

## Time in Ruy Belo's Poetry: Three Preliminary Aspects\*

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**Abstract.** Taking as its point of departure the argument that Jorge de Sena failed productively in his attempt to overcome Fernando Pessoa, and that Ruy Belo—trying to emulate Pessoa but at the same time writing quite different poetry—emerges as Pessoa's worthy successor, this article proposes a brief analysis of three preliminary aspects of temporality as a contribution to a broader study of time in Ruy Belo's poetry: *i*, time as a condition of possibility; *ii*, the paradoxical time after death; and *iii*, the temporal sense of the poem's ending.

In the rich history of his country's twentieth-century poetry, Ruy Belo is the worthy successor to the great Fernando Pessoa and may be considered, within an intentionally restricted national lyric repertoire, the second Portuguese poet of the century. From the critical point of view, however, Ruy Belo is still awaiting his own equivalent of Eduardo Lourenço's *Pessoa Revisitado*: Belo's Lourenço belongs to the realm of the future. Let us therefore put an abrupt end to this reductive paragraph, with its concern for the poet's complete works, in order to focus on a relatively secure point of time. For time is precisely what it is all about.

Other poets have dealt in a more radical fashion with the making of their genealogy; and, as we cannot analytically ignore after the second Harold Bloom, this is a foundational assumption of the modern poet's self-

affirmation.<sup>1</sup> In his ill-fated anxiety to overcome Pessoa, Jorge de Sena fell prey to the shortcomings of the theoretical dialectics that inform that very goal of overcoming.<sup>2</sup> And his was the case of the most explicit and bravest effort to confront Pessoa and fail in the process, even while leaving behind a remarkable poetic output. There were, of course, other similar attempts, but in terms of an explicit confrontation Sena subsumes them all.

Ruy Belo attempted to imitate Pessoa and, despite himself, produced poetry that was substantially different from Pessoa's. In another art form, we may be reminded of how Brahms the composer of the First Symphony related to Beethoven of the Ninth: these are imitations that make all the difference. We do not find in Belo the structural lucidity of Pessoa's prose in verse, but we encounter in it *another space* and, above all, *another time*. Some prevalent critical approaches to Belo tend to label him as an epigone to Modernism (which often means to Pessoa) or wrap him up in the miseries and anachronisms of the Portuguese literary-historical narrative of the 1960s and 1970s, in this way revealing their own share of analytic distress. These miseries and anachronisms are of little help in reading Belo's poetry in the context of the twenty-first-century republic of letters; in other words, in making it contemporary. My contribution to such an undertaking is to show how Belo inscribes in the temporality of his verses a stage in the history of how the Portuguese became hedonists, and does so—much better than Pessoa—regardless of the thematic sadness suffusing so many of his poems.<sup>3</sup>

In the following paragraphs, I will offer a brief preliminary analysis of three aspects of time in Belo's poetry. The poet is faced with the difficult problem of the co-existence, within the poetic text, of contradictory stances. In this regard, the most relevant factor is without a doubt the author's belonging, on the crucial issue of how to cope with life, to the party of Catholicism as well as, simultaneously and in an overt contradiction, to the party of the critics of Catholicism and, even more amply, of Christianity: "I belonged to the Western Church," we read in his 1973 poem "Sobre um simples significante" (On a Simple Signifier). This is the most intense contradiction of Belo's poetry, and it is of religious nature, as was the case, in an altogether different context, of Camões's epic (as pointed out by Almeida Garrett in *Travels in My Homeland*). Unlike what happens in Sena, Belo's inscription of this discrepancy in time fortunately does not beget a set of rules that confine temporality to a dialectical version of history. In Belo's terms, the distension of his contradiction is called a *transport in time* (as in the title

of his 1973 book), and it may well be read as an umbrella title for the whole of his poetry. The increasing secularization of time in Belo's poetry, even as it occurs, for example, in the context of the Christian Christmas calendar, evades the untenability of Pessoa's design for a return to pagan temporality.

Let us focus then, first of all, on time as the condition of possibility. In the opening lines of "Viagem à volta de uma laranja" (Journey Around an Orange) from *Todos os Poemas* (311-12), the reader is once again transported into the obsessively reiterated atmosphere of "the end of the day," which is a Western atmosphere par excellence—signifying, in other instances, the end of an era or the end of a world—and which, in Belo, now and again appears *prima facie* as vested with the meaning of the end of time.<sup>4</sup> The poem emits crystal-clear messages about referential delusions or facile reprocessing of the word "orange" in other poets and poems: Belo's orange is not an orange, just as the journey around this orange is not a journey at all. Let us have a look at the poem's syntactic pattern:

Laranja de cultura uma laranja só possível  
 depois de vista a vida morta na pintura  
 às mãos dos que tiveram nela uma razão de ser  
 e cingiram a emoção à disciplinada dimensão da tela  
 Laranja negação da natureza  
 puro fruto sem fruto e sem função  
 desafio insolente à iminente podridão  
 que merecem as coisas que mais vivem  
 Laranja que não morre enquanto mata sede ou fome  
 que morre exactamente na medida em que vive  
 e cuja vida é viver apenas  
 laranja só redonda e amarela  
 coisa gratuita imagem do poema

The alliterative pattern (Laranja..., Laranja..., Laranja...), of such structural importance in the construction of Belo's poetry, does not in this case imply a mimetic repetition or a performativity of the orange, but rather a peculiar version of the transcendental notion of the orange, which I will attempt to describe. A scrutiny of the conditions of possibility for Belo's orange brings us to the question of time. In the lines "Laranja de cultura uma laranja só possível / depois de vista a vida morta na pintura" (The orange of

culture an orange made possible only / after a dead life painting has been seen), the temporal adverb “depois” (after) posits two moments inherent to the temporality required by the orange, whatever “the orange” may mean (to register here the disclaimer of any word’s always unstable semantic import). What this orange suggests is a micro-narrative principle resting on at least two moments that are aligned as follows in the linear time of analysis: *i*, the orange is seen represented in a still-life painting; *ii*, as a consequence of *i*, the orange is made possible. What happens, then, from one moment to the next, that makes the orange possible, “only possible” in Belo’s terms? The answer to this question, in the context of the poem, requires a consideration of, in the first place, the art of painting, along with the hands that paint in order to make sense, and the discipline of this art of emotional restraint, and secondly, the act of looking at painting or, more precisely, of having seen an orange painted in a picture. Art synthesizes the opposition between life and death, as in the expression “a vida morta na pintura” (dead/still life in painting); art benefits from the privilege, so dear to Belo’s poems, to amplify extraordinarily the implications of the pictorial genre of still life (in Portuguese, “natureza morta,” or dead nature).

This anti-Aristotelian explanation is well known to us and has its origin in some of Oscar Wilde’s maxims about art and life or in the work of the outstanding art historian Ernst Gombrich.<sup>5</sup> The traditional antagonism between nature and culture is resolved in favor of the latter; nevertheless, this denial of nature in the “fruto sem fruto” (fruit without fruit) is unstable. Art as challenge and aggressiveness is refuted by time through an unannounced shift of register that is such a recurrent surprise of this poetry.<sup>6</sup> The temporal adjective is “iminente” (imminent), imminence being one of Belo’s major poetic paranoias, which in “Viagem à volta de uma laranja” takes on the form of death or “podridão” (rottenness). Only for a while does the orange deny the course of time.

The orange that “mata sede e fome” (that, in a literal translation, “kills” hunger and thirst) cannot be the *painted orange*, the precondition of the other orange. The orange that is eaten becomes part of the cycle of metamorphosis by means of death. In other passages of the text, the poet occupies the place of the orange in time.<sup>7</sup> Between the orange as the “imagem do poema” (image of the poem) and the *thing* this image represents, what remains to be elucidated is the relationship of the image that the poem also is to death itself. Do poems die? Do painted oranges die? Is the imminence of the highest

degree of “rotteness” exclusively on the side of the orange that “*kills* hunger or thirst” (my italics)? In the terms of the poem—and these are the only terms we have at our disposal—the relationship between the image of the poem and death is not clarified, so the issue whether the painted orange, or in other words art, entails an effective suspension of time is filed away as a matter that defies resolution. The image of the poem is, according to Belo, a “coisa gratuita” (gratuitous thing), which means a thing divested of being necessary in time. Metaphors inlaid in verses, such as “o vento, esse terrível tempo” (wind, that terrible weather/time), which appears to surrender to a rhyme effect the generally positive status of “wind” in Belo’s poetic syntax, have to be distinguished clearly from the inverted space-time coordinates of expressions like “praias que há no tempo” (beaches that exist in time). Time does and does not allow itself to be subsumed by space.<sup>8</sup>

By comparison, the presumed rule of poetics mandating that one dirties “as mãos com os problemas do seu tempo” (one’s hands with the problems of one’s time) from the “Breve programa para uma iniciação ao canto” (Brief Program for an Initiation to Singing), hardly represents more than a repetition of a topos in which sociological analysis takes over a substantial share of poetry. Nonetheless, in Belo’s works poetic thought on time asserts itself vigorously as a reversal of the linear time inherent to the notion of progress. Witness, for instance, the following fragment of “Meditação montana” (Mountainous Meditation):

aviões impossíveis mais reais do que os reais  
 perfeitos pássaros provindos da cessante condição  
 ó aviões antecessores das aves  
 palavras vindas de étimos das quais os étimos dimanam  
 movimento de mãos produtoras das próprias produções  
 umas mãos que ao mover-se movimentam  
 criaturas que incríveis criam coisas suas criadoras  
 aves imitação dos imitados aviões  
 natureza nascida onde visivelmente nasce a vida  
 aviões aos quais a ave deve o voo  
 (324)

If one perseveres in the good critical creed according to which texts are the best purveyors of associations for their own reading, a reward awaits a

couple of lines below in this same poem, when the author writes about the “verdade apenas vista nos jogos verbais” (truth to be seen only when playing with words). The much-quoted Nietzschean and Wittgensteinian cognitive vision that informs both Belo’s poetry and my own reading invalidates the charge that Ruy Belo is unable to escape the distress of being an heir to Pessoa’s Álvaro de Campos.

Let us have a look at the standard version of the history of progress. Birds preceded airplanes, airplanes emulated birds. In this poem, however, airplanes come before birds. In a more abstract formulation, effects can produce causes; if we were to look for an illustration of this claim in Belo’s poetry, the very particular case of God (who in time changes into a god) may be read as the cause of man, but in Belo’s terms it is man who can be read as the cause of God. In a necessary aside, let us note that the prevailing point of view in Belo’s poetry is manifestly male, and that as such it recalls, by means of a displacement, the representation of modern Man still on display at the Natural History Museum in Washington, DC: a 1970s white-collar male worker with his grey suit, tie, and black briefcase. Belo’s figure of “man” would certainly benefit from being read as gendered, given the prominent role played by this figure in his writing; such a reading would also be justified by the fact that Belo shares with Pessoa an idea of poetry with gnoseological claims.<sup>9</sup>

To return to Belo’s verbal games, being more than mere play with time they allow the poet access to what he calls the truth, whatever this may be, and it is definitely consubstantiated by many different assertions in the text. One of Belo’s repeated truths takes the shape of *A comes after B*, and *B causes A*. Let us collect the objects corresponding to this scheme that have been mentioned so far: the natural orange (A) and the painted orange (B); birds (A) and airplanes (B). The works of art (technics, *technê*) precede and produce nature.

Let us move now to a second aspect of temporality: the paradoxical time after death which, for Belo, is not configured as a liberation from death through salvation. In “Na morte de Georges Braque” (On the Death of Georges Braque), technologies give back to the world the dimension of times past. Braque is one of the artist heroes whose funeral Belo stages in his poetry. And the funerals in *Todos os Poemas* are many, allowing us also to regard this poetry, even in statistical terms, as an obituary. At this point, the most difficult critical task is to produce a satisfactory explanation as to the kind of



psychological reward one can derive from so many obituaries including, interestingly enough, a *self-obituary* (more on which soon). The poem on Braque poses several pertinent problems related to the issue of time in Belo's poetry, most prominent among them the problem of time after death. What is this particular time like?

Foi através dum título inserido num jornal alheio  
 no metro por acaso de viés olhado  
 que eu soube que saíste da velhice  
 para entrar não se sabe bem onde  
 mas decerto na terra dentro em pouco  
 (314)

We know that in Belo's anthropology of death the dead get buried and that the poet has dedicated unforgettable verses to the act of burying. The exit from time, the exit from "velhice" (old age), leads to an indefinite space, "não se sabe bem onde" (who knows where). As we shall see, Belo's poetry as a whole presents a number of postmortem fictionalizations. Braque's death presents an opportunity for art and for Belo's affiliation with modernity. Braque is a hero of that "feroz luta" (fierce struggle) against art envisaged as mimesis of life, "pra que a arte deixasse de reproduzir a vida" (so that art may cease reproducing life). Regarding the question posed above, about the relationship between death and the orange that is the image of the poem, the poem on Braque gives us a helpful clue: "Fica o mais importante a obra essa pegada / do homem que passou por esta praia / e que mesmo que saia alguma coisa fica da passagem" (The most important things remain the work the footprint / of the man who walked across this beach / and even if it vanishes / something is left from the passage). Here we are again in the realm in which trust needs to be deposited on the side of the poem and not in the experiment one may wish to perform, of leaving footprints in the sand, noticing their disappearance, and investigating that *something* that remains. Thus Belo may also be presumed to suggest that, in spite of death, something is left of the "laranja imagem do poema" (orange image of the poem). This is a minimalist version of art's time after death, which secures the permanence of the poem's orange. However, this kind of permanence is itself fragile and shows no sign of the tension between time and eternity that pervades, for instance, Milton's poem "On Time."

Let us return to the question of technique and time. Braque becomes here the generic modernist hero:

Tu e os teus amigos dos princípios deste século  
de máquinas de técnicas de pressa de vertigem  
devolveram ao mundo o seu passado  
e reduziram a distância entre nós e a nossa origem  
(314-15)

The modernist accomplishment is an exploit directly related to time. To paraphrase quickly what Belo tells us, there was a time when the world was deprived of its past. Then, resorting to machines and techniques, Braque and his friends restored the past to the world. Thus, through a contraction of time—that is the implied corollary—we have come closer to our past. Or, to put it differently, the present has expanded, as many other lines suggest; for example, “*essas mulheres mortas mas contemporâneas*” (those women who are dead and yet contemporary) (331).<sup>10</sup>

Let us look now at Belo's self-obituary. This fictionalization of the poet's own death can help us reread the obituaries he has written for others, be it men, women, animals (“*Requiem for a Dog*”) or fruit (e. g., the orange). In the poem “*Elogio de Maria Teresa*” (In Praise of Maria Teresa), the poet is speaking from beyond death:

Contigo fui cruel no dia-a-dia  
mais que mulher tu és já hoje a minha única viúva  
Não posso dar-te mais do que te dou  
Este molhado olhar de homem que morre  
e se comove ao ver-te assim tão subitamente  
(332)

The polarization between life and death reappears here in one of the most striking settings in the whole of Belo's work; the poet situates himself in the time after his own death, which he implicitly stages. His relationship with his wife, Maria Teresa, is described as the opposite of goodness, in an expiatory mood, while his acknowledged cruelty belongs grammatically to the past: “*fui*” (I was). In the present, however, nothing better awaits in the realm of the conjugal relationship; hence the shocking statement: “*tu és já hoje a*



minha única viúva” (you *are* already today my only widow; my italics). The separation that follows places the poet beyond death; it is thus that, after committing *this* act of poetic cruelty, the poet removes himself from his beloved by way of dying. This is an exceedingly rough game, even if one keeps present the awareness of verses being nothing but verses. What are the stakes here?

Within the temporal economy of the poem, Belo attempts to buy time. I am using the expression “to buy time” in the sense Richard K. Fenn ascribes to it, that is, as a possibility to experience, in a reasonably harmless way, as is the case of poetry, certain emotions related to a situation that threatens to annihilate the subject.<sup>11</sup> The contrast between the life of “dia-a-dia” (everyday) and the implicit life beyond death has a female victim, on whom a poetic gift is bestowed in the form of the alliteration “molhado olhar de homem que morre” (wet look of a man who dies). As we know, in Belo’s work the man who dies is the man who *chooses* to die. The poet’s venturing into death reaps symbolic gains. The complete experience of death remains, for the time being, protected in the dimension of an indefinite future time: “o que é preciso é que não doa muito / Depois que me escondam na terra como uma vergonha” (all one needs is that it doesn’t hurt much / and then may I be buried under like a shame) (251). The anxiety of time is retrospective; it comes from a future death, and thus is experienced by a subject who has already lived in a *bought time*. One can hardly think of a better function for poetry as a *transport in time*.

In *Homem de Palavra(s)* (A Man of His Word[s]), the poet also conceives of himself in a postmortem time. Let us read “Cólofon ou epitáfio” (Colophon or Epitaph):

Trinta dias tem o mês  
e muitas horas o dia  
todo o tempo se lhe ia  
em polir o seu poema  
a melhor coisa que fez  
ele próprio coisa feita  
ruy belo português  
Não seria mau rapaz  
quem tão ao comprido jaz  
ruy belo, era uma vez (264)

The fictionalization of his own death allows the poet to buy time in order to cope with the real and unknown term of his life. The speaker of the line “ruy belo era uma vez” (once upon a time there was ruy belo) cannot be anyone other than the poet, who, for that very reason, writes his self-epitaph lightly. The present that can be read as the absence of time only becomes manifest in the line in which Ruy Belo is mentioned as being dead. In Portuguese, the verb “jazer” (to lie, to rest) is associated with being buried. This benign experience of a post-burial state makes possible for the poet the analepsis of his poetics: akin to the Horatian *labor limae*, his is a poetry produced by a *techné* that has consumed hours, days and months of his life. Two kinds of time are presupposed in this poetry: the time of writing and the time of forming and polishing; it is the latter that devours time itself. In this thematization of time, there is no place for a deliberate choice of an *emploi du temps*; Belo's time wears away in a poetic activity whose doctrine is diametrically opposed to Jorge de Sena's writing of “versos sem arte” (artless poetry). The poet's self-fashioning as “portugalês” evokes a Ruy Belo who is both old and ancient, even as it points to the Latin term *portucalese* and the construction of an outspoken, loyal character like that of the medieval Portuguese hero Egas Moniz. This brief poem and the others in Belo's collected poems, *Todos os Poemas*, that belong to the same family recall an episode in Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 film *Rumble Fish*, in which the central character, in a compensatory move, dreams of his own death and of the death of those surrounding him.

Belo's poetry requires a rhetoric of temporality for strategic reasons. The tension at the origin of this need results, as we have seen, from the main contradiction that permeates *Todos os Poemas*; we shall call it religious for short. Instead of the Nietzschean death of God, in this poetry we see God metamorphosing into a *god in language*. Belo needs time to accommodate his thorny distinctions: the poet of 1961, the poet of 1973, and so forth. The notion of a time understood as a historical or generational period proves of little help here, although vast resources can be mobilized by a critical reader collecting pertinent references from poems like “Odeio este tempo detergente” (I Hate This Detergent Time) or the much-quoted “Nós os vencidos do catolicismo” (We, the Losers of Catholicism).

The third aspect of time in Belo's poetry that I will touch upon is mostly implicit in his writing, but it may be discerned in the concluding lines of a number of his poems. This brief essay is not the appropriate place to expound

on the theory of poetic endings; besides, this has already been done, and well done, by Barbara Herrnstein Smith in *Poetic Closure*.<sup>12</sup> How then does Belo write his own version of *La commedia è finita*? We should note that the endings of poems represent a priori a *mise-en-abyme* of that other problem, seemingly of vaster proportions but at the same time unverifiable: the end of life. In “Algumas proposições sobre um certo João Miguel” (Some Propositions About a Certain João Miguel), Belo mentions a poet, possibly a literary descendant of his: “suspeito que o poeta meu amigo / seja criptomonárquico e se não / tiro a questão a limpo é para não estragar tão promissora / carreira literária não há muito começada” (I suspect my friend the poet / is a cryptomonarchist and I only don't / make it clear so as not to damage his promising / literary career of such recent vintage). Here is what else happens to João Miguel in Belo's poem:

O João miguel quer qualquer coisa para os sapatos  
 o João miguel agora quer falar para o porto  
 só para ouvir talvez a voz da margarida  
 O João miguel quer-me cá a mim parecer  
 não saber bem ao certo já aquilo que quer  
 [...]  
 O João miguel encontra finalmente a graxa  
 e assim finda o poema escrito no invólucro da caixa  
 onde levo os sapatos acabados de comprar  
 (340-41)

The character of João Miguel inherits, in this poem, the shape of the contradiction that configures Belo's structural distribution of time: from “agora” (now) A to “agora” B, *now* serves as the sign of change.<sup>13</sup> Other characters in the poem also join this family of figures that want one thing now and then another, or who are supposed to talk about something and then talk about something else. This is what happens with the writer Vitorino Nemésio (appearing on TV), who instead of speaking of Christ speaks of the Neolithic (precisely a time when there was no Christianity yet). Another character, TV news presenter Henrique Mendes, “quando diz que vai falar de paz / fala de guerra” (when he says he'll be talking about peace / he talks about war”).

Following this succession of exchanges that make up the poem, João

Miguel finds that “something” he was looking for, which turns out to be shoe polish. The poem owes its existence to an interruption in a succession of moments (“agora,” “agora,” “agora”) in the present of what João Miguel wants and the finding of the object of his search. The beginning and the end of the poem associate João Miguel’s shoes with the new shoes bought by Ruy Belo himself. The conclusion of the poem, “e assim finda o poema” (and so the poem comes to an end), marks a time of self-reference. An analogous procedure is on display in the narrative “Poema de Natal” (Christmas Poem), where the nineteenth-century writer and historian Alexandre Herculano turns up: “O Herculano entre outras coisas sabia distinguir os tempos / sabia o que num tempo é distinto de outro tempo” (Herculano knew among other things how to distinguish times / he knew what makes one time different from another time). The time of the poem’s closure, once again self-referential, is imprisoned in a cyclical time that returns year after year, and the poet’s words betray no sign of progress: “nem talvez tenha já a convicção de quem anualmente / escreve pontual se não contente o seu poema de natal” (perhaps I’ve even lost the conviction of the one who every year / writes punctually if not in joy his christmas poem). In “Versos que vou escrevendo” (Verses I Keep Writing) (346-48), one of Belo’s poems in which the banality of everyday life meets the poet’s art, we come across characters already familiar to the readers of this essay: João Miguel and Maria Teresa. They hike up a hill while the poet stays in the car, reading in his newspaper about, among other topics, “a escritora agustina e a jornalista albertina” (the writer agustina and the journalist albertina). The poem’s ending injects it into the referential time of the present and into the action controlled by the poet: “Deixo o jornal porque voltou a juventude / e por aqui me fico que mais querem fiz aquilo que pude” (I put the newspaper aside because youth has returned / that’s all for now what else do you want from me I’ve done what I could). With this distinction marked between himself, on the one hand, and, on the other, the younger João Miguel (a distinguished poet since the 1970s) and Belo’s wife Maria Teresa, Ruy Belo stages his own identity as that of the resigned protagonist of the end. *Consummatum est*.

\* An earlier version of this article appeared in Portuguese in *Inimigo Rumor* 15 (2003). This reincarnation in English has benefited vastly from the input of Anna M. Klobucka and Maria Antónia Amarante.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In a long interview for an "In Depth" segment of C-Span 2's *Book TV* program, which aired on May 4, 2003, Bloom described the three main phases of his scholarship. Very summarily, the first phase was concerned with English poetry, the second with the theory of influence, and in the third stage of his work Bloom assumed the role of a popular critic. I thus refer to the "second Harold Bloom" as the author of such critical masterpieces as *The Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading*. The first and the second Bloom are certainly among the small number of the most decisive literary critics and theorists of the twentieth century.

<sup>2</sup> I develop this argument fully in my article "Fernando Pessoa e Jorge de Sena, segundo este último," *Colóquio/Letras* 147-148 (1998), 132-49.

<sup>3</sup> I am drawing here on the concept of hedonism as explored by Benjamin Wiker in *Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations of Belo's poetry are taken from the volume *Todos os Poemas*. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> In her very practical essay "Stevens and Keats's 'To Autumn'," Helen Vendler recapitulates for poetry what Gombrich had proposed for painting: artists do not reproduce what they see but instead produce amalgams of preexisting representations. See Frank Lentricchia and Andrew Dubois, eds. *Close Reading*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003. 156-174.

<sup>6</sup> Belo defends the proposition that writing is tantamount to aggression in the text "Breve programa para uma iniciação ao canto" (in *Transporte no Tempo*).

<sup>7</sup> As in the following verse, further down in "Viagem à volta duma laranja": "A noite vem não serei nada em breve" (The night comes I will be nothing soon) (311).

<sup>8</sup> W. V. O. Quine made the following lapidary reference, in his decisive style, to the analysis of time in the context of Zeno's paradoxes: "a treatment of time as spacelike" (*Word and Object*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1967. 172). In Belo's poetry, time is not treated as spacelike, but as that which makes it possible for space to exist and encompasses it. Stanley Fish's observation, in *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), that "New Critical practice spacializes time" (268-69) is worth evoking in this context. Fish confronts us with the concept of modern or modernist analysis that reduces time to space, thus allowing for a unified vision of time. In Ruy Belo, no such unified vision blocks discontinuous temporality, but thematic criticism of his work—invested as it is in the content of time as a theme—is methodologically unable to move beyond making note of the essence of time through its examples, remaining blind to what I am calling the grammar of time in Belo's text.

<sup>9</sup> Entirely absent at this point from the critical literature on Belo's poetry, the strategy of gender analysis could take as one of its critical clues Barbara Johnson's chapter on "Gender and Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and Marceline Desbordes-Valmore" in her book *The Feminist Difference*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> One of the most consequential formulations of the expansion of the present, coupled with a critique of transcendental assumptions, may be found in the work of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. His "A Farewell to Interpretation" is particularly worth mentioning in this context, although it is in some ways a popularizing account of Gumbrecht's strongest insights on the subject of time and poetry, which are articulated in "Rhythm and Meaning." Both essays are included in the volume *Materialities of Communication* edited by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer and translated by William Whobrey (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> See his *Time Exposure: The Personal Experience of Time in Secular Societies*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> It would be a highly promising vein of analysis to read João Miguel Fernandes Jorge's poetry as a response to Ruy Belo's. For example, Fernandes Jorge's writing evidences a recovery of certain notions that had been rejected by Belo. A symptomatic case is Belo's critique of the term "pátria" (fatherland), for which he substitutes "país" (country), a word that recurs often in his texts. Fernandes Jorge returns to "pátria," thus marking his difference from his predecessor: the only anthology of Belo's poetry, published in 1973, is entitled *País Possível* (Possible Country), while Fernandes Jorge's own anthology, released in 2002, carries the title *A Pequena Pátria* (The Little Fatherland).

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