resultante de todas as raças do mundo” (“Ultimatum às Gerações” 37), Pessoa individualized the skill of multiple identification when making it depend upon the unique experience of the Discoveries: “[o]s sensacionistas portugueses são originais e interessantes porque, sendo estritamente portugueses, são cosmopolitas e universais. O temperamento português é universal; esta, a sua magnífica superioridade. O acto verdadeiramente grande da História portuguesa - esse longo período das Descobertas - é o grande acto cosmopolita da História” (*Páginas Íntimas* 151). In his mind, the modernist aesthetics of sensationism provided the best representation of that inborn capacity, which, although Pessoa puts it positively, may also be ultimately understood as a power to absorb and erase the Other into a sensation of oneself, or to identify with the Other to the point of turning the Other into Self - or the Self into the Other.

IV. The modernist border identity Pessoa and Almada’s intellectual elite was eager to disseminate allows the application of the border concept in yet another sense - that of the margin. To start with, the “little” magazines which were the heralds of this intellectual community were marginal, as the public’s negative reception left clear; when, in 1915, the first number of *Orpheu* was published, it was installing a minority discourse. Therefore, *Orpheu* appears clearly as the voice of a margin unrepresented in Portuguese cultural life, a margin which promised to fill in the national void with cosmopolitan originality. Two years later, *Portugal Futurista*, a literary magazine largely influenced by Almada Negreiros and the inheritor of ORPHEU’S project, was to carry on that task. The relationship between the magazines deserves mention because they indicate crucial moments in the reconstruction of cultural life and identity. In this point, Fernando Pessoa/Álvaro de Campos’s “Ultimatum” and Almada Negreiros’s corresponding “Ultimatum às Gerações Portuguesas do Século XX” are very important texts for a variety of reasons. While looking for alternative references to redefine Portuguese cultural authority, they reveal its two main sources of reference: the Old and the New Worlds (the center and the periphery), and, simultaneously, they set forth the directions left for a renewed version of the “national mission,” or the Portuguese empire.

V. The assumed superior capacity of the Portuguese to adapt easily to any form of identity while praising that very process of creative assimilation, as Pessoa defended, is very revealing about the possibilities of resistance and agency that Pessoa sensed in the concept of border identity. That is, what could be kept from the remains of the center and what could be gained as new and original from the assumed (Other) location in the periphery. When one looks into Pessoa's and Almada's poetics together what stands out indeed is the complementarity of their projects; how Pessoa basically strengthened the idea of the nation, while leaving all ways open, and how Almada projected it abroad by placing it back within the acknowledged center of authority, Europe. So I will focus mainly on Pessoa's construction of the Portuguese as Other by means of his project of a 'community of the Atlantic', and on Almada's recovery of the Self in his revival of the European roots, even if admitting that these are just main trends which very often intermingle within the same project.

Considering how modernism grew out of a rising nationalist atmosphere and that to a great extent it met a need to redefine national identity in terms of difference (in spite of its internationalist claims), Pessoa's fascination with the possibility of being the Other should come as no surprise. Yet, what makes it different is that this identity coexists with that of the Self. Indeed, despite the fact that the past and the specificity of the Portuguese colonial experience had left deep references of alterity, the trouble with the Portuguese was that, on the other hand, they wanted to go on sharing in the prestige and power of old Europe, which, even if decadent, was still the only acknowledged center of authority. However, it also became evident that only a hint of difference and distancing from European decadence (the "Old" World) could renew the national power and assert its own place in the new emerging world order. It is possible to argue that in Pessoa's spiritualist project of the Fifth Empire, as well as in the whole modernist effort to renovate the language, what is at stake is a construction of national difference which owes a lot to a reinvention of the origin, the "making new" of the overused past. Thus the *movement* between Self and Other - and thus also the appropriation and reevaluation of the negative image Europe projected on the Portuguese empire in order to present an independent identity.

In Pessoa's project, the climax of that affirmation would be an era of plain 'Portuguese universalism', as it were, which depended largely on a reappraisal of the Discoveries and the Empire, as well as on a renewal of international

loyalties. Each of these repositionings would account for a strengthening of the Portuguese border identity. On the one hand, the reinvention of the concept of empire, while stressing the need to invent new models, new general ideas instead of material order stressed the essentially spiritual essence of the Portuguese identity. On the other hand, Pessoa/Bernardo Soares's declaration that his homeland was not a territory but a language (the Portuguese language, obviously), not only reinforced the spiritual dimension of the project, but asserted a fundamental relocation: that of proximity to the Portuguese-speaking territories. Finally, Pessoa's admitted admiration for Whitman's unbounded creativity confirms the choice of Atlantic projection, and it confirms the definition of the Portuguese as Other. The issue of Pessoa's "Atlanticism" has been the object of deeper research by M. Irene Ramalho S. Santos,⁵ but for now I will focus on Whitman's influence over Pessoa, to which Álvaro de Campos's acknowledged discipleship appears as the highest tribute. Pessoa's admiration for Whitman's rhetorical capacity to suggest expansiveness would ultimately allow for the performativity of the much theorized sensationism and the art of the "Syntese-Somma": according to M. Irene Ramalho S. Santos, Whitman was the direct inspiration for the maximum liberation in Pessoa's poetics, that of the Self and of creativity that came to be the heteronymic process ("From Whitman to Pessoa" 231).

That capacity to liberate creativity is no doubt part of the wider process for shedding the Portuguese identity, the so-called era of the 'Fifth Empire', portrayed by the poet as the substitute for the materialist empires often called into question by World War I and whose authority Pessoa/Campos's "Ultimatum" openly challenges. Furthermore, Pessoa's discovery of identity references in the New World was triggered by a series of values attached to America as a New World: expansion, possibility and fulfillment, ideas which also meet in the project of the Fifth Empire. In the movement towards America, Brazil stands out as a fundamental piece, bearing in mind that language was now the measure of the empire, the maximum instrument for the dissemination of Portuguese identity. It can therefore be inferred that, at this stage, Pessoa negotiates the admission of Portugal in the promise of renewal held by the New World. Yet, this movement was double, considering that the promise projected on America was no more than a European promise, a European desire, itself protected by very specific ethnic, racial, class and gender borders. Pessoa's movement towards the Other still holds fast to the old western frame - or the old western Self. What comes to dis-

tinguish the Portuguese modernists' positioning in that retrieval, however, is the process by which Portugal would *take the place* of the old center, in the manner Derrida ascribes to the "supplement" and to which I will come back.

Still, the insertion of Portugal within the aforementioned western frame is not unproblematic. Indeed, Europe fits into Pessoa's project as a *target* to be won, an identity to be accumulated, while the means to win it over is the shedding of the Fifth Empire. In other words, Pessoa meant to turn Europe into a kind of 'universal Portugueseness', contradictory as it may seem, as he himself propheticizes: "a alma recém-nada da futura civilização europeia é que essa civilização europeia será uma civilização lusitana" (*A Nova Poesia Portuguesa* 103). The process Pessoa conceives in order to overcome the stage of European domination is very telling not only of his underlying intentions for national supremacy but also of the subaltern position he deliberately takes while attempting to invert the established conception of order and authority. Subalternity was thus assumed as a stage, a strategy on the route to the time of Portuguese influence over the world. For the moment, Portuguese culture had to swallow up Europe; that is, it had to assimilate it in order to be able to proceed, on a second stage, to its recreation in its own terms, in a gesture that finds much in common with the Brazilian cultural movement of the "Antropofagia."⁶ The process is clearly similar: in a letter written to an English editor, in a time when Pessoa still believed that his poetic theory stood a chance to be published in Britain, Pessoa/Campos wrote that the proof of the uniqueness of Portuguese artistic sensitivity was the way it actualized the foreigner into the national; the poet acknowledges "um processo de decomposição do modelo" in order to reinvent it in Portuguese/universal terms. Just like Almada, when urging the Portuguese to incarnate the "Homem Definitivo" as the one who could contain all qualities and all faults, would say: "Crie a vossa experiência e sereis os maiores." ("Ultimatum às Gerações" 38, [my emphasis]), Campos/Pessoa argued that, leaving aside the substance of the works, but rather by means of an intellectualization of their processes, the Portuguese had turned the romantic and symbolist traditions, and the cubist and futurist principles into "*as nossas sensações das coisas*" (Páginas Íntimas 136-7). A nation claiming centrality would definitely not concede to an originality made of pieces, like this, a 'second hand originality', so to say. But one must keep in mind that what Pessoa stresses is *the process*; it is in the deconstruction and recon-

struction that Portuguese artists dictate the new rules and claim vanguardism, thus proposing a reevaluation of fragmentation which is common in emergent discourses.⁷

VI. The very idea of the Fifth Empire can easily be aligned with other nationalist positionings. In the same way that Edward Said and Seamus Deane consider Yeats's search for the heart of Ireland as the invention of a so-called legitimating "third nature" ("Yeats and Decolonization" 81), so can one understand Pessoa's spiritual project as the reconnection with an oldest and truest source which would dictate and legitimate a *renovated* redeeming national mission - the correction of the degenerated enterprise of the Discoveries, as well as of the decadent materialist empires of Europe. However, a feature which distinguishes Pessoa's project is its scope and dynamics, since the renovating power of the Fifth Empire concentrates both local and global orientations, that is, cultural and civilizational intentions. Almada's theories can be useful to illustrate this point when he defines culture as "o gesto de personalizar cada ser," while civilization is understood as the process of extending to a group that which had been first internalized individually. Hence Almada's conclusion that culture is an individual phenomenon, whereas civilization is a collective phenomenon (*Ensaio* 73) - so, the Fifth Empire, due to its spiritual essence, holds both and at once the collective and the individual.

The project, moreover, is based on a reappraisal of the past: Pessoa reactivates the national past in order to settle that the whole enterprise of the Discoveries had been meant to be an essentially cultural enterprise, which despotic Catholicism had however thwarted, when converting the originally spiritual project into one of material conquest (*A Grande Alma Portuguesa* 20). Considering that he was aware of the irrevocable peripherization of Portugal, the spiritual empire actually appears as a consolation prize, but still the ultimate possible form of affirmation - and influence. The awareness of this explains Pessoa's simultaneous revision of the measure of national value, in a somewhat desperate strategy to rescue the nation from peripherization: "Por vitalidade de uma nação não se pode entender nem a sua força militar nem a sua prosperidade comercial, coisas secundárias e por assim dizer físicas nas nações; tem de se entender a sua exuberância de alma, isto é, a sua capacidade de criar, não já a simples ciência, o que é restrito e mecânico, mas novos moldes, novas ideias gerais" (*A Nova Poesia Portuguesa* 22).

VII. The foundation of the modernist project on a poetics was a strategic means to legitimate what we find to be the ultimate essentialist claim which supported the universalist intent of the whole modernist project. The proposal for poetry to fulfill national identity envisaged to reinforce the spiritual dimension of the enterprise because the essence of the poetic journey is said to be closest to the true language of things, that ultimate primordial language. A closer observation of such a poetics can be very telling about its complementarity to the identity project. The analysis of the first section of Pessoa's "Chuva Oblíqua" (*Orpheu 2*), for instance, gives evidence not only of how the border identity was conceived in poetic terms, but also of a particular course and articulation in the several -isms *Orpheu* established in the cultural life of the time. That trajectory follows the splitting of the Self, introduced by interseccionism, up to the achievement of an individual - but multifolded - voice, which is warranted by sensationism. Although this voice is primarily poetic, it can however be understood as a voice of the nation, since the poet was seen as the fittest representative of his nation. It is therefore not at all accidental that Pessoa states that "poesia absolutamente nacional e poesia absolutamente universal são termos interconvertíveis" (*A Nova Poesia Portuguesa* 64). Poetry was thus instrumental in Pessoa's renewed imperialism; basing poetry on a universal essence, a Portuguese nationality of poetic nature would be able to surmount any kind of borders, extending Portuguese hybridity anywhere in the world and legitimating the 'encounter' by making the Portuguese akin to any other people. But the very term 'empire' testifies to his failure in finding a genuinely authorizing and equalitarian form to meet the Other.

VIII. "Chuva Oblíqua" (*Orpheu 2* [June 1915]: 115-23) is a key poem to that ambivalent movement that characterized the border identity Pessoa's poetry was voicing. Revealing influences of several modernist tendencies then in vogue, the poem rearranges them in a new movement, interseccionism. The basis of this aesthetics is best conveyed by the intersection of reality and irreality in the same multiple landscape: "Atravessa esta paisagem o meu sonho d'um porto infinito / E a côr das flores é transparente de as velas de grandes navios," while present and past are abolished in the present moment of the construction of the poem "O porto que sonho é sombrio e pallido / E esta paisagem é cheia de sol d'este lado... / Mas no meu espírito o sol d'este dia é porto sombrio / E os navios que sahem do porto são estas arvores ao

sol.” As the several surfaces and objects penetrate through one another, “com uma horizontalidade vertical,” which fuses ships and trees, cables and leaves, and the visual painting unfolds in a double image at the bottom of the sea, the observer divides him/herself, thus taking part in the disjunction of reality: “Liberto em duplo, . . . / . . . / Não sei quem me sonho...” Finally, a third space, between imagination and reality (which is precisely that “entre o meu sonho do porto e o meu vêr esta paisagem”) breaks into reality and within the observer him/herself: “. . . chega ao pé de mim, e entra por mim dentro, / E passa para o outro lado da minha alma...” The Self does not exist as a concrete reality, a reality in itself; it simply happens in the moments of fusion with the other levels of reality - the happening is the unsurpassable proof of its existence. Homi Bhabha explains this annulment of the idea of identity as totality and presence as one of the techniques found in intervention discourse, causing “a principle of undecidability in the signification of part and whole, past and present, self and Other, such that there can be no negation or transcendence of difference” (“DissemiNation” 54).

Introduced also by poems published in *Orpheu*, interseccionism signaled another important moment in Portuguese modernism because of the principle of instability it managed to install and which was certainly not indifferent to the general turmoil felt in Portuguese society at the time. So also in interseccionist poetics the initial dispersal would be reorganized in sensationism’s highest, and all-encompassing, form of order: the “sentir tudo” that Pessoa believed to be the essence of Portuguese identity. Authorizing as this attempted to be in terms of asserting a Portuguese difference which Pessoa saw as oppressed by British imperialism, Pessoa’s project clearly slid into the opposite extreme. While asserting such identity of possibility, Pessoa could not avoid the pitfalls of nationalist enterprises, as his discourse of Portuguese superiority reveals.

IX. Pessoa’s heteronymic process can also be located in this process of fragmentation and imbalance which claims a space for the Other, in particular and for the purpose of this argument, when related to the English tradition of the mask. Used by Shakespeare and Keats, Browning and Pound and developing in the poetics of depersonalization both T. S. Eliot and Pessoa theorized, the mask is very significantly reinvented in Pessoa’s heteronymy. Suggesting the dramatization and carnivalization of forms Santos sees as an attribute of the border identity (“Modernidade, Identidade” 35), the

Portuguese poet appropriates the form, but manipulates it very differently so that heteronymy becomes an essentially ironic technique, susceptible of calling into question, if not destroying, the original support of form. This technique creates instability in concepts such as authorship/authority, or the border between life and art. Consisting of the creation of “real characters” (Pessoa makes up dates of birth, physiognomies, personal histories, private lives, different and completely original works and, on occasion, even makes the heteronyms intervene in reality), the process largely surmounts the effect of the mask when the fictitious figures boast enough autonomy to leave the controlled space of poetry and affirm themselves as beings independent from their author, a startling question emerges: where is the line between fiction and reality, subalternity and authority? Who is the puppet and who is the creator? We could extrapolate it to the political situation: who is the periphery and who is the center?

It is in this manner that the process of unfolding of the Self becomes a hybrid form of continuity and discontinuity which challenges an established aesthetic form in the English literary tradition. Thus, Portugal's subordination to Britain, in an anticipated version of neo-imperialism, one might say, Pessoa's heteronymy, as well as interseccionism and sensationism, can be regarded as cultural strategies of subversion of authority, as M. Irene Ramalho S. Santos has already pointed out: “what the pessoan dislocation of the subject ultimately means is that the idea of a fixed unique authorizing center is shattered once and for all” (“From Whitman to Pessoa” 234). To that extent, Pessoa's disruptions become adjuncts of meaning, they are *alternatives* which add to central representations.

X. Yet, Pessoa's aesthetics does not rule alone over Portuguese modernism, and in particular its articulation with Almada Negreiros gives better evidence of the border identity under construction. Whereas Pessoa's poetics tends to emphasize a marginal position, Almada's theories and poetics stress the central share of the border identity. Siding with, but also largely complementing Pessoa/Álvaro de Campos's “Ultimatum,” Almada's own provocation against Portuguese apathy emphasizes the present moment and so distances itself from Pessoa's voice. While Pessoa recalled the myth of the Discoveries and Pessoa/Álvaro de Campos's pedagogical piece finally admitted “Mas eu só vejo o Caminho; não sei onde ele vae ter” (“Ultimatum” 34), Almada's positioning is clearly in the present, in the moment of action, and in so doing he

attempts a performative gesture which supersedes - and ultimately reinforces - Pessoa's.

The rejection of the past is evident throughout the "Ultimatum às Gerações Portuguezas..." but nowhere else is it more explicit than in the direct exhortation of the Portuguese people: "Hoje é a geração portuguesa do século XX que dispõe de toda a força criadora e construtiva para o nascimento de *uma nova pátria inteiramente portuguesa e inteiramente actual* prescindindo em absoluto de todas as épocas precedentes." Almada Negreiros wipes off the slate of the past and sees the actual turmoil in Europe as an open opportunity for renewal. Namely the participation of Portugal in World War I appears as the best opportunity for placing the Portuguese within the old European order: by siding with the other European powers, Portugal symbolically shares the same common roots in the soft mud of the trenches: "Ide buscar na guerra da Europa toda a força da nossa nova patria. No *front* está concentrada toda a Europa, portanto a Civilização actual." But his understanding of the power of the war is closely linked to his view of nation-building; the war was a moment of great visibility of the confrontation between nations, a moment of measure of national value: "É a guerra que proclama a patria como a maior ambição do homem" ("Ultimatum às Gerações" 36). Portugal was not, therefore, simply claiming a place back in the European Self, but affirming itself as 'Portuguese' within that Self.

The performativity of Almada's project also stands out in the emphasis he lays over the need of an awareness of reality, or, as he puts it, an awareness of actuality, since only that would allow for a rebirth of the national idea: "é preciso criar a patria portuguesa do século XX," he insists (38). Significantly, only the language, by means of literature, could stimulate the spirit of adventure meant to wake up national awareness and make possible a renewal of national originality. Thus, while Pessoa theorized over what was to be made (the whole project in Campos's "Ultimatum") and why it should be made (the national mission), Almada is already showing the sources (Europe, the War) and urging the Portuguese to act. Using Homi Bhabha's application of Chomsky's theories of pedagogy and performativity to nation-building rhetorical strategies, it is possible to identify both pedagogical and performative gestures in each project: one can understand Pessoa's nationalism as the pedagogical gesture which claims the people for the definition and justification of the nation, whereas Almada's exhortation in the "Ultimatum" provides the performative movement: claiming the nation for the definition and

justification of its people (Bhabha 297). Pessoa's and Almada's projects, therefore, work in the double sense of the derridean supplement Homi Bhabha applies to the rhetorical construction of the nation, in the sense that whereas Almada's insertion of Portugal within the European center *adds* the Portuguese *to* the former order, Pessoa's "Fifth Empire" aims at *taking the place* of the former order (305). Hence the conclusion that nationalist and internationalist postures within Portuguese modernism finally work in order, firstly, to consolidate the position of the nation, which is the basis for its projection afterwards.

Still, the nation lives in-between these double gestures. As Homi Bhabha demonstrates, the people end up living neither in the performative nor in the pedagogical movement, but rather in a liminal space *in-between* the two - a concept which adds to Santos's notion of the 'border identity': "The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national production [the pedagogical] with a space of representation [the performative] that threatens binary division with its difference. The barred Nation It/Self, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal form of social representation . . ." (299).

XI. I expect this analysis to be capable not only of stating the concept of the border identity as a leading concept in Portuguese studies, but also of illustrating and discussing one of the uses to which it was put in the specific context of Portuguese modernism. In view of modernism's (more or less acknowledged) attachment to issues of nationalism, this paper ends up highlighting important problems concerning the question of national identity, in particular Pessoa's and Almada's nationalist pitfalls. Namely, that what appeared to be sheer cosmopolitanism would reveal itself invested of a not less menacing unlimitlessness dependent on their proposals for new forms of national reimagination and reinvention, such as Pessoa's 'Fifth Empire'. A strong assertion of independence as this may at first appear, it was not divested of intentions of national supremacy, neither of internal segregations, considering how both *Orpheu* and *Portugal Futurista*, the heralds of the modernist project, established themselves as exclusive communities, determined to trace gender and ethnic borders between themselves and, for instance, women, the old elites or the people at large. This case in Portuguese modernism can thus be very revealing about how an apparently assertive and progressive affirmation of difference can degenerate into pure imperialism.

Still, however imperfect they may have been, the question Pessoa's and Almada's projects were tackling was, after all, a very actual question - how does one combine the local and the global shares of one's identity? What is the ideal articulation between being a 'citizen of the world' and 'Portuguese'? Reappraisals of border identity in modernism may help to show at least how that must not be done.

Notes

¹ Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa.

² Organized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the volume *Portugal, Um Retrato Singular* presented a multi-disciplinary analysis of the Portuguese society as semiperipheral. (For reference, see list of works cited).

³ Portuguese modernism is usually understood as made up of two stages: the 'first modernism', which developed from around 1915 (the date of release of the 'little' magazine *Orpheu*), to roughly the late 1920's, and the so called 'second modernism', as literary historians identify intellectual and literary activity in the 1930's, ascribing prominence to the rediscovery and diffusion of the work of some of the first modernists (namely Pessoa), carried out by the group of the literary magazine *Presença*.

⁴ On this subject and its development, see, for instance, Valentim Alexandre, "Um Momento Crucial do Subdesenvolvimento Português: Efeitos Económicos da Perda do Império Brasileiro," *Ler História* 7 (1986): 3-45. For a brief account of the impact of the Treaty of Methuen on the Portuguese economy, see Lawrence James Nielsen "De Londres com amor: a evolução do domínio inglês na economia portuguesa 1353-1754,"

Estudos Ibero-Americanos III 1 (Julho 1977): 109-20.

⁵ On the person "Atlantismo" and its imperialist implications, see Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos, "Um imperialismo de poetas. Fernando Pessoa e o imaginário do império," *Penélope Fazer e Desfazer a História* 15 (1995): 54-77, "From Whitman To Pessoa," *Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies* 3 (1994-5): 213-39; and also "Atlantic Poets: 'Discovery' as Metaphor and Ideology," *The Continuing Presence of Walt Whitman: The Life After the Life*, ed. Robert K. Martin (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 1992), 152-66.

⁶ The coincidence of the terms in which the strategy is conceived may prove Boaventura de Sousa Santos's thesis that Portugal somehow transmitted to its ex-colonies the model of the "border identity," even safeguarding the specific ways in which those cultures came to develop it. "Modernidade...," 34-5.

⁷ This proposal finds indeed a clear parallel in Brazilian modernism, in Oswald de Andrade's defense of a new primacy of the copy over the original once the original had been devoured and reconstructed.

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