

Art

*A TRADIÇÃO COMO  
AVENTURA  
A URTIGA  
A VOZ DO LEAL  
ABÍLIO-JOSÉ SANTOS  
ALBERTO CARNEIRO  
ALMADA – UM NOME DE  
GUERRA  
ALTERNATIVA  
ALTERNATIVA ZERO  
ÁLVARO LAPA  
ÁLVARO SEIÇA  
ANA HATHERLY  
ANA JOTTA  
ANA VIEIRA  
ANTÓNIO ARAGÃO  
ANTÓNIO BARROS  
BARRISTAS E IMAGINÁRIOS  
BRUNO MINISTRO  
CATARINA ROSENDO  
CÍRCULO DE ARTES  
PLÁSTICAS DE COIMBRA  
DO VAZIO À PRÓ VOCAÇÃO  
E. M. DE MELO E CASTRO  
ECOS DO CATUJAL  
EDUARDO BATARDA  
ELVIRA LEITE*

*EMÍLIA TAVARES  
ENCONTRO DO GUINCHO  
ERNESTO DE SOUSA  
FERNANDO AGUIAR  
FERNANDO CALHAU  
HAPPY PEOPLE  
HIDRA  
HUGO CANOILAS  
IRENE BUARQUE  
ISABEL ALVES  
ISABEL CARLOS  
ISABEL CARVALHO  
JORGE PEIXINHO  
JOSÉ CARLOS COSTA  
MARQUES  
JOSÉ MIRANDA JUSTO  
LILIANA COUTINHO  
LOURDES CASTRO AND  
MANUEL ZIMBRO  
LUIZ VAZ 73  
MARIA DO MAR  
MARIANA SILVA  
MIGUEL VON HAFE PÉREZ  
NÓS NÃO ESTAMOS  
ALGURES  
NOVA  
NUNO FARIA*

*OPERAÇÃO  
OS 4 UNIDOS  
PAULA PINTO  
PAULO MENDES  
PAULO PIRES DO VALE  
POESIA EXPERIMENTAL  
PROJECTOS-IDEIAS  
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RUI TORRES  
SAAL  
SALETTE TAVARES  
SANDRA GUERREIRO DIAS  
SEMANA DA ARTE NA RUA  
SOFIA VICTORINO  
SUPERGOOD  
SUSANA LOURENÇO  
MARQUES  
THE PROMISED LAND  
THIS IS MY BODY  
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ERNESTO DE SOUSA AND SOME OTHER AESTHETIC OPERATORS IN PORTUGUESE ART AND POETRY FROM THE 1960s ONWARDS

# THE ZERO ALTERNATIVE: ERNESTO DE SOUSA AND SOME OTHER AESTHETIC OPERATORS IN PORTUGUESE ART AND POETRY FROM THE 1960s ONWARDS

OEI #80/81

# DIALOGUE AND OPENNESS IN PORTUGUESE EXPERIMENTAL POETRY RUI TORRES

The myriad of textual practices associated with Portuguese Experimental Poetry (concrete, visual, spatial, sound, and video forms of poetry, but also performances and happenings, as well as digital poetry) spotlights the difficult task of finding paths with cohesive aesthetic coordinates. Classifications and taxonomies are invariably incomplete and insufficient. These particular practices, or 'operations', as argued by Ernesto de Sousa concerning the work of Melo e Castro, place us before "uma nova dimensão, a qual resulta de uma nova análise" [a new dimension, resulting from a new analysis], articulated "na ausência de certas etiquetas" [in the absence of given labels] (1973b, p. 193). Surely "o importante é começar" [what is important is to begin] (Sousa 1974a, p. 40), and these manifestations may be considered "vertentes, modos operatórios" [operatory aspects, modes] (Sousa 1972, p. 29).

Such a verbicovisual dimension of intersemiotic practices is also an opportunity to address how different codes and artistic processes merge in contemporary art and poetry. Acting as *templates*, the processes articulated by experimental writing allow studying how different techniques of inscription are juxtaposed and interact with each other. Their keen awareness of the ludic sense of language underlies the "diluição de fronteiras entre as diferentes disciplinas estéticas, (...) da arte e da vida" [dilution of boundaries between different aesthetic disciplines, (...) of art and life] (Sousa 1973b, p. 195).

For this reason, the study of experimental poetry through guiding vectors allows a more adequate approach to the multiplicity and profusion (and confusion) of the available *corpus*. Therefore, we will use as guiding focus of this presentation of PO.EX the echoes established with some aesthetic proposals by Ernesto de Sousa, employing the concept of dialogue: 1) dialogue with the reader (the work interacting with the receiver, its openness to interpretation); 2) dialogue with writing (the work reflecting on code, the openness to otherness); and 3) dialogue with tradition (the work as rereading and rewriting, the opening to the repertoire, to the world).

On the other hand, the problematic of dialogue and openness is inseparable from a certain level of inter-

ference upon reality. In the Portuguese context of the 1960s and 1970s, experimental poetry saw the gesture of writing as a political act that opens in dialogue with the reader, the world, and tradition: "quanto mais débeis são as repressões organizativas, mais forte tem que ser o jogo das significações" [the weaker the organizational repressions are, the stronger the game of meanings must be] (Sousa 1978d, p. 250). As an effort of action and work towards change, writing allows *poeppractice* (poetic practice)<sup>1</sup> and *poelitics* (poetics + politics)<sup>2</sup>. Conversely, the 1980s and 1990s, free from the yoke of explicit dictatorship, were a moment of maturation and expansion of creative processes, opposing the obsolescence of form, fighting "moda, capricho ou imitação do-que-se-faz-lá-fora (...) combate urgente à comunicação e à obsolescência crescentes" [trend, whim or imitation of what-was-done-abroad (...) urgent combat to increasing communication and obsolescence] (Sousa 1974c, pp. 143-144). Subsequently, the adopted triangulation allows identifying how the categories themselves (mistrust of 'labels') are disaggregated: the dialogue with the reader places the text in the future, through unfinished writing; the dialogue with the materiality of writing places the text in the present of the world, through the otherness resulting from the self-reflexive process; and the dialogue with tradition seeks the text in the past, a necessary condition for present and future production. Ana Hatherly synthesizes the connection between these three aspects, since any critical act of reading and writing is always "meta-reading, creative reading", an appropriation that "reinvents reading" (1981, p. 142).

## POEPRACTICE AND POELITICS OF PO.EX

As a coordinated operatory activity, PO.EX<sup>3</sup> emerged in Portugal with the two issues of the magazine *Poesia Experimental* [Experimental Poetry], associated with other events such as happenings, exhibitions, book presentations, etc. The material and aesthetic variety that characterizes this set of interventions is signaled in the works reproduced in leaflets from those magazines. The dialogic and dialoguing aesthetics of those operations

constitutes first of all a *poepractice*. The first issue of the magazine *Poesia Experimental* was organized by António Aragão and Herberto Helder, in 1964, and includes an offprint by António Aragão, “Roma nce de iza mor fismo e poema fragmentário” [Roma nce of iza mor phism and fragmentary poem], whose discursive fragmentation and spatial syntax promoted the openness of the text to the “problems” with reading and writing. This poetics of rarefaction and constellation also echoes in other texts by António Barahona da Fonseca, António Ramos Rosa, and graphic poems (visual and concrete) by E. M. de Melo e Castro and Salette Tavares; in collages and “poemas encontrados” [found poems] by António Aragão; and in the fragments of a combinatorial expression by Herberto Helder’s “Máquina de emaranhar paisagens” [Machine to entangle landscapes].

In dialogue with tradition, the magazine published an anthology of texts by some contemporary antecedents such as Ângelo de Lima (sonnet from 1915), Mário Cesariny (“ditirambo” from 1958) and Emilio Villa (text of 1951), as well as Quirinus Kuhlmann, the German Baroque poet (1651-1689), translated by Ramos Rosa, and Luís de Camões (c.1524-1580). A warning from Helder accompanies these materials, with the reflection that “em princípio, não existe nenhum trabalho criativo que não seja experimental, nesse sentido em que ele supõe vigilância sobre o desgaste dos meios que utiliza e que procura constantemente recarregar de capacidade de exercício” [On principle, there is no creative work that is not experimental, in the sense that it presupposes vigilance regarding the decay of the media employed, while constantly attempting to recharge it with the ability to operate] (1964, p. 6). Consciousness and vigilance of form, game with reading and writing, some of these works are expanded in the gallery Divulgação, in Lisbon, in the collective exhibition *VISOPOEMAS*, with objects, paintings and posters; and manifested through the happening “Concerto e Audição Pictórica” [Concert and Pictorial Audition], with poetry, music and performances by Jorge Peixinho, António Aragão, Salette Tavares, E. M. de Melo e Castro, Clotilde Rosa, Mário Falcão and Manuel Baptista.

The second and last issue of the magazine was published in 1966, organized by Aragão, Helder and E. M. de Melo e Castro. It confirmed the dialogue with reading-writing, as in the text by António Aragão “Mirakaum (em 5 episódios)” [Mirakaum (in 5 episodes)], mixing calligraphy and typography, images and illustrations; Melo e Castro and his graphical score for “Música Negativa” [Negative Music]; Álvaro Neto with selected experiences from his *Gramática histórica* [Historical grammar]; “Letras” [Letters], by António Barahona da Fonseca; the calligraphies by Helder and Ana Hatherly; and “a primeira pessoa do singular do presente do indicativo do verbo reflexo encontrar-se” [the first person singular of the present indicative of the reflexive verb to be found], hybrid of calligraphy and typewriter, by Luiza Neto Jorge.

Other published works are the “homeóstato” [homeostasis machine] and fragments from the poems “experi-ânsia” [*experianxiety*] by José-Alberto Marques; graphic poems and a sound object program for random poetic procedure, “Parlapatisse” by Salette Tavares; and a booklet on musical notation written by the avant-garde musician Jorge Peixinho (1940-1995). In the dialogue with tradition and the *other* (extraneous), a semi-pictorial text by Lewis Carroll is published on the back cover,

as well as concrete and visual poems from Brazil (Pedro Xisto, Haroldo de Campos and Edgard Braga) and from France (Pierre Garnier and Henri Chopin).

This ‘Feast’ continued during the second half of the 1960s, with the publication of magazines such as *Operação 1* [Operation 1], organized by Melo e Castro in 1967, with a cover by João Vieira, including posters by António Aragão; the “Alfabeto Estrutural” [Structural Alphabet] by Ana Hatherly; “10 sintagramas” [10 syntagrams] by Melo e Castro; “9 homeóstatos” [9 homeostasis machines] by José-Alberto Marques; and “4 epithalamia” by Pedro Xisto. Also, *Operação 2*: “estruturas poéticas” [Operation 2: poetic structures] with works by Ana Hatherly. Both magazines had associated exhibitions: one inaugurated on April 13, 1967 at the gallery Quadrante, in Lisbon, with a conference-object with the participation of Ana Hatherly, E. M. de Melo e Castro, José-Alberto Marques and Jorge Peixinho, presented by José Augusto-França; and another on January 20, 1968, in the gallery Dominguez Alvarez, in Porto. The magazine *Hidra 2* [*Hydra 2*], organized by Melo e Castro in 1969, is also relevant regarding the dialogue of poetry with other arts, with real objects operating as “object-poems”, such as the leaflet “Faça o seu avião” [Make your own airplane] by Aragão; “mais exercícios de fonética” [more phonetic exercises] by Álvaro Neto (now signing as Liberto Cruz); “Atômico Acto” [Atomic Act], by Silvestre Pestana, a red balloon with a printed H, summarized by the text “Construir o poema / Destruir o objecto” [Build the poem/ Destroy the object]; the “Textos matéricos” [*Matteric Texts*] (boxes/ match boxes) by José-Alberto Marques; and “Sintagrama” [Syntagram] by Melo e Castro, handed out in an envelope.

The 1980s witnessed a new stage in the paths of literary experimentalism with the volume *Poemografias* [Poemographies], compiled by Fernando Aguiar and Silvestre Pestana. In the epigraph: “Este livro é uma introdução” [This book is an introduction], *Poemografias* indeed introduces a group of new authors persisting on the extension of poetry to other arts, as in the work by Abílio-José Santos, Alberto Pimenta, Antero de Alda and António Barros, and the statement “minimal na música minimal” [minimal in minimal music] by the musicologist and promoter of new music in Portugal, Jorge Lima Barreto (1949-2011). *Poemografias* was also an itinerant exhibition of visual poetry displayed in Lisbon, Torres Vedras, Évora and Coimbra (center and south of Portugal).

Although these collective actions and group involvement merit careful attention, experimental poetry (co) existed, as explained by Ernesto de Sousa relating to artists from the same generation, “sem contágio nem mudança. Sem começo nem acabamento. Rito sem passagem, festa sem orgia” [with no contamination or change. No beginning or ending. Rite without passage, Feast without orgy] (Sousa 1978a, p. 22). It was an act of resistance using polemic as a means. This liberating intention motivated, on the other hand, an incessant search for “um lugar próprio” [a place of its own] (Sousa 1978a, p. 22), attuned to the re-reading of tradition and the revisiting of form, re-inscribing them in the present, through staging and inflection: writing turned towards reading, towards the code of writing. It is also writing interfering in the social text – *poepractice* thus becomes *poelitics*. Not doing so in an isolated or even pioneering way, experimental poetry establishes a vital link with politics, promoting *poelitics*.

The aforementioned aesthetic operations testify to a radical change in the sensibility of the reader-public, and act as vectors of openness, dialogism and heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1983). Accustomed to passive contemplation, the reader is now a *wreader* (reader + writer) and *spectactor* (spectator + actor), terms originally proposed by Pedro Barbosa in Portuguese (*escreleitor* and *espectactor*). This regime of interaction (of dialogue and openness) requires a reassessment of one’s own way of (co) existing. The acting body of *wreading* inhabits the social text, and according to Eugen Gomringer in “From Line to Constellation”, “the aim of the new poetry is to give poetry an organic function in society again, and in doing so to restate the position of the poet in society” (1954).

Until April 1974, the date of the so-called Carnation Revolution, Portugal experienced a period of dictatorship that did not help the acceptance or dissemination of the experimental poets’ activities, considered subversive. They were “vasos incomunicáveis” [non-communicating vessels] (Sousa 1978a, p. 22). More than an ‘ungrateful cause’, an inglorious task, slow and isolated. The refusal and opposition to the Salazar regime and the colonial war was an attack on the “discurso retrógrado que então parecia querer dominar um largo sector das nossas letras, em reflexo dum meio que vivia ancorado na acomodação e no marasmo” [retrograde discourse at the time dominating a large portion of our literary sector, reflecting a society that was frozen in accommodation and stagnation] (Hatherly 1985, p. 15). Experimental poetry was thus presented as an “acto de rebeldia contra um *status quo* mas também um questionar profundo da razão de ser do acto criador e dos moldes em que ele vinha sendo praticado” [act of rebellion against the establishment, but also a deep questioning of the justification for the creative act and how it was exercised] (Hatherly 1985, p. 15).

This transgressive (*poepractice*) and subversive (*poelitics*) effect was implicit in a “gozo lúdico da criatividade, tão tradicionalmente nossos [dos Portugueses]” [ludic enjoyment of creativity, so traditionally Portuguese] (Hatherly 1995, p. 15). And according to Melo e Castro and Hatherly:

[a] Poesia Experimental portuguesa atacou e ataca destrutivamente o código fossilizado da leitura sentimentalista e opressiva da língua portuguesa no momento preciso em que o sistema político fascista dele mais se reclama (no início da década de 60) para galvanizar o povo para as guerras do Ultramar. [Portuguese Experimental Poetry deadly attacked and attacks the fossilized code of the sentimentalist, oppressive reading of the Portuguese language at a precise moment when the fascist political system of the early 1960s galvanized the people concerning the overseas wars.] (1981, p. 176).

Ernesto de Sousa also sought this “esperança libertadora de encontrar uma função ritualista de participação para o acto estético, de reinventar a FESTA” [liberating hope of finding a ritualistic function of participation for the aesthetic act, to reinvent the FEAST] (1973a, p. 62). The *Feast* is the liberation from the yoke, but also from form, from the crystallization of the living forces from the past. In her aesthetic theory, Salette Tavares refers to this sociological dimension of art, which implies an “activa penetração poética em todos os planos da vida humana ao nível do quotidiano” [active poetic penetra-

tion in all planes of human life at the level of daily life] (1989, pp. 45-46).

Therefore, if the action of these disseminator-operators contributed to a re-evaluation and renewal of the literary text, according to Hatherly “[ela foi feita] quer do ponto de vista da produção quer do ponto de vista da análise crítica” [it was made both from the point of view of production and from the point of view of critical analysis] (1985, p. 15), mixing the relationship between producer and promoter. As put by Ernesto de Sousa, “ao mesmo tempo que se é produtor força é que se seja também promotor” [at the same time that one is a producer, one is necessarily also a promoter] (1973b, p. 194).

Tavares’ booklet in the second issue of *Poesia Experimental*, ironically entitled “Brincade iras / Brincade irras / B irras”,<sup>5</sup> includes the “poemas em -al” [poems in -al], “Al gar ismos Alfinete” [Di gi ts Fidgets] and “Álvaro Alberto”, an homage to Fernando Pessoa (his heteronyms *Álvaro* de Campos and *Alberto* Caeiro), some of them ‘upside down’. Ludic, or rather a “alfinetada política, que sempre as dei ultimamente de pernas para o ar, pois a argúcia da censura voltava as páginas ao contrário mas não se lembrava de as virar de pernas para o ar em poemas maluquinhos” [political nipping, which I have always given them lately upside down, because the shrewdness of censorship turned the pages upside down but did not remember turning them upside down in crazy little poems] (Tavares 1975, p. 18). These (typographical and visual) games criticize and ridicule the (repressive) military and police power of the time. The salutation of respect for hierarchies (*Alvíssaras, Almirante* [Hail, Admiral]) is satirical, and the term *Admiral* is connoted to police repression and ensuing corruption: “almojarife algema/ algoz algibeira” [stockman handcuff/ hangman pocket]. This progressive order also invokes the liaison between dictatorship and (the Catholic) Church: “altar alterna” [altar alternates/*hustler*]. As ironically advocated by Tavares, for censorship, “a força da gravidade era de cima para baixo, em todas as matérias” [the force of gravity was from *top to bottom*, in any case] (1975, p. 18).

The (r)evolution is also, as suggested by António Barros, “a poesia duma lucidez perigosa” [the poetry of a dangerous lucidity] (1985, p. 125). Hence, this artist’s production, such as “Escravos” [Slaves] and “Revolução” [Revolution], both from 1977, and more recently “Lástima” [Sorrow] (2014), indicates a transgressive restlessness through the systematic eagerness to rethink the revolutionary process in Portugal. “Escravos” was an object-text and *obgesto* [*obgesture*] printed on a white cloth (also available in graphic version), in which the term “escravos” [slaves] is progressively transformed by deletion and re-inscription in another term: “cravos” [carnations]. The repetition in a minimalistic approach becomes difference, disarticulating and dismantling the meaning of the supposed liberation (of the Carnation Revolution). It is a circular process, inscribing in the aesthetic operation a fold that reflexively refers to the *poelitic* aspects of the experimentalist intervention in the Portuguese context. Also in “Revolução” this path (that direction or that circling around) is suggested and built from *Resolução* [Resolution] to *Revolução* [Revolution] to *Evolução* [Evolution], and again to *Resolução* [Resolution], printed in white on a long black cloth.

More recently, in “Lástima” *artitude* [*artitude*] with texts painted over 40 black carnations, Barros presents

a manifesto (sent to the Portuguese Parliament) exalting (and criticizing) the 40th anniversary of the ‘Carnation Revolution’ of April 25th. These variations on the letter P, referred to by the author as *pautizações performativas* [performative scores], should read: “pátria; pobre; Portugal” [fatherland; poor; Portugal]. According to Barros: “Volvido este arco temporal de quatro décadas obriga a acender a consciência e olhar o país de pessoas reais, onde, à arte cumpre denunciar a sua dor, a sua lástima, e o já pânico perante uma ditadura emergente, mas uma outra, esta vestida de cosméticas diversas e prolixas divinizações sofisticadas a esconder o abismo ameaçador” [After this four-decade long time-frame, [poetry] forces us to light up the conscience and look at the country of real people, whose art must denounce pain, sorrow, and the panic before an emerging dictatorship, a different one, disguised in multiple cosmetics and prolific sophisticated divinizations hiding the menacing abyss] (2014, n.p.).

In a radical way, António Aragão, in *Os bancos: antes da nacionalização* [Banks: before nationalization], from 1975 shortly after the Revolution, with collaboration in photography by Helmut M. Winkelmayer, satirizes the role of banks, appropriating bureaucratic forms (credit notes, debit lists, signature formularies) diverting them to an inscription of concrete poems replacing the usual text. In harmony with aspects that characterize concrete poetry, such as spatialization and the constellation-like organization of signifiers, this piece proposes overcoming the verse as a rhythmic-formal unity, replacing it with homologues and iconic relations between writing and image. In other texts by the same author, “a transgressão, o humor, a denúncia e o absurdo” [transgression, humor, denunciation and absurdity] (Melo e Castro 2015, p. 132) play a central role.

Also in his *electrografias* [electrographies], namely *Electrografia 1, ou o elogio da loura de Ergasmo nu Atlânticu* [Electrography 1, or the eulogy of the blonde of Ergasmus nude Atlantarse], published in 1990, the author uses manipulation procedures resorting to the photocopy machine. These visual texts, in a series of three books published in 1990 by his own publishing house Vala Comum [Mass Grave], synthesize his whole work, at the same time establishing a dialogue with similar electrographies developed by other authors associated with Portuguese literary experimentalism, such as António Dantas, António Nelos and César Figueiredo. Integrated in an international network of copy-art, the work of these artists was “mantido à margem dos circuitos de distribuição comercial” [kept aside the commercial distribution channels] (Ministro 2015, n.p.) as many others were.

#### DIALOGUES: READING-WRITING; REREADING-REWRITING

In a text about Melo e Castro, Ernesto de Sousa stated: “poesia experimental – num país onde experimentar verdadeiramente assume uma tal singularidade marginal, que não longe se fica do *mau sujeito*, lumpen-intelectual nunca livre de várias suspeições” [experimental poetry – in a country where true experimentation assumes such a marginal singularity, not far from the *bad guy*, lumpen-intellectual never free from various suspicions] (1973b, p. 193). This sense of marginalization generated a feeling of beings “exilados-no-seu-próprio-país” [exiled-in-their-own-country] (Sousa 1977, p. 68).

It was therefore required a ‘ground zero’. After the combative phase before April, new challenges: “a exploração do talento é uma das características alienadoras do nosso tempo. Talento e especialização constituem os parâmetros de uma sociedade tecnocrata e de consumo” [the exploration of talent is one of the alienating characteristics of our time. Talent and specialization are the parameters of a technocratic consumerist society] (Sousa 1974a, p. 39). In tune with the aesthetic proposals of Ana Hatherly and Salette Tavares, Ernesto de Sousa, among others, suggested a “combate urgente à comunicação e à obsolescência crescentes; resposta às inquietações e às esperanças mais válidas de agora e aqui” [urgent fight against increasing communication and obsolescence; response to the most valid concerns and the hopes of here and now] (1974c, pp. 143-144).

The ‘dialogue scene’ infatuates the fight against the obsolescence of objects and forms. From this dialogue, considered “heterologia, aceitação da lógica do outro, confronto das pedras e das tecnologias do homem, colheita dos restos, entrelaço do visível” [heterology, acceptance of the logic of the other, confrontation of the stones and technologies of man, harvest of the remains, intertwining of the visible] (Sousa 1979, p. 51), results the game, the creative act. The game is liberation, dialogue with others: “Jogo, desperdício, contentamento ao serviço directo da libido, do fausto, da desmesura, e em última análise do amor” [Game, waste, contentment at the direct service of libido, pomp, excess, and ultimately love] (Sousa 1979, p. 48). Therefore, a full exercise of freedom implied a “valorização (...) do brinquedo. Ludificação” [valorization of the toy. Ludification] and therefore the “[v]alorização do efémero” [valorization of the ephemeral] (Sousa 1973a, p. 61).

*Poepractice* and *poelitics* thus paved the way for the open work dialogue, “predomínio do processo sobre o objecto, do conceito sobre a coisa” [predominance of process over object, of concept over thing], since the relationship between spectacle and spectator is changed through *mixed-media*, in a “renovo da festa, oralidade, (...) participação, (...) con-vívio” [renovation of the *feast*, orality, (...) participation, (...) con-vivality] (Sousa 1974c, pp. 143-144). The necessary break, or the *death of art* (Sousa 1974a, p. 39) is thus a *giving birth to* and a “valorização do diálogo interrompido” [valuation of the interrupted dialogue] (Sousa 1978c, p. 205); the awareness of the processuality of writing and of the text’s openness and intentional incompleteness fosters new relationships between author and reader, rewriting and rereading, of dialogue as migration, as abolition of all frontiers.

Although the openness of the work of art was theorized by Umberto Eco departing from the study of electronic music that required the participation of the interpreter for co-creation and execution, Eco was aware that this openness of form also finds precedents and echoes in Baroque aesthetics, whose dynamic forms allow and encourage a game of perspective on the part of the reader. Eco understood that playing with language (‘langue’) through speech (‘parole’) involves constraints: there does not seem to be freedom without rules that define the conditions of that same freedom. In this sense, the recovery of Baroque poetry by Ana Hatherly, seeking the genesis of visualism and textual combinatory in the experiences of image-texts, including hieroglyphs, ideograms, cryptograms, diagrams, and other identifiable poetic objects and texts (1981, p. 141),

was significant. These remote achievements and idealizations constitute one of the aesthetic and material precedents for experimental poetry.

The openness of forms transforms perception into co-creation: the aesthetic object is completed at the moment of perception, because “o espectador é o último executante, que toda a obra de arte exige para a plenitude da sua existência” [the spectator is the last performer, required for any work of art to fulfill its existence] (1965a, p. 600). The poetic form is thus a “potencialidade actualizável” [updatable potential] (1965b, p. 43), allowing to “revivificar os elementos adormecidos” [resuscitation of dormant elements], and thus “transcender os tempos” [to transcend time] (1965b, p. 42).

Any text has therefore blank spaces allowing the reader to establish his/her own relationships of signification, always having something new to discover by a new reading. Notwithstanding, Ernesto de Sousa, in a text about José Rodrigues, radicalizes: “Às ilusões da obra aberta opõe-se a não-obra. O acto estético não seria, pois, obra aberta, mas simplesmente abertura, não obra, não objecto, mas projecto, num processo” [The illusions of open work are opposed by non-work. The aesthetic act would not be open work, but merely openness, not work, not object, but project, in a process] (Sousa 1974b, p. 113). The ability to “exercer a liberdade” [exercise freedom] (Sousa 1973b, p. 196) suffers from chronic instability, indeterminacy, the only aspects truly leading to reader participation.

In his “Poemas cinéticos” [Kinetic poems] from 1966, a set of manipulable texts, Melo e Castro proposes a “sintaxe dinâmica” [dynamic syntax] open to dialogue with the “utente do poema” [poem user] (Hatherly and Melo e Castro 1981, p. 159), who is invited to handle and eventually destroy the textual object(s). The possibility of modifying the object-text forces the reader into a physical involvement with the text’s own media, and often the text itself. The poem thus becomes a hybrid, intermediate entity, surpassing the exclusiveness of verbal language and typographic elements, promoting the articulation with plastic elements that anticipate the exploration of the possibilities of video and motion pictures, since signs are *iconicized* through space-time relationships.

Although the published catalogue of object-poems can only present planographic surrogates of the originals exhibited in June 1966 at the Gallery 111, in Lisbon, in 1968<sup>6</sup>, Melo e Castro later produced the *Caixa-Objecta* [Object(a)-Box], a unique set of these and other leaflet poems and interactive texts, proving that kinetic forms require space and body to reframe interaction and participation.

Also establishing a dialogue with the reader, Ana Hatherly’s “Metaleitura” [Meta-reading] written between 1968 and 1969, book IV of *Anagramático* [Anagrammatic] (1970), uses procedures based on recursivity that result in a set of seven variations. A theorem proposed by the author underlies this experience of textual transmutation and openness to writing and reading: game and processuality. As explained by Hatherly: “Ao nível do significado, um texto poético possui tal integridade funcional e é constituído por elementos de tal modo autónomos que suporta sem prejuízo as fragmentações mais sistemáticas” [At the level of meaning, a poetic text has such functional integrity and is constituted by such autonomous elements that it supports

without prejudice the more systematic fragmentations] (2001, p. 236). For an open reading, marked by ephemerality and variability, to destroy the text is always to open it for new reconfigurations, departing from an initial integral text, upon which the operations follow: elimination of the text’s keywords; elimination of verbs; elimination of the third word in each group of five; negative of the previous; etc.

Dialogue with writing (considered as the awareness of communication) encourages the game of interpretation, facing the text as unfinished and changeable; an overcoming of boundaries and frontiers that transfigures the code itself. Although it consists of a graphical representation of orality (linear, spatial, arbitrary, and abstract), writing is always a problem for the poet, who then turns to signic materiality, understood as a notation system. To subvert the logical structures is to disaggregate the implicit ideological structures. Thus, for Ernesto de Sousa, Hatherly turns her “atenção para os sinais da escrita que se transformam em sinais pictóricos” [attention to the writing signs that turn into pictorial signs] (Sousa 1983, p. 174), and writing is “escrituração” [scribing] and “escravatura da escrita” [slavery of writing] (p. 175), an absolutely modern writing, turned towards freedom and therefore “para-a-resposta” [towards-the-answer] (Sousa 1978c, p. 204).

Openness and dialogue, in Ana Hatherly, are keys to invent a “arte política” [political art] (1978c, p. 208), because “a escrita é sempre um acto político” [writing is always a political act] (p. 208). Often included in anthologies of Portuguese experimental poetry, Emerenciano’s works also mix writing as gesture with painting as an act of writing, hence, *escrituras* [writpaintings]. As in the paradox ‘escrever uma pintura; pintar literatura’ [to write a painting; to paint literature] coined by Dimitrije Basicovic Mangelos. This plastic and gestural dimension of writing signals yet another way of dealing with openness, by the degree of illegibility achieved. The hand that writes is released from the line (and space and arbitrariness), causing the artist to see writing in a gestural way, as explained in *Mapas da Imaginação e da Memória* [Maps of Imagination and Memory] (1973), freeing himself/herself from the constraints of language.

In *O Escritor* [The Writer] (1975), a narrative composed of 27 moments where each drawing is a frozen frame on the page, as explained by Hatherly in the introductory note, the writer’s portrait is in symbiosis with the body and the writing of the body, documenting how they become autonomous, how the writer disappears, that is, “o modo como o escritor substitui a fala pela escrita, que é a sua voz mais alta, mais ambígua” [how the writer replaces speech for writing, which is his/her highest, most ambiguous voice]. Hence “o leitor torna-se uma testemunha que depõe, agindo” [the reader becomes a witness who testifies by acting] (Hatherly 1975, n.p.).

Previously, in *Alfabeto Estrutural* [Structural Alphabet], Hatherly actually proposed a ‘new writing’; conceptual writing organizing eight basic characters in open or closed structures (hence, free), similar to ideogrammatic systems. Firstly, freedom due to the ideogrammatic nature of joining distinct sign elements to produce new forms of reading and interpretation. Secondly, freedom due to the ‘keyless alphabet’ proposed, which places creative freedom in the combinatory process, in the poetic game (‘calculation of probabilities’), in the openness to the senses; openness

to the other, the writing of the other, dialogue with the foreigner. Manuel Castro Caldas speaks of a ‘magic function’, but also of ‘pillage’. That is, “o reverso de todo colonialismo” [the reverse of all colonialism] (1992, p. 108). By appropriation of the stranger (the other, in this case the Chinese characters) the artist ends up “mostrar a escrita, não o escrito” [showing the writing, not the written] (Hatherly 1973).

Fernando Aguiar, in *Rede de canalização: uma intervenção consoante* [Plumbing network: a consonant intervention] (1987), captures in a book with photographs an activity of *perfoepoesia* [perfoepoetry], integrating live multidisciplinary action and subsequently expanding the poetic territory to the expressiveness of the body and the social and spatial context of the manifestation. This sort of performance or poetic action was carried out by other poets such as Silvestre Pestana, Gabriel Rui Silva, Alberto Pimenta and Manuel Portela, among others.

Abílio-José Santos also considered writing as gesture. As remarked by Alberto Pimenta, refusing the theoretical system of the concrete poets, his work was always marginalized. For this poet “todo o fundamento epistemológico é repressivo” [any epistemological fundament is repressive] (Pimenta, 1988, n.p.). Writing is thus presented as a liberation mechanism for imagination (game, and dialogue, as in his *diálogos imprevistos* [unforeseen dialogues] of 1992).

For Eunice Ribeiro, Abílio articulates a “escrita-gesto dotada de um carácter processual e exigindo o total envolvimento do sujeito” [procedural writing-gesture, requiring full involvement of the subject] (Ribeiro, 1995, n.p.). In the booklet entitled *Escrita* [Writing] (1992), for example, a hand draws three words as wires: ink, wire, and knot. A ludic play with writing emerges from that hand, which creates but also destroys. It is a dialogue of the writer with the space of the page, liberated from topology. Abílio’s work articulates an exchange between the plastic component, printing, and collage techniques, lending his works a hybrid materiality and allowing his writings new expressivities.

Experimental poetry thus pays attention to the processes of writing and reading, dissolving the codes and promoting dialogues. It would therefore be inevitable to seek a living tradition, that is, a tradition as action, rather than as inspiration. In the first issue of *Poesia Experimental*, Herberto Helder states that “a tradição é um movimento” [tradition is a movement] (1964, p. 6). For Ernesto de Sousa, to dialogue with tradition is to understand “tradição-como-futuro, como-aventura” [tradition-as-future, as-adventure] (1978a, p. 22), since “sem tradição não há aventura” [without tradition there is no adventure] (1983, p. 170). As in *Re-Camões*, by Melo e Castro (1980), or in “Leonorana”, by Ana Hatherly (1965-70), where the authors use Camões’ texts as motto to carry out textual permutations and extensions. According to Sousa there are “Camões e o absolutamente novo” [Camões and the absolutely new] (1978). Furthermore, for Sousa tradition is seen as “um Lugar, casa do mundo e aventura (o poema), vanguarda” [a Place, house of the world and adventure (the poem), avant-garde] (1978e, p. 255), because “falar de novo não significa ódio ao antigo. O novo é sempre polémico, é o desejo, mas o corpo do desejo só pode ser antigo (existente, em acto)” [speaking of the new does not mean hatred of the old. The new is always controversial, it is desire, but the body of desire can only be ancient

(existing, in action)] (1978e, p. 259). Form is opened to dialogue through the ages, and the avant-garde, under these terms, does not fear the past. Therefore, as for the experimental poets, for Ernesto de Sousa too it is always necessary to “voltar constantemente atrás (o tempo perdido) se se quer andar para a frente” [constantly go back (lost time) in order to move forward] (p. 260), because “o antigo é condição do novo, para se reencontrar o tempo é preciso perdê-lo (...)” [the old is the condition of the new; to find time again one must lose it (...)] (Sousa, 1978e, p. 260).

Openness of form and authorial, mobile and liquid performativity; heterogeneity articulated in exchange and dialogue with tradition: not as a literary property, but as tacit appropriation. In addition to Camões, and before the Baroque poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also the polyphony of medieval *Cancioneiros* [songs of the troubadours] is for experimental poets an open form, available for revisiting. What the Brazilian poet Haroldo de Campos called *transculturação* [transculturation], crossing poetry and music, dance, choreography. Moreover, as explained by Maria dos Prazeres Gomes (1993), the medieval repertoire was experienced as a social/ private miscegenation. That is, as participation. Troubadour poetry is also inclined to ritual, to dialogism and heteroglossia. So, no wonder that the vanguard is presented as a tradition in the sense of an “tradição aberta, passível de decomposição e recomposição” [open tradition, decomposing and recomposing] according to Asor Rosa (2005, pp. 324-325).

Consequently, from the *Cancioneiros* (13th century) to Camões (16th century), from Baroque (17th century) to Futurism (20th century), the recovery of a (living) tradition is an act of rereading and part of a *cultur-morfologia* [culturmorphology], as coined by Haroldo de Campos (Campos, Pignatari e Campos 1965, p. 24). Hatherly explains: “se para uns a tradição existe e deve ser imitada, para outros, se existe é para ser reinventada” [for some, tradition exists and must be replicated, but for others, it exists in order to be reinvented] (1985, p. 17). In “Leonorana” (1965-70), Book III from *Anagramático* [Anagrammatic] (1970), Ana Hatherly proposes a set of (open) textual variations taking as motto the villancico by Camões “Descalça vai pera a fonte / Leonor pela verdura; / vai formosa e não segura” [To the fountain barefoot she goes / Leonor through the meadows; / fair she goes and not cautious]. The variations operated on the text by Camões are multiple: synthesis, thematic and formal atomization, coerced consonance, visual semantization, inscription of unintelligibility processes, systematic and combinatorial permutation, interference of neologisms, calligraphic transcription, constellation.

In the book *Outrora Agora* [Once Now] (1993), Maria dos Prazeres Gomes proposes a cartography of the dialogical relations in the Portuguese poetry of invention, identifying a “movimento plagiotrópico das formas culturalmente fixadas” [plagiotropic movement of culturally determined forms] (p. 19). Texts staging the transformation and devouring of tradition, in an attitude that the author designates as “crítico-lúdico-transgressora” [critical-ludic-transgressive] (p. 22). This ‘translation’ operation constitutes a “releitura crítica da tradição” [critical reinterpretation of tradition] (p. 20), and it is due to this sort of texts that the plagiotropic movement may be established as “movimento inalienável da literatura” [inalienable movement

in (the history of) literature] (p. 20). In addition to a reevaluation of the literary canon, this rereading, according to Hartherly and Melo e Castro, is useful “NÃO para justificar o Experimentalismo do século XX – que se justifica a si próprio – mas porque permitindo verificar como certos tipos de criatividade se produzem ao longo dos tempos através de processos semelhantes, mesmo quando o meio ambiente e até os objectivos imediatos diferem, esse conhecimento proporciona novos ângulos de visão não só da genealogia das formas mas das próprias mentalidades que lhe subjazem” [NOT to justify the twentieth-century Experimentalism – which is self-justifiable – but because it allows knowing how some sorts of creativity are produced over time through similar processes, even when the environment and immediate targets differ, this knowledge provides new insights not only regarding the genealogy of forms but regarding the underlying mentalities] (1981, p. 17).

Therefore, experimental poetry is dialogue, freedom. Freedom to open the text for readers’ participation; freedom to demolish/ disassemble/ reveal the code(s) of writing itself; freedom to appropriate materials, reconverting them upon new contexts; freedom to mix genres and integrate different material configurations; freedom, finally, to dialogue with the past.

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1 "Poeprática" [poepractice] is a neologism introduced in a PO.EX retrospective from 1980 in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Lisbon. In the catalogue of this exhibition, as underlined by José-Alberto Marques: "there was a POEPRÁTICA..." (1985, 89). Moreover, as Marques explained, the "textos / objectos / intervenções possuíam, eles mesmos, uma componente teórica implícita" [texts/ objects/ interventions themselves had an implicit theoretical component] (Marques 1985, 89).

2 Neologism used in the catalogue of an exhibition of Spanish visual poetry in Madrid and New York: Poe(li)tical Object: Experimental Poetry from Spain: Spanish experimental poetry / Poetic object (New York; National Chalcography, 1989).

3 Acronym for POesia.EXperimental (EXperimental POetry) created by E. M. de Melo e Castro for the exhibition PO.EX/80, in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Lisbon, and used in the title of the book PO.EX: Theoretical texts and documents (1981).

4 'Feast' (Festa) is the term coined by Ernesto de Sousa to represent those manifestations, in the Dionysian sense of appealing to emotions and instincts.

5 Salette Tavares comments: "a minha palavra, frente a tanta cabeça dura de miolos moles, com a tesoura que lhe meti ficou dividida com raiva pura" [My words, before so many strong headed with soft brains, with the scissors I've put in it, got divided in plain anger] (1975, 18).

6 Regarding the anthology Visão/Vision (1972), by Melo e Castro, addressed by Ernesto de Sousa concerning the issue of the (flat) pages in works with a (tridimensional) plastic dimension, Sousa stated: "Fazer uma antologia da efemeridade pode parecer absurdo: mas trata-se apenas de utilizar as armas do inimigo" [Making an anthology of ephemerality may seem absurd: but it's only about using the enemy's weapons] (Sousa 1973b, 194). In fact, as he writes in another text, truly modern art "contém em si a sua própria destruição. O quadro não consente moldura" [bears within itself its own destruction. The painting refuses framing] (Sousa 1977, 75).

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