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**Intertextuality and Intratextuality in the  
Pessoan Epic: *Mensagem***

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*O futuro é um nevoeiro fechado  
sobre o Tejo sem barcos, só um  
grito aflito ocasional na bruma.*

António Lobo Antunes  
(*Os cus de Judas*)

#### **1.1. Geographies of (Semi-Peripheral) Modernism**

Rarely the history of a country's literature displays such a thematic and coherent circularity as the Portuguese one. The grammar of the Lusitanian poetic language, in fact, unflaggingly leans upon a few firm pillars. Actually, the coordinates of the Portuguese imagery are composed of the Atlantic Ocean and Europe, which are conceptually and ideally silhouetted as two granitic interlocutors and as the fundamental tropes of both literary texturing and geopolitical imagination. Perhaps it would be even more appropriate to affirm that political geography and literature have illustrated, from centuries, the resounding chambers and the philology of this country's self-telling and self-representation punctuated by a still unresolved dialogue with the European continent. If the dialogue with the Atlantic Ocean is marked by the epic celebration of the Lusitanian maritime history, the longing towards a European recognition is crafted through a continuous and persistent anxiety of inclusion. Recently, Roberto Vecchi contended that this yearning is emblematically

immortalized in the paving opposite the *Mosteiro of Jerónimos*, at Belém, where a marble memorial tablet celebrates the entry of Portugal into the European Union in 1985:

*A sorprendere è appunto il luogo: la Praça do Império vera enciclopedia storica a cielo aperto dell'espansione oltremarina, non solo per la vicinanza, a due passi, della Torre di Belém e dello spettrale e retorico Padrão dos descobrimentos dominato dalla figura del principe Dom Henrique, mitologico promotore quattrocentesco delle scoperte. Ma anche perché questa piazza imperiale fu, nel 1940, sede della più imponente teatralizzazione del Portogallo imperiale, quell'Esposizione del mondo portoghese che il regime salazariano aveva tenacemente voluto, nonostante il contesto internazionale di guerra, e che esibiva una vastissima sezione coloniale. [...]Potrebbe dunque sembrare a qualcuno eccentrica la decisione di fissare il monumento della rifondazione europea del Portogallo nel luogo storicamente più antieuropeo del paese. Invece è una spia significativa di un vero complesso europeo di Lisbona<sup>1</sup>. (Vecchi 2010, 79-80)*

Although, if in the late 1970s Eduardo Lourenço proposed a process of demythologization of Portuguese history, a release from its fictive self-perception, from the mid-to-late 1990s, the essayist was convinced that as a consequence of this “*autognosis*”, Portugal was ready to become a key European country, a “ship-nation” capable of ferrying Europe across modernity. As a leading European country, Portugal would have been able to amalgamate and even out differences and diversities to achieve an ever more converging perspective. Nevertheless, in addition to this openly idealistic projection which

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<sup>1</sup> [«What comes as a surprise is the place: the *Praça do Império*, the real and under the open sky encyclopedia of the overseas expansions, not only because it is a few steps from the Belém Tower and from the spectral and rhetorical *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* dominated by the figure of Dom Henrique, mythological promoter of the XV<sup>th</sup> century's discoveries. Moreover, in 1940 that imperial square was the place of the hugest over-dramatization of the imperialist Portugal, the Exhibition of the Portuguese world that Salazar's regime had firmly wanted ignoring the international war context, and that displayed a wide colonial section. [...] Thus the decision of placing the Portugal's European re-establishment monument precisely in the place which was historically more non-European in the country could appear to someone eccentric. By contrast, this is a significant hint of a real Lisbon's European complex»]. (my translation)

Lourenço himself declared as both utopian and pragmatic, a few dystopian and scientific perspectives have emerged. The entry into the European Union, in fact, was contemporary hailed by José Saramago with *A jangada de pedra*, issued in 1986, where the Nobel Prize writer imagines the Iberian Peninsula breaking away from the European continent displaying an apocalyptic pan-Iberian utopia. On the other hand, in the same years, the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos developed the concept of *semi-periphery* coined by Wallerstein in order to single out the Portugal's peculiar anomaly.

Over the centuries, literature has represented an important mirror of the Portuguese geopolitical dynamics. Probably, Fernando Pessoa's poetry outlines a full-bodied image of a crossroads moment in the Lusitanian historical parabola. By the same token, the sociologic perspective offers, in this regard, a two-fold chance of understanding his work and *Mensagem* in particular. Actually, it makes a close focusing feasible, i.e. the possibility of foreseeing the poetic objective through the Pessoaan epic lens which reveals the double tension between Europe and the Atlantic Ocean. On the other hand, it discharges the figure of Fernando Pessoa himself from a certain critique that would fix his image in a yellowed daguerreotype of a small, dusty, and faraway country. It is precisely in an article entitled "Estado e sociedade na semiperiferia do sistema mundial: o caso português" that Boaventura de Sousa Santos places a similarity between Portugal and other semi-peripheral European such as Greece, Spain, and Ireland. In this way, not only does the Portuguese sociologist charts a geographical and economic map of the semi-peripheral conceptualization, but he also makes reasonable the inclusion of Fernando Pessoa in the modernist geography starting from Seferis to Joyce, and Unamuno. A thread passing through the parallel but distant cities of Lisbon and Dublin can be traced



unifying the different but yet full of affinities poetics of Joyce and Pessoa. There is a mirror image which represents most symbolically their respective ways of understanding the semi-periphery. If Joyce had defined Irish art as the cracked looking glass of a servant, Pessoa turns this looking glass into the episteme of a Janus-faced national identity. Fernando Pessoa, in fact, produces a multiplication of lyrical identities able to re-populate his bereft Portugal while Joyce makes of Ireland a huge literary *chronotope* able to expand beyond its borders:

The drawing of this caricature would only be possible through a move from the serious world's inaccessible core to its outer contemplating and expressive limits. But, like Pessoa's Portugal, Joyce's Ireland scarcely needed to make that move, requiring only a change of focus, as it was already painfully – and conveniently – located at the serious world's periphery, one of the prerequisites (together with the contradictory inflated memories of a glorious past) to apply for a full time job at the world's fairest mirror. (Lage Pinto Basto 2008, 167)

Nonetheless, the question that the Irish nationalist addresses to Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses'* XII chapter could be valuable for both of them: “*What is a nation?*”. The difficult issue of nationalism and nationality in relation to Joyce has already been explored in terms of fiction, grotesque, and irony but even a quick glance at a few Joycean articles or essays such as *Ireland at the Bar* and *Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages*, make a lexicon apparent which is very common among those semi-peripheral modernist authors to which Fernando Pessoa legitimately belongs.

## 1.2. Fernando Pessoa Between Nationalism and Modernism

Fernando Pessoa returns to Portugal in 1905. Having spent his whole childhood in South Africa, he eventually decides to renounce to his naturalization as English and goes back to Lisbon for good. This decision is fundamental to the understanding of his life-long concern with the role of poetry in relation to the enhancement of the nation, his profound willingness to take part in the rebuilding of a new kind of nationality and nationalism. In 1908, shortly after his return, Pessoa writes:

*O meu intenso sofrimento patriótico, o meu intenso desejo de melhorar o estado de Portugal, provocam em mim – como exprimir com que ardor, com que intensidade! – mil projectos que, mesmo se realizáveis por um só homem, exigiriam dele uma característica puramente negativa em mim. Força de vontade. Mas sofro – até aos limites da loucura, juro-o, como se tudo eu pudesse fazer sem, no entanto, o poder realizar, por deficiência de vontade. É um sofrimento horrível que, afirmo-o, me mantém constantemente nos limites da loucura. E, depois, incompreendido. Ninguém suspeita do meu amor patriótico mais intenso do que de todos aqueles a quem encontro ou conheço.<sup>2</sup> (Pessoa, Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação 1996, 7–8)*

The detachment, from the home country during his youth assumes psychological as well as literary traits. The distance from the place of origin seems to be lived as a traumatic parting from his roots, while contemporary, within the Pessoaan conscience, he is never really devoid of a strong literary involvement, which appears in all his firm desire to free his country from the threats of parochialism and peripheral culture. Furthermore, in 1890 Britain

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<sup>2</sup> [«My deep patriotic grief, my deep desire to improve the Portuguese situation, triggers in me – how to explain with how much fervor and intensity – thousands projects that, even if realizable just by a single man, would require from him a prerogative which is purely negative in myself. Willpower. But I suffer – till the limits of madness, I swear, just as I could do it while not being able to realize it because of a lack of willpower. It's a terrible grief that, I can affirm it, keeps me constantly on the border of foolness. And then, not understood. Nobody imagines my patriotic enthusiasm which is deeper than in anyone I meet or I know»]. (my translation)

proclaims its Ultimatum to the Portuguese colonial expansion decreeing its renewed decadence (two years later Portugal is declared bankrupt) and maybe this stirred the national pride of the young Pessoa exiled in the anglicized South Africa. This is particularly apparent in the poem *Lisbon Revisited* dating back to 1926, which shows, significantly, an English title while the ode is written completely in Portuguese. The piece is addressed entirely to the Portuguese city: «*Outra vez te revejo/ Cidade da minha infância pavorosamente perdida...Cidade triste e alegre, outra vez sonho aqui.../Eu? Mas sou eu o mesmo que aqui vivi, e aqui voltei./ E aqui tornei a voltar, e a voltar./ E aqui de novo tornei a voltar?/ [...]»*<sup>3</sup> (Pessoa, *Poesias de Álvaro de Campos* 1944, 249). This double and oxymoronic nature of the poem reflects the linguistic and psychological dyscrasia that will accompany Pessoa during his whole life and which is underlined, within the ode, in a series of contrasts which show a deep and reciprocal connection between the poet's self and the city, metonymy for the country as a whole. It is precisely from the meaning of motherland that Fernando Pessoa traces back the reasons of Portuguese decadence: Portugal isn't "*patria*" anymore but rather a nation, i.e., a geographical identity swallowed by its cultural contents. Pessoa returns to this concept many times in his writings dealing with the national cultural situation. Often, it seems that there is no distinction between the existential condition of the poet and the ontological plight of Portugal so that the poeting I becomes the resounding chamber of the Lusitanian essence<sup>4</sup>. The relationship between the poet and the

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<sup>3</sup> [«Once again I see you, City of my childhood terrifyingly lost.../ City of my sorrow and joy, I dream here again.../ I? But am I the same person who lived here once and returned./ And came back her again and again?/ And now come back here again, am I?/ [...]»].(Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 96)

<sup>4</sup> «*O percurso iniciático de um Portugal antropomorfizado e sebastianizado na Mensagem é no fundo apenas o percurso solitário do poeta, obrigado a assumir individualmente o peso de um país estragnado e inoperante. Fernando Pessoa na Mensagem, para além de ser D. Sebastião é também Portugal: um Portugal pequenino que se podia fazer*

nation is, in fact, interiorized both ontologically and existentially speaking, even for regarding the most solitary and neglected heteronymous of his, Bernardo Soares, indissolubly bound to the existential geography of Lisbon and whose loneliness could eventually coincide with the historical and cultural loneliness of Portugal itself. If the *genesis* of heteronyms could be seen as a deflagration of a subject into an entire literature, the task of heteronymia would be interpretable as a problem of identity, or rather, of cultural identity as well.

By the time of his return, Portugal is divided by the republican riots which will culminate in 1910 with the proclamation of the First Republic ruled by Teófilo Braga. In a tract entitled *O Interregno*, Pessoa states explicitly that the actual situation of Portugal could be reassumed in a sort of hiatus of traditionalism and futurism and thus, of the old Republic and the Empire to come. At this respect, the anticipation of a Republican Sebastian seemed to be embodied by Sidónio Pais<sup>5</sup>, addressed as the “Presidente Rei” and perhaps

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*bem maior através da poesia, da sua poesia*». (Apolinário Lourenço 2006, 93)[«The initiation path of an anthropomorphic and Sebastianized Portugal in *Mensagem* is, after all, just the solitary path of a poet forced to take upon himself the weight of an alienate and ineffective country. In *Mensagem* Fernando Pessoa, more than being D. Sebastião is also Portugal: a very small Portugal that could have become much bigger by the means of poetry, of his poetry»]. (my translation)

<sup>5</sup> «A fórmula pessoana “Presidente-Rei”, encarnada em Sidónio Pais, é talvez mais elucidativa das duas verdadeiras convicções políticas, se bem que o sidonismo pessoano parece ter-se declarado mais depois da morte de Sidónio do que antes. Mais claro foi o seu abandono, e definitivo, dos ideais democráticos intrínsecos ao republicanismo radical da juventude e o desenvolvimento de uma crítica global da democracia e dos seus fundamentos, numa linha simultânea de individualismo nos planos social e económico (livre empresa, antiestatismo, anticorporativismo, anti-socialismo), de elitismo no plano sócio-cultural (“república aristocrática”) e de nacionalismo no plano político – a que mais tarde chamará nacionalismo místico ou sebastianista e, finalmente, nazionalismo liberal para o distinguir do nazionalismo autoritário e católico do Estado Novo». (Barreto 2007, 110) [«The Pessoaan formula “King-President”, embodied by Sidónio Pais, is perhaps eloquent of his real political convictions, albeit the Pessoaan Sidonism seems much more apparent after the Sidónio’s death than before. Even clearer has been the – definitive – abandon of the democratic ideals intrinsic to the radical republicanism of his youth and the development of a global critique of democracy and of its underpinnings, in a simultaneous line of *individualism* for what concerns the social and political level (free enterprise, anti-statism, anti-corporatism, anti-socialism), of *elitism* on the social and cultural level (“aristocratic republic”), and of *nationalism* on the political level – what, lately, will call *mystical* or *Sebastianist* nationalism and, finally, *liberal* nationalism in order to distinguish it from the authoritarian and catholic one promoted by the *Estado Novo*»]. (my translation)

identified with a sort of Portuguese Cromwell. The Pessoaan contradictory political thought resembles that of the Lusitanian political and social sensibility which used to combine the republican tension with a latent messianism. As he himself implies in an article which dates back to 1912, «*Fixemos isto: ser monárquico é, hoje, em Portugal, ser traidor à alma nacional e ao future da Pátria Portuguesa. – A Terceira conclusão é que o republicanismo que fará a Gloria da nossa terra e por quem novos elementos civilizacionais serão criados, não é o actual, desnacionalizado, idiota e corrupto, do tri-partido republicano*»<sup>6</sup> (Pessoa, *Crítica, ensaios, entrevistas* 1999, 34). During these years, the patriotic ardour of Pessoa met the aims<sup>7</sup> and the poetics of that tendency which has gone down in history as the Portuguese Renaissance<sup>8</sup> from which most of the “isms” of the first half of the Portuguese XX th century began. First of all, *Saudosism* which punctuates the Lusitanian fence-sitting poetics and politics that Pascoaes<sup>9</sup>, principal character of the movement, tried to

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<sup>6</sup> [«Let’s fix this. To be a royalist today, in Portugal, means to be a betrayer of the national soul and of the future of the Portuguese country. The third conclusion is that the Republic that will foster the Glory of our land and thanks to which new civilized elements will be created, and not the actual one which is denationalized, stupid and corrupted of the three fold Republican Party»]. (my translation)

<sup>7</sup> As Eduardo Lourenço affirms: «*O século XIX nos seus finais, e os primeiros anos do século XX, foram um momento alto da mais tradicional “paixão patriótica”. Também este aspecto de “libido” patriótico – ou de nacionalismo esasperado – existe na visão de Pessoa*». (Lourenço 2002, 29) [«The last years of the XIX th century, and the first years of the XX th century have been a period of intense and high traditional “patriotic passion”. Even this aspect of patriotic “libido”– or of extreme nationalism – does exist in Pessoa’s perspective»]. (my translation)

<sup>8</sup> «*A Renascença Portuguesa foi um movimento de regeneração nacional, movimento extraordinariamente fecundo que, visando dar um conteúdo cultural e português à Republica recém-nascida, teve a adesão e a colaboração de um Pascoaes, de um Leonardo Coimbra, de um Jaimie Cortesão, de um Afonso Lopes Vieira, de um António Correia de Oliveira, de um António Carneiro, de um Mário Beirão, de um António Sergio, ou de um Álvaro Pinto, entre outros*». (Quadros 2001, 16) [«The Portuguese Renaissance has been a movement of national regeneration, an extremely fecund movement that, trying to give cultural and Portuguese content to the just-born Republic, was able to avail itself of the participation of Alfonso Lopes Vieira, António Correia de Oliveira, António Carneiro, Mário Beirão, António Sergio, Álvaro Pinto, among others»]. (my translation)

<sup>9</sup> «*Pascoaes tentou erguer uma supra-estrutura filosófica. Elevou assim a saudade à categoria de privilegio étnico do povo português, a centro da gravitação espiritual de cunho exclusivamente lusitano, vislumbrando, finalmente, nas suas visões poéticas, a humanidade inteira a caminho dessa Saudade e vendo nela a culminção da evolução humana*». (Lindt 1981, 16) [«Pascoaes tried to build up a philosophical superstructure. He raised also the *saudade* to a

immortalize in his best-known works and that, indubitably, influenced and contributed in connoting Pessoa's literary aspirations<sup>10</sup>. Sebastianism, in fact, undoubtedly represents one of the most fascinating sources of inspiration for Pessoa. After all, *Mensagem* is actually devoted to King Sebastian's virtual reincarnation. However, proclaiming himself a "rational sebastianist", Pessoa somehow approaches this national myth singling out its historical and collective importance. Since the route in Alcácer Quivir in 1578, in fact, Portugal became a waste country, spoiled of myths and, thus, of literature. As João Gaspar Simões has extensively illustrated, Pessoa claimed till his death his belonging to "Orpheu" and it is quite clear that behind this claim there was an implicit wish to declare himself part of a European movement. "Orpheu" was actually the image in which all of subsequent avant-garde trickles will take shape through his various heteronyms. From Pessoa's perspective, his resemblance to "Orpheu" outlines a precise choice of crossing the cramped perimeter of the saudosistas group (which was starting its slow development towards a xenophobic and chauvinistic tendency) abjuring the mysticism which used to tinge the movement with obscurity. Till his last days, Pessoa asserted his affiliation with "Orpheu" as a sort of poetic declaration. His proclaimed intention of overcoming Camões can actually be understood as the will to

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category of ethnic privilege and as an exclusive Portuguese hallmark, finally forecasting, in his poetic visions, the whole humanity on the way to this Saudade and foreseeing in it the culmination of the human evolution». (my translation)

<sup>10</sup> «A *Renascença Portuguesa* vinha ao encontro do ardente ideologismo do jovem Pessoa, então com 24 anos. O poeta encontrava enfim um movimento, uma revista, um grupo que o estimulavam a realizar ou a começar a realizar os projectos patrióticos "confessados" na já citada nota íntima, escrita quatro anos antes e que provavelmente há muito tinha em mente, talvez desde que decidira deixar a África do Sul e regressar às raízes». (Quadros 2001, 16) [«The Portuguese Renaissance met with the young Pessoa's fervent ideology who was twenty-four by that time. The poet found a movement, a journal, a group that spurred him to realize, or rather, to start realizing the patriotic projects he had alconfessed in the already cited private notes, written just four years before and that, probably, he had in his mind from long since, maybe since he had decided to leave South Africa and come back to his roots»]. (my translation)

overcome Pascoaes<sup>11</sup> as well. Pessoa's inclination for inverting, reworking, personalizing, and then overtaking his inspirers<sup>12</sup> according to that tendency which Edouardo Lourenço labelled "*imaginação ciumenta*"<sup>13</sup> is by now an hard fact. The impatience towards Pascoaes' theorizations is already perceivable in the first essay on "A Águia" which Pessoa published in 1912, where he affirms:

*Urge que – pondo de parte misticismos de pensamento e de expressão, úteis apenas para despertar pelo ridículo, que a sua obscuridade para os profanos causa, o interesse alegre do inimigo social – com raciócinios e cingentes análises se penetre na compreensão do actual movimento poético português, se pergunte à alma nacional, nele espelhada, o que pretende e a que tende, e se ponha em termos de compreensibilidade lógica o valor e a significação, perante a sociologia, desse movimento literário e artístico.*<sup>14</sup> (Pessoa, Crítica, ensaios, entrevistas 1999, 8)

Pessoa's participation in a more trans-national kind of aesthetics allows him to be named among the most representative European exponents: «On one hand, he attempted to define an "authentic" national tradition, expressing

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<sup>11</sup> «*Enquanto Pascoaes se situa mais na teoria romântica duma saudade criadora em que o passado não se apreende como História mas como mito, Pessoa é saudosista por outro caminho: o do encontro do "génio português" na confluência da Rensascença e Romantismo sob a forma de uma síntese superior e original–o "Transcendentalismo Panteísta"*». (Antunes 1983, 447) [«While Pascoaes collocates himself more within the Romantic theory of a creative saudade according to which the past is not understood as History but as myth, Pessoa is rather a saudosist following another path: that of the encounter between the "poetic genius" in the conflating of Renaissance theory and Romanticism in the form of a superior and original synthesis – the "Panteistic Transcendentalism"». (my translation)

<sup>12</sup> «*[...] a vida simbólica de Pascoaes e do Saudosismo devia ser superada por uma outra, [...] elevando-a à consciência de si mesma, conservando-lhe a intuição de base, o núcleo neoplatónico*». (Lourenço 2002, 106) [«[...]Pascoaes' symbolic life and Saudosism had to be overcome by another one, (...) raising it to a self-consciousness, preserving its basic intuition, i.e., the neo-platonic kernel»]. (my translation)

<sup>13</sup> Also Rudolf Lindt contends: «*No caso da profecia do Super-Camões, não se trata de uma graça ou provocação, mas sim de uma meta a atingir que o autor se impôs a si mesmo*». (Lindt 1981, 21) [«In the case of the Super-Camões' prophecy, it is not about grace or provocation but, rather, it is all about a goal that the author imposes himself to reach».] (my translation)

<sup>14</sup> [«It is urgently required – setting aside a certain mysticism of thought and expression, which is useful only to rouse again to ridiculousness as its obscurity for the uninitiated provokes the hilarious interest of the social enemy – to penetrate, with reasons and cogent analyses, the significance of the actual Portuguese poetic movement, so that one would be able to ask the national soul, mirrored therein, what does it pretend and thus, posing in terms of logic comprehensibility, which is the value and the meaning, in terms of sociology, of this literary and artistic movement»]. (my translation)

nostalgia for the epic glories of a Lusitanian empire; on the other hand, he was keenly aware of vanguard poetic movements, and he participated in the worldwide drive to “make it new”» (Sadlier 1998, 28). What makes it feasible to include Fernando Pessoa in the huge movement labeled “Modernism” is not only his British cultural background that naturally links him to the European and Anglo-American modernist environment but, particularly, his willingness to establish a close connection between the country’s social conditions and cultural work trying to affect unflaggingly the homeland’s cultural outcomes.

In this way, Pessoa represents a modernistic dichotomy divided between the real situation of his country and a sort of a Golden age to long for, ruled by poetry:

*Todas eles fabricaram novas pátrias imaginárias, e todos eles o fizeram de forma conservadora, tendência dos exiliados e emigrantes (que eles foram) e que fora da terra de origem ou de formação fazem dela uma ideia estática que forçosamente os desiludirá da realidade evolutiva e progressiva quando com elas deparam.*<sup>15</sup> (Carmo 1987, 27-8)

It should be added that, for the most part, modernists, in the end, choose their own ideal country: Pessoa settles down in Portugal in 1905, from which he will never depart afterward, Eliot opts for the Anglican England, while Pound dreams of a literary Italian Republic. There’s a red thread running through the different geographies of modernism which unifies a common concern with the relationships between culture and society and the role of poetry in the nation’s enhancement running the risk of turning into orthodoxy. If Eliot shows a keen

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<sup>15</sup>[«All of them built up new imaginary homelands, and all of them did it in a conservative way, which is a tendency typical of exiled and emigrants (that they actually were) and that outside their origin or forming places, they used to make of it an ecstatic ideal which compulsorily would have disappointed them about the evolutionary and progressive reality at the moment they had to run into with it»]. (my translation)



interest in the role of spiritual and social life in his *The Sacred Wood* essays, and, shortly after, he converts to the Anglican Church trying to give a religious characterization of his ideal society, Ezra Pound<sup>16</sup>, who has risen to the monumental image of a Modernist guru, gives life to his speculations about the usury of the capitalist economic system that will turn into a sort of neo-platonic extremism. Both of them, were preoccupied, in the end, with the rebirth of their respective countries by rescuing the roots of their cultural as well as literary traditions<sup>17</sup>. Although, broadly speaking, Pessoa's involvement in the Portuguese Renaissance must be framed within the specific Portuguese context and that, at the same time, demonstrates an important feature of his faceted poetic personality, as Pessoa also shows a more general tendency towards an ideal homeland, sometimes coveted, dreamed of, and intellectually chosen:

Once fundamental liberal humanist assumptions were shattered by the experience of modernity, a retrieval of the idea of the nation might be a possible temptation for poets in this traditions, as when, nation less all, Pound attempts to reinvent *Patria Sua*, Eliot becomes English, and Pessoa's "naturalizes" himself Portuguese. As just implied, modernist reinventions of the nation, and Pessoa's no less, are to be understood beyond narrow patriotic implications, if indeed not against them, and rather as imagined communities of poetic language signifying total dominion and influence (whether it be "America" or "England" or "Portugal", the ultimate meaning for the modernist poet is "Europe" or "the West"). (Ramalho 2003, 39-40)

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<sup>16</sup>«Pound's recommendations for post-war civilization were strikingly different from Eliot's call for a return to Christian values. Like many others during the Britain's depressed post-war period, Pound believed that the answer layed in an economic reform, specifically the Social Credit proposals of C.H. Douglas (1879–1952), an engineer-turned-economist he had met in the office of The New Age in 1918». (Beasley 2007, 98)

<sup>17</sup>«All the appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, Pound was from the beginning an American writer. His driving energy was critical, totally devoted to the goal of an "American Risorgimento" (a phrase he liked) which he eventually concluded would never come to pass without fundamental economic renovation. As the poet of *The Cantos*, the project that occupied him from 1920 on – a work that grew to more than twice the length of *Paradise Lost* – Pound's critical energy assumed the form of a poetry whose intention was the retrieval and resuscitation of all that had been lost in the modern world; a poetry whose goal was to provoke literary and social change by providing its essential curriculum». (Lentricchia 1994, 182)

As it is evident from the pages of his essays, Pessoa intends literature as a sort of social survey instrument<sup>18</sup>, just like T.S. Eliot, in his essays, he reasserts the importance of getting back to the universal as well as national roots of tradition. The central pivot around which all his literary theories tend towards the extinction of the individual personality in order to foster the realization of an over-individual work of art to cross over the boundaries of individuality and retrace the ever-renewable powers of tradition. In this regard, more than Pound whose didactic and energetic appeal seems to be retrieved in a late-Romantic perspective pierced by a neat distinction between bad and good traditions, Eliot screens attentively the concept of tradition from a theoretical point of view, but never departing from a universal design. Both Pessoa and Eliot actually share a kind of eternal sense of time: in this respect the old and the new, the present and the past are already included in a much wider project. Pessoa's theorization of the *Supra-Camões* and therefore, his inclusion in the three *Avisos* in the third part of *Mensagem* is ascribable to a similar conception. Even if the Pessoaan theoretic production is apparently less coherent and organic than Eliot's one, it is possible to retain quite a consistent line in relation to his political entanglement, translated into his profound trust in the possibilities of literature and poetry. Due to these reasons, it is fundamental to grasp the significance of the role of *Supra-Camões* which is not just the last swan's lament of the extinguishing *poeta vate* but the declaration of the firm willingness to embody the characters of the epic narrator who is able to restore a deep rooted dialogue

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<sup>18</sup>«Porque a corrente literária, como vimos, precede sempre a corrente social nas épocas sublimes de uma nação. Que admira que não vejamos sinal de renascença na vida política, se a analogia nos manda que o vejamos apenas uma, duas o três gerações depois do auge da corrente literária?» (Pessoa, *Crítica, Ensaios, Entrevistas 1999*, 16) [«As the literary current, as beckoned before, always precedes the social one during the sublime epochs of a nation. Of what can we get astonished if we don't see any sign of rebirth in the political life, if the analogy suggests that we see it just one, two or three generations after the apex of the literary current?»] (my translation)

with his people. If, in fact, his essays represent the most fecund realization of Pessoa's intentions, *Mensagem* is the attainment of all his aesthetic, social, and political purposes summed up in the overall mission of civilization and patriotism.

### 1.3.Censored Pessoa

Most of the essays devoted to the understanding of *Mensagem* tend to underline that it is the only work Pessoa ever published in his whole life. When he affirms, in a letter to Casais Monteiro, that it is the only complete work he got finished by 1932 (except for the *Cancioneiro*) he's partly untrue. Around 1934-35, he actually writes:

*Não é que não publique porque não quero: não público porque não posso. [...] Ora sucede que a maioria das coisas que eu pudesse escrever não poderia ser passada pela Censura. Posso não poder coibir o impulso de escrevê-las: domino facilmente, porque não o tenho, o impulso de as publicar, nem vou importunar os Censores com matéria cuja publicação eles teriam forçosamente que proibir. Sendo assim para quê publicar? [...] Posso, é certo, dissertar livremente (e, ainda assim, só até certo ponto e em certos meios) sobre a filosofia de Kant (...)<sup>19</sup>. (Pessoa, Contra Salazar 2008, 101)*

As the political and social task can never really be separated from the Pessoaan aesthetic intensions, the censorship issue – especially in relation to the creation, reorganization, and publication of *Mensagem* – is worth discussed in detail. Being a liberal, Pessoa doesn't put into question primarily the idea of a

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<sup>19</sup> [«It is not that I don't publish because I don't want: I don't publish because I can't. [...] It happens that a great part of things I would have written could have been submitted to the board of Censorship I cannot be able to resist the impulse of writing them: I can control it easily, as I don't have the impulse to publish them nor do I want to bother the censors with a subject-matter whose publication they would strongly repute to forbid. If it is like this, why should I publish? [...] I can, certainly, dissert freely (and even though only until a certain point and within certain means) upon Kant's philosophy (...)]. (my translation)

conservative government. Rather, what's really at stake, according to Pessoa's thoughts, is the cultural and literary regress of his homeland which proceeds side by side with the *Estado Novo* evolution. Shortly after his ardent cultural commitment to the rebirth of the country, Pessoa is forced to accept the uncontrolled cultural impoverishment of the nation tormented by the rising dictatorship. In *O caso mental português*, published in 1933, the author of *Mensagem* defines Portugal's overall situation with these words: «*Se fosse preciso usar de uma só palavra para com ela definir o estado presente da mentalidade portuguesa, a palavra seria 'provincianismo'*»<sup>20</sup>(Pessoa, *O caso mental português* 2008, 1). It is almost certain that *Mensagem's* publication was politically-oriented as a letter to Casais Monteiro dating back to January 1935 shows:

I am convinced, as you are, that *Mensagem* was not a felicitous literary début, but I'm convinced that under the circumstances it was the best début I could have made. That facet of my personality – in a certain way a minor facet – had never been adequately represented in my magazine publications (except for the book's section titled "Portuguese Sea"), and for that very reason it was good that it be revealed, and that it be revealed now. Without any planning or premeditation on my part (I'm incapable of premeditation in practical matters), it coincided with a critical moment (in the original sense of the world "critical") in the transformation of the national subconscious. (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 253)

*Mensagem's* publication appears to be anything but casual and, instead, embodies a precise intention. Progressively, in fact, the former accomplishment of patriotic acts (embodied both by the conservative Lusitanian extremism and the more liberal movement of the *Renascença Portuguesa*) in which Pessoa somehow undoubtedly takes part, naturally flow into the establishment of the

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<sup>20</sup> [«If it shall be needed to use a single word to define the present plight of Portuguese mentality, this word would be "provincialism"»]. (my translation)

Salazar's regime. However, quite soon, as his posthumous writings elucidate, Pessoa starts identifying the reasons of Portugal's decadence with the dictator's politics whose personality reveals itself as particularly fitting with Pessoa's expectations. The advent of Salazar who «*tem todas as qualidades perifericas do chefe. Falta-lhe a principal – que é ser chefe*», is far from being interpreted as the fatal coming back of Sebastião. The New States' *rappel à l'ordre*, can be understood as progressively expanding marginalization of the country which leads Pessoa to regret the previous climate of "disorder":

*Chegámos a isto, Senhor Presidente: passou a época da desordem e da má administração; temos boa administração e ordem. E não há nenhum de nós que não tenha saudades da desordem e da má administração. Não sabíamos que a ordem nas ruas, as pontes e as esquadra tinham que ser compradas por tão alto preço – a da venda a retalho da alma portuguesa.*<sup>21</sup> (Pessoa, Contra Salazar 2008, 140)

Many of the sarcastic poems he writes during these years are actually relied upon the parochialism of the Portuguese dictator plying with his name and dividing it into "sal" (salt) and "azar" (misfortune). It is the cultural regress, intended in a literary sense, that grabs Pessoa's attention as, for instance, this poem demonstrates:

*Ai que prazer,  
Não cumprir um dever,  
Ter um livro para ler  
E não o fazer!  
Ler é maçada,  
Estudar é nada.  
O soul doura  
Sem literatura.*

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<sup>21</sup> [«We are at this point, Mister President: the epoch of disorder and bad administration has passed by; now we have good administration and order. And yet, none of us regrets disorder and bad administration. We do not know that the order in the streets, the bridges, and the squads have been purchased at such a high price – that of the sale of the Portuguese soul»]. (my translation)

*O rio corre, bem ou mal,  
Sem edição original. [...] (Pessoa, Contra Salazar 2008, 17)*

The Pessoaan anti-Salazarist work, as a whole, exposes his disappointment with the editorial history of *Mensagem* which also affects its subsequent (mis)interpretations. The controversial publication history of the book seems to have been manipulated since 1933, with the publication of *Mar Português* in the review “Revolução” and the subsequent edition of some poems taken from *Mensagem* in the review “O Mundo Português”. As it has been put, the recollection of the work within a national(istic) panorama is anything but ingenuous. Within the numerous contradictions in relation to the work’s circulation, José Blanco also numbers the interview regarding *Mensagem*, which appeared in the “Diário de Lisboa” on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1934, illustrated by three pictures of Almada Negreiros and three poems extracted from the work. It is on this occasion that Pessoa’s answers seem to be subject of a strange manipulation, or at least, appear truly bewildering: «*Mensagem é um livro nacionalista e, portanto, na tradição cristã representada primeiro pela busca do Santo Graal e depois pela esperança do Encoberto*»<sup>22</sup>(Pessoa, Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação 1996, 43). Certainly for the work to be able to participate in the Concourse of the Propaganda Nacional, it had to be written in a nationalistic vein and, surely, it had to mention something about Sebastianism, the Portuguese myth *par excellence*. His statements look quite vague and subtle. This definition can be interpreted in various ways but it certainly reflects a simplistic definition able to open the doors to the subsequent

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<sup>22</sup> [«*Mensagem* is a nationalistic book and, therefore, it is within the Christian tradition represented firstly by the quest of Saint Grail and secondly by the hope for the Veiled»]. (my translation)

“official” publication. As it is noticeable, in fact, in the same interview Pessoa seems to betray himself stating: «*Quis marcar o destino imperial de Portugal, esse império que perpassou através de D. Sebastião, e que continua ‘há-de ser’*»<sup>23</sup> (*ibidem*):

*Dir-se-ia que com estas palavras Pessoa prevenia desde logo que o nacionalismo da obra – característica exigida pelo regulamento do SPN – ia muito além do cânone oficial do Estado Novo, para cujos próceres o «destino imperial do Portugal» era já entã – e não haveria de ser num futuro indeterminato – uma realidade.*<sup>24</sup> (Blanco 2007, 151)

At the time of *Mensagem*'s award, in 1934, a few exponents of “Presença” interpreted the work as the nationalistic celebration of the Salazarist era. As João Gaspar Simões witnesses, Pessoa was perfectly aware of the nationalistic weight of the work:

*Nessa altura, a Mensagem intitolava-se, pura e simplesmente, Portugal, título que quadrava muito bem com essa nova epopeia de uma pátria para a qual o poeta ainda esperava o destino grande do anunciado Quinto Império. [...]*  
*Pessoa sabia que a Presença não navegava nas águas algo turvas de qualquer espécie de nacionalismo literário. Por isso, muito mais prudentemente, nos ofereceu uma outra obra sua – aquela que se harmonizava melhor com os propósitos da Presença – obra representando, quanto a nós, com muito mais acerto, o lado do seu génio que nos encaravamos com o de maior originalidade.*<sup>25</sup> (Gaspar Simões 1978, 293)

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<sup>23</sup> [«A trail of Portugal's imperial destiny is necessary, of this empire which trespassed through Sebastian and that yet, it is still there, must realize itself.»] (my translation)

<sup>24</sup> [«Said in these words, Pessoa understood quite soon that the nationalism of the work – a prerogative required by the SPN code – went too far from the official canon of the *Estado Novo*, whose heroes believed that the “Portuguese imperial destiny” was an already realized reality– and had not to be achieved in a vague future –»]. (my translation)

<sup>25</sup> [«By this time, *Mensagem* was entitled solely *Portugal*, a title which perfectly attained with the new epic of a country for which the poet was still wishing the great destiny announced by the Fifth Empire. [...] Pessoa knew that “Presença” was not going in the direction of a somewhat literary nationalism. For this reason, more prudently, he offered to us another work of his – the one which harmonized better with the purposes of “Presença” – a piece which represented, for what concerned ourselves, certainly a side of his genius which we used to consider as the more original one»]. (my translation)

During the following years, and namely after the Revolution of 1974, *Mensagem* fell into oblivion representing one of the most significant crystallizations of the past nationalistic extol. Perhaps, this tendency helps to explain the reasons which led many critics to believe the hermetic revision of the Portuguese epic's past was influenced by the esoteric involvements of its author. It is quite clear that a work such as *Mensagem* must have been perceived, especially within post-dictatorial Portugal, as a source of embarrassment<sup>26</sup>. Many possible reasons can be given for the Pessoaan decision to publish *Mensagem* as his first book and all of them, due to his inborn untruthfulness, about which Gaspar Simões wrote extensively, could be just allegations. It is, anyway, possible to attempt a sort of coherence regarding the Pessoaan poetic intentions. *Mensagem* is, in fact, the realization of what he had previously announced in his review articles, as the recognition of the *Supra-Camões* (according to the statement «*primeiro virá a teoria política da época. Depois virá o pô-lo em prática*») and, of course, as the only work he had written which was in line with the requirements of the National Concourse, giving him the possibility to get published. The wish to be published should not be interpreted, yet, as the anxiety to achieve that award but, above all, as the

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<sup>26</sup> «Mas *Mensagem*, o único livro publicado em vida da o poeta, surgiu num momento pouco oportuno que acabou por empolar o livro de conotações políticas que o diminuiram aos olhos da cosnsciência intelectual portuguesa da altura, em crescente afastamento crítico da versão salazarista do fascismo então vigente. O facto de ter recebido do Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional da Informação um prémio (com um montante especial atribuído sob a influência do porta voz e ideólogo do regime salazarista, António Ferro, que havia pouco tempo publicara um texto comparando Salazar ao Desejado Dom Sebastião, figura histórica e mítica central na terceira e última parte do livro de Pessoa) só acentuou aquila conotações». (Almeida 1987, 18) [«But *Mensagem*, the only book Pessoa published during his whole life, appeared in an inappropriate moment that contributed to label the book of political connotations which lessened in the eyes of the intellectual Portuguese conscience of time, increasingly and critically departing from the Salazarist version of the still in force fascism. The fact of having received an award from the Secretariat of National Propaganda and Information (with a special amount assigned under the influence of the spokesman and ideologist of the Salazarist regime, António Ferro, who shortly after will publish a work comparing Salazar to the Desired King Sebastian (the historical, mythical, and central character of the third and last part of the Pessoa's book) only increased those connotations»]. (my translation)



worthy completion of Pessoa's national as well as literary aspirations. As Irene Ramalho has pinpointed: «*Mas, por outro lado, Pessoa não pode ter deixado de ver em Mensagem (uma obra de arte singular composta de fragmentos) o poema que melhor o representava como o poeta da modernidade portuguesa, que ele decidiu ser quando escolheu escrever em português*»<sup>27</sup> (Ramalho, 2006, 19).

If it is true that *Mensagem* is the only book Fernando Pessoa published during his life it is also true that, philologically speaking, it is the only work which witnessed the last wish of its author. The first edition is actually issued in October 1934 under the print of the Parceria António Maria Pereira on the occasion of the participation in the National Propaganda Competition. However, the author amends this edition with several orthographic corrections. Based on this autographic source, the second edition was prepared posthumously and was published in 1941 by the Agência Geral das Colónias. Thereafter, all the following editions tried to re-frame the former structure of the text.

The editorial history of *Mensagem* is thus marked by a double version of the text: one following the orthographic archaism of the second edition and another one presenting an actualization of the orthography. Significantly, the Editorial Ática adopts the first model until the sixth edition and the second template from the seventh edition on.

The 1934 edition is pivotal in order to grasp the real intentions of the author as, for instance, it still carries the former title *Portugal* changed in favor of *Mensagem*. As Maria Alhete Galhoz has contended, in fact, this trace shows

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<sup>27</sup> [«But, on the other hand, Pessoa could have not helped from seeing in *Mensagem* (a peculiar work made up of fragments) the most appropriate work to represent him as the poet of Portuguese modernity, that he longs to be when he eventually decided to write in Portuguese»]. (my translation)

the editor that important changes must have taken place after the publication of the first edition and that, at this stage, the book's structure was not definitely clear. Yet, it is possible to detect from the para-textual material that the genesis of the works dates back to 1913 and, precisely, from a nucleus identifiable with the poem Dom Fernando and a provisional title, *Gládio*, which also corresponded to a poem that appeared in reviews. A philological exploration of the text by José Augusto Seabra and Maria Alhete Galhoz has highlighted a progressive and coherent development of Pessoa's intention to write a nationalistic inspired epic poem whose structure will be attentively revised and proof-read till the end of his life.

In this work, in order to give due of some pivotal critical issues, I will quote the first edition. The subsequent ones, being only possible reconstructions of the Pessoaan intentions, would not completely mirror the overall frame of the text. Moreover, the Latinized orthography encompasses the Pessoaan modernist intention to mix past and present, conflating different cultures and genres into a firm and symbolic architecture. As K. David Jakson has recently contended, in fact:

The orthography of *Mensagem* is based on etymology, as was Portuguese spelling in general after the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when printing began to attribute official status to Latinate spellings. Pessoa's orthography further brings to mind the 19<sup>th</sup> century's fascination with historical episodes from medieval times to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and it particularly reflects the purposefully archaic aestheticism of groups such as the pre-Raphaelites at the turn of the century. (Jackson 2010, 312)

#### **1.4. Methodological Foreword**

In this work, I have tried to apply a comparative and a theoretical method using *intertextuality*, not only as a source stemming from the comparison of

different literatures, authors, or cultures but primarily within the *oeuvre* of the same author. Cesare Segre in *Analisi del testo letterario* illustrates how the Bakhtinian concept of *plurivocity* is not exclusively prerogative of the novel genre but also a methodological and interpretative predicament which is applicable, at different levels, to other literary genres as well. Thus, the Italian critic identifies in intertextuality a partially akin category of approach to the literary work that permits the text to free itself from its interpretative oneness entering a thick net of connections with other texts, thus allowing a reciprocal and diachronic interpretability<sup>28</sup>. The juxtaposition of plurivocity and intertextuality appears particularly penetrating in relation to Fernando Pessoa and his creation of a *coterie* made of different poetic voices. It is a privilege to work with an author as prolific and eccentric as Fernando Pessoa who invites one quite dynamically into the ambit of his poetic galaxy. Within his infinite and variegated poetic work, what is generally considered and defined as the *para-textual* production rather emerges as a real intertextual possibility. Thanks to this peculiarity, it has been possible to detect a close correlation between the system of influences and the dynamics of literary genres within the Portuguese poet's work. The depth of the Pessoaan research in relation to the revitalization and re-evaluation of literary genres, in fact, does not only stem from a modernistic kind of inspiration and affiliation but also from a very peculiar way of absorbing and reproducing literary models and forms. The literary template, thus, is translated into stylistic eclecticism and into a study on the possibilities of both the poetic structure and word. The exploration of the Pessoaan

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<sup>28</sup> [«[...]col trasparire dell'intertestualità, il testo esce dal suo isolamento di messaggio, e si presenta come parte di un discorso sviluppato attraverso i testi, come dialogicità le cui battute sono i testi, o parti di testi, emessi dagli scrittori». (Segre 1985, 86) [«[...]when intertextuality shines through, the text comes out of its isolation of message, and presents itself as part of a dialogue developed by the means of texts, as a dialogism whose words are texts or parts of texts, given out by the authors»]. (my translation)

compositional course, from the perspective of his “inter-generic” rewriting, actually fosters the collocation of the author of *Mensagem* in the wider (Anglo-American) search for the restoration of some literary genres. Moreover, *Mensagem* is extremely representative being made by very different genres, it actually interconnects within a nationalistic inspired epic poem different kinds of poetic forms ranging from sonnets to epitaphs. This piece appears as a precious summary of Pessoa’s poetic experimentations but, especially, of his aesthetic intentions and convictions. In order to give due respect to the Pessoaan epic poem, this work is articulated into three sections progressively exploring how the system of literary genres combines with the introjections and subversion of the literary models. The first chapter analyzes how the revision of the epic stems, on Pessoa’s part, from the revision of the Camonian model. An attempt has been made to demonstrate how profoundly the Portuguese poet is aware of the fact that rewriting *Os Lusíadas* means, above all, revising the Lusitanian imperialist idea(l). The aim of scrutinizing *Mensagem*’s author’s need of recurring to and restoring the epic genre has also been pursued. While chasing this goal, I have taken into consideration the echoes of the European historical avant-gardes and, at the same time, I have highlighted the author’s wish to re-establish and re-build a Lusitanian poetic identity on the score of the cultural and literary tendencies of the first thirty years of the Twentieth century. By contrast, the second chapter focuses on the reception of the English late-Romantic authors who profoundly marked the author’s literary growth through the direct and indirect acquaintance with the coeval European and overseas literary production. In the meantime, it has been pointed out how the late-Romantic affiliation could be ascribed to a dialectic that finds an ultimate synthesis in some of the most eloquent modernist poetics as, for instance, the

expedient use of *personae* which evolves from Browning to Pound till the Pessoaan sclerotic process of heteronymia. The last chapter concludes the historical parabola of Pessoa's system of influences which sometimes overtly persists as a visible trace. As *Mensagem* shows, the Pessoaan epic is able to contain different genres often pausing on the expressive possibilities of the *brevitas*. In this ambit, the presence of some brief genres which are typical of Classicism, such as epitaph and epigram appears quite eloquent. Moreover, in spite of the undeniable ascendancy of the fragment upon the Pessoaan production, the bewitchment for classicism the Portuguese poet shows in a few theoretical writings is given concrete form by the poetics of, for instance, António Mora, Alberto Caeiro, and Ricardo Reis. After all, even if the trunk of Pessoa's literary production is characterized by fragmentation, the goal of this analysis is precisely that of highlighting another main feature of the Pessoaan poetics, i.e., the constant and unflagging tension between past and present, as well as a steadfast continuity and elasticity in the ambit of the themes, structures, and influence of the literary system.

## Chapter 2.

### **“*My country is where I am not*”. *Mensagem* and the Rewriting of Portuguese Imperialism**

*“All the histories of gentile nations have their origin in fables”*

Giambattista Vico, *The Scienza Nuova*

*O mar de outras terras é belo?*

Fernando Pessoa, *O Marinheiro*

#### **2.1. “Our national epic has yet to be written”.**

In one of *Mensagem*'s opening poems, Portugal is defined as “*o rosto da Europa*”, the face of Europe. Since the first verses of his epic poem, Pessoa guides the reader to focus mentally his glance towards the geographic body of Europe that, as a tired and fickle woman, turns her look towards a new face: that of Portugal. Significantly enough, William Butler Yeats' *A Vision* inaugural pages present a sphinx<sup>29</sup> image too which represents, according to the author, “the outward-looking mind”. In “The Second Coming”, the sphinx actually stands as a symbol of precognition; it staggers past in order to predict a new coming:

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<sup>29</sup> «He recalls that the Sphynx, a symbol of classical civilization, was “...vexed to nightmare by a rocking candle...”; that is to say, the symbolic Sphynx of antiquity was finally overcome and put to a restless sleep by Christ's conception and birth. And then, in mockery and in paradox, he concludes his poem with a warning that the Second Coming of Western tradition is to be not the expected return of Christ but the Second Coming of the Antichrist. When the new age at last emerges out of our twentieth-century violence, a beast—probably the Sphynx, although it is not named – will appear; [...] ». (Seiden 1975, 235)

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
 When a vast image of Spiritus Mundi  
 Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
 The darkness drops again; but not I know  
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle  
 And what rough beast, its hour come around at last,  
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? (Yeats 2000, 159)

According to Yeats, the sphinx conveys and symbolizes the idea of a classical civilization as well as that of dragon<sup>30</sup> that schematically structures also the first part of Pessoa's piece. Importantly, these symbols of personal and collective regeneration inaugurate two key-works of two poets profoundly preoccupied with the regeneration of their respective countries, i.e., Portugal and Ireland. Actually, these two countries display quite a similar geographical as well as historical condition: on one hand, in fact, even if differently, they both participate in the Age of Discovering (only virtually for Ireland) while, on the other hand, they are both subjected to the British imperialist sway. Geographically speaking, they both stand as the Atlantic borders of Europe, somehow embodying the marginal crossroad of the West.

On Portugal's part, the allure of this feminized Europe, can assume a double meaning: the "European allegory" refers to the final and hoped for international recognition of Portugal, while it acquires the traits of a sort of abdication or *translatio imperii*:

*Esta ideia manifesta-se no interior do caso português, em os dois momentos cruciais, num sentido externo e interno. Primeiro e, externamente, em relação à Europa em que Portugal, depois de ter*

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<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, the poem "Her Triumph".

*sido a sua “margem e vanguarda” – e, portanto, “rosto” da Europa, a justo título, para os outros povos não europeus trazidos pelo movimento do Descobrimentos – se converte em margem e retaguarda dessa Europa, sendo visto como um país que tinha falhado a sua missão colonial, convertendo-se o império não numa continuidade e braço essencial da expansão económica, financeira, social e política da metropole, mas antes no seu reduto essencial de sobrevivência em termos reais e simbólicos.*<sup>31</sup> (Calafate Ribeiro 2004, 2)

According to what the author of *Mensagem* contends in his *Esoteric Pages*, this is the time of Europe’s ultimate decline. After the extinction of the Greek, the Roman, and the Christian empires, the European descent simply precedes the upcoming establishment of Portugal’s Fifth Empire. To quote Pessoa, «*o mar com fim será grego ou romano:/ o mar sem fim será português*»<sup>32</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 60). The new concept of imperialism that Pessoa outlines, being profoundly associated with the Sebastianist myth, reveals his intention to handle and recast a deep rooted collective imagination, giving poetic form to Portuguese unflinching efforts to revive their waste empire. It should not be forgotten that *Mensagem*’s long conception covers the first three decades of the Twentieth century, say, the last days of the Portuguese Monarchy, the brief Republican experience and the ultimate entrenchment of Salazar after the military coup of 1926. During these years, Salazar’s dictatorship was simultaneously exploiting Sebastianism as a subtle means for propaganda and, one way or another, Pessoa’s work, concurrently with his

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<sup>31</sup> [«This idea arises within the Portuguese case precisely in two crucial moments and within an inner and outer sense. Firstly and externally, in relation to Europe of which Portugal, after having been its “margin and forefront”– and, therefore, “*rosto da Europa*” with every right, for the other non-European peoples betrayed by the movement for Discoveries – converts itself in margin and rearguard of this Europe, having been seen as a country which had failed its colonial mission, converting its empire not in the essential continuity and arm of its economic, financial, social, and political growth of the metropolis, but most of all in its essential byproduct of survival both in real and symbolic terms»]. (my translation)

<sup>32</sup> [«Teach how the sea with an end will be Greek or Roman,/ The sea that has no end is Portuguese»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 58)



rational Sebastianist declarations, could be understood as Pessoa's way to oppose this "mythical manipulation". Consequently, the Pessoaan mythical understanding is not a way of withdrawing from History, but rather a means to craft a new historicity, a historicity that sinks its roots in a new mythological past and is projected towards a possible (utopian) future that Pessoa identifies with a Fifth Empire spreading out from the coming back of King Sebastian in that foggy morning that – quoting Pessoa himself – "means the beginning of something new – a new age, a new phase, or the like" (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 166).

As briefly mentioned before, the imperialist issue is framed in the Portuguese context within a colonial parabola, which distinguishes dramatically the Lusitanian oversea experience from that of other colonizing countries. Boaventura de Sousa Santos has appositely coined the term *semi-periphery* in order to expound and represent the two-fold and a-typical Lusitanian condition of colonizer and colonized at the same time, of Prosper and Caliban<sup>33</sup>. Beyond sociological as well as cultural implications, Pessoa himself embodies – both from a literary and a psychological point of view – the crucial issue of the Lusitanian Janus-faced problem of self-representation. This transpires in Pessoa's double linguistic form of expression and composition, as well as at a

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<sup>33</sup> «As regards the Portuguese colonizer, this problem translates itself into the need to define Portuguese colonialism in terms of its specificity *vis-à-vis* hegemonic colonialism, which means the impossibility or difficulty of defining it in terms such that do not reflect subalternity, that is to say, in terms of what it was and not in terms of what it was not. Particularly complex research topic consists in assessing to what extent this problem of the Portuguese colonizer reverberates in the Portuguese colonized. Could it be that the Portuguese colonized have a double problem of self-representation: *vis-à-vis* the colonizer that colonized them, and *vis-à-vis* the colonizer that, not having colonized them, has nonetheless written the history of their colonial subjugation? Or, on the contrary, could it be that the problem of self-representation of the Portuguese colonizer creates a chaotic disjunction between the subject and the object of colonial representation, which in turn creates a field apparently empty of representations (but in fact full of sub-codified representations) that gives the colonized enough leeway to attempt their self-representation beyond or outside the representations of their subalternity? The question here is to determine whether the colonized by a subaltern colonialism are under-colonized or over-colonized». (De Sousa Santos 2002, 3)

more personal level in the fact that his basic education was almost English. In the end, Pessoa spends his whole life in two English colonies (a real one, South Africa, and a virtual one, Portugal), «*estrangeiro aqui como em toda a parte*»<sup>34</sup>, as he states in a poem of his. It is not by chance that through his Futurist *facies*, say, that of Álvaro de Campos, Pessoa proclaims his *Ultimatum* addressing to the Anglo-Saxon giant with disdainful verses. Also in the poem *Opiário*, the Marine Engineer writes:

*Os ingleses são feitos pra existir.  
Não há gente como esta pra estar feita  
Com a Tranquilidade. A gente deita  
Um vintém e sai um deles a sorrir.*<sup>35</sup> (Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 136)

The conflicting relationship with Britain cannot just be traced back to the famous Ultimatum of 1892 but also to the fact the England basically represents the monumental colonial giant, the perpetrator of the real capitalistic imperialism and, perhaps, from this perspective, the real head of Europe. The turbulent relationship with Britain is quite apparent also in the Pessoaan theoretic works where the distinction between the English capitalistic colonization and the Portuguese forecast and cherished imperialism of poets is even more evident:

An imperialism of grammarians? The imperialism of grammarians runs deeper and endures longer than that of generals. An imperialism of poets? Yes, of poets. The phrase sounds ridiculous only to those who defend the old and ridiculous kind of imperialism. The imperialism of poets endured and wins out; that of politicians passes on and is forgotten, unless the poet remembers it in his songs. We say

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<sup>34</sup>[ «[...]Stranger in this place as in every other place [...]»].(Pessoa, The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa 2002, 96)

<sup>35</sup>[«English are made to exist/ There's no other people endowed with/ Such tranquility./ You throw them a penny/ And one of them turns out a smile»]. (Pessoa, Poems of Fernando Pessoa 1998, 40)

“Cromwell did” but “Milton says”. And in the distant future, when there is no more England (for England’s characteristics do not include being eternal), Cromwell will be remembered only because Milton mentioned him. (Pessoa, *Obras em prosa* 1974, 161-2)

These words shed light upon the Pessoaan subversion of the national and nationalistic mythologization of the oversea conquest. The Portuguese projection upon the sea, a millenary Lusitanian *topos*, is actually re-converted in *Mensagem* through a new ideal of expansion that Pessoa will define as the Conquest of Distance.<sup>36</sup> It is, therefore, Camões the starting point of the Pessoaan imperialistic deconstruction. In Camões and for Camões, the *outramar* starts to be subject of a cultural materialism which kept the flag flying for race and Christianity (against which Pessoa will level his accusations). In all respects, the Lusitanian bard was the first to define Portugal as the face of Europe trying to enhance its peripheral position transforming it into the departure harbor for the discovery fever.

Pessoa subverts the re-territorialization of the Portuguese marginality through the total negation of the canonization of the Camonian ideal. The author of *Mensagem* doesn’t just rewrite Camões but a whole tradition by then drained by the regime’s goals. The Camonian paradigm had, in fact, been able to play on the consciousness of marginality itself to allegorize and convey a much wider imperialist task:

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<sup>36</sup> «Rifluindo historicamente do inteiro mar, os Portugueses convertem-se em orla vã desfeita. Mas para o “patriota de uma espécie nova” que é o autor do *Ultimatum* (e será mais tarde da *Mensagem*), essa agonia, esse fechamento contra-natura expresso neste reflexo para a “pequena casa lusitana”, sugerem de si mesmos a salvação mítica, a reconversão da nossa imagem e do nosso projecto de alma e cultura». (Lourenço 2009, 110) [«Ebbing, historically speaking, from the entire sea, Portuguese eventually turned into a rent and immaterial border. But for the “patriot of a new species” who is the author of the *Ultimatum* (and who will be much later the author of *Mensagem*), this agony, this unnatural closure expressed in this shadow of the “small Lusitanian house”, suggests itself the mythical salvation, and the re-conversion of our image and of our soul and cultural projects»]. (my translation)

*O camoniano Império é um fantasma hamletiano, a camoniana Fé um ideal que suscita na geração pós-nietzschiana, de que Pessoa é uma das mais complexas encarnações, um horror ou uma indiferença desdegnosa*<sup>37</sup>. (Lourenço 2002, 241)

Pessoa's most charged epic ambition coincides with his willingness of rewriting the Lusitanian epic poem changing the nature of myth itself. Hence, it is possible to find in Pessoa that quite common longing among the so called peripheral modern Western countries whose aim was that of a remapping with that tension that Eduard Said has defined cartographic – a new territoriality of the margin.

## **2.2.Epic, Myths, and Archetypes**

The history of the epic genre has been developed, rewritten and revised but has not lost sight of its objectives during the centuries. Representing the origins of literature, the *epos* has, in fact, always illustrated the setting up of a culture, its origin and collective necessity. This is quite noteworthy considering that the Homeric texts represent the indefatigable hypotexts of a long-standing rewriting for which, without doubt, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the founding text of Western literature. Sergio Zatti rightly recalls the statement of the Italian romance philologist Alberto Varvaro who implies that the epic genre not only precedes, from a historical point of view, every other literary form but, ideally, builds up the underpinnings of literature itself:

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<sup>37</sup> [«The Camonian Empire is a Hamletic ghost and the Camões' Faith an ideal which excites in the post-Nietzschean generation, of which Pessoa is one of the most complex embodiments, a horror or a contemptuous indifference»]. (my translation)

*L'epica stabilisce un rapporto primario fra la sua materia narrativa ed una qualche vicenda storica di rilievo per la comunità che la ricorda, sicchè essa si distingue dall'altra narrativa proprio perché il suo non è un rapporto generico con la realtà bensì con avvenimenti storici specifici (che siano reali o presunti importa meno)*<sup>38</sup>. (Zatti 2000, 7)

The epic is, thus, chosen by a people in order to tell and remember its own history and, uttermost, its origin. At the same time, this genre permits, transgressing the original archetypes of a culture, to project it towards the future in order to offer a possible perspective of this culture's fate:

This action of storying and thereby storing one's history, be it personal or collective, may be, within the epic tradition, the surest safeguard against the onset of a cultural amnesia that threatens the existence of the goddess Mnemosyne herself. And even as Eric Vogelin reminds us that epics give us the memory of a civilization, so, too, the narratives that retrieve both the personal and the communal history of a people are, like myths, ways of seeing into the future as well as centering properties of both individual and collective past. (Slattery 1992, 331)

Within this ambit, the use of myth is particularly important. In relation to this, Karl Kerényi illustrates how myths always deal with origins and constitutes a sort of archeology, intended in a Foucaultian sense. The need of rewriting and restoring myths, or rather, mythical-archetypical patterns, often represents a way to rethink and reshape the (national) history of a people through literature. As Joseph L. Handerson actually wrote in *Ancient Myths and Modern Man*<sup>39</sup>, heroic myths provide a structure not only for the individual who tries to discover and re-affirm his personality but also for an entire society which needs

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<sup>38</sup> [«The epic genre sets out a primordial relationship between its narrative subject-matter and a historical event which is relevant for the community that recalls it, so that it distinguishes itself from other genres of narrative precisely because it does not establish a generic relationship with reality but, rather, with specific historical events (it does not matter if real or assumed)»]. (my translation)

<sup>39</sup> [«I shall later explain in more detail why I believe this pattern has psychological meaning both for the individual, who is endeavouring to discover and assert his personality, and for a whole society, which has an equal need to establish its collective identity»]. (my translation)

to define its own collective distinctiveness. As Jung has put it, mythogenic activity is the result of a compensatory as well as prospective function. This is particularly true with reference to Portugal and to its peculiar historical situation during the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. Eduardo Lourenço precisely defined the Portuguese literary and historical condition in terms of a psychological “state of minority” from which Portugal has tried to escape with unflagging efforts since 1578 by whether desperately whether looking for international recognition or sinking in an eternal fence-sitting messianism. Mythopoiesis can, or rather, must, consequently, fulfill the fallacies and the disregarded expectations of history and it is precisely when Portuguese history and it precisely when Portuguese history declines that Portuguese mythology sprouts. After Alcácer Quivir disastrous route, according to Pessoa, Portugal lost, together with its independence, its sense of nation: «*Tivemos – para bem ou mal, porém e com certeza não só para mal – um conceito de império a que nos forçaram nossos Descobrimentos. Esse conceito caiu em Alcacer Quibir*» (Pessoa, Da República 1979, 111). The only way out that Pessoa glimpses to turn back to the national roots is mythmaking along with Sebastianism as a secular and national religion.<sup>40</sup> The Pessoaan preoccupation with resurrecting the Portuguese soul is actually brought about by the restoration of different levels of genealogy:

The search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes, myths and religions, these too are enabled by the land. And along with these nationalistic adumbrations of the decolonized identity, there always goes an almost magically inspired, quasi-chemical redevelopment of the native language. (Said 1990, 79)

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<sup>40</sup> «*La seule possibilité de recouvrer le sentiment national résidait dans l’accession à une région mystique absolument détachée de la matérialité d’un territoire, ou le retour du roi disparu à el-Qsar el Qbir serait l’annonce de la restauration nationale*». (Margarido 1971, 160)

The mythic foundation of Lisbon through the agency of Ulysses seems to be spurred by the aim of re-collocating Portugal from its Atlantic borders to the central sphere of influence of the West. The Pessoaan rewriting of Sebastianist myth can actually be conveyed to what the critic Harold Fisch called as the historicizing of myths which stands for this urgency of historicizing the past by the means of non-historical archetypes: «in trying to grapple with their existential crisis, with the awareness of historical rupture, so characteristic of this time, writers often seized upon myths and legends of a non-historical kind and gave them a new historical urgency. This is what I have termed the historicizing of myth» (Fisch 1984, 14). On first sight, the entrusting of the entire weight of Portugal's fate in the hands of a hero represents a precise archetypical pattern. Nevertheless, although *Mensagem* as a whole, as an epic, is anything but the extol of a series of heroes: within the schemata of this piece, Ulysses and Sebastião are actually the first and the latter heroes of foundation. The former, in fact, sets up Lisbon (and not Adam as according to the Agostinian tradition) but in a broader sense, the Greek hero inaugurates a discovery imaginary epitomizing the ideal of an intellectual sense of navigation. On the other hand, the re-elaboration of a national myth such as Sebastianism offers the possibility of turning back to the roots of the nation as well as a new spiritual life:

Fortunately we already have the Sebastianist myth, deep rooted in the past and in the Portuguese soul. This makes our job easier: instead of creating a myth, we need only to renew one. (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 163)

The Pessoaan rewriting of myth mirrors the overall modernist attention to mythmaking possibilities. So far, the topic of time redemption, pivotal within the modernist aesthetics – as both T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and the *Four Quartets* demonstrate – is no longer conceivable from a solipsistic point of view, but from a collective one as well. Furthermore, the idea of time itself seems to meander appearing as no more ineluctable but rather retrievable. If Proust, as Joseph Frank outlines in *The Widening Gyre*, provided for a personal redemption of time by its sliding merging of past and present, according to Eliot, Pound and Joyce (and for modernist authors in general) personal time becomes collective by virtue of its mythical characterization:

Time is no longer felt as an objective causal progression with clearly marked-out differences between periods, now it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out. Past and present are apprehended spatially, locked in a timeless unity that while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of sequence by the very art of juxtaposition. (Frank 1963, 59)

But this juxtaposition is possible as myth is essentially timeless and not a-historical as Joseph Frank<sup>41</sup> himself or Mircea Eliade would put it. Nevertheless, Fernando Pessoa implies in one of *Mensagem’s* opening poems, myth (– say Ulysses) is the nothingness which is/can be everything. In Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom will write on the sand, almost conscious about being himself an allegory of the Homeric Ulysses, that he (– and therefore myth) is blanket. Such as the choice of this character of Joyce’s *Ulysses* suggests, myth has its own chronotopes and, somehow, it is the biggest chronotope ever having paved the way for the adventure novel. In some respect, its inborn *emptiness*

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<sup>41</sup> «What has occurred, at least, so far as literature is concerned, may be described as the transformation of the historical imagination into myth – an imagination for which historical time does not exist, and which sees the actions and events of a particular time only as the bodying forth of eternal prototypes». (Frank 1963, 60)



permits its rewriting at any time. Consequently, myth is a sort of scaffold wherein past and present can be alternated but absolutely manifest.

### **2.2.1. The Intertextual and Intratextual Epos**

The structuring of the epic poem within the XX<sup>th</sup> century has found innumerable paths and countless forms as well as myriads of originating reasons and geographical and political justifications. Modernist poets have generally experimented new ways of giving form to that epic fascination that challenged the age of the novel, thus mirroring also a political dimension of the genres' system. Generally, *epos* has always been defined in contrast to other genres, especially all along the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century and, somehow, the debate still remains open. According to Fernando Pessoa, the *débâcle* results basically spurious and pleonastic. Even if within his theoretical pages the Portuguese poet takes advantage of a taxonomy which would resemble the Romantic terms of the issue, in his poetry he shows a way out from this much-discussed matter. As a point of fact, within the poetic production of his heteronyms, it is detectable a parallel attempt to contain his epic yearning which becomes apparent in the negotiation of the principal topics of both Portuguese poetry and epic contents. The different literary genres and forms Pessoa explored through his heteronyms actually offer a drawn in round image of a nearly obsessive, objectively circular and coherent thematic spin.

The epic ambition longing for an *ultramar* (roughly translatable with “oversea”) was actually just expressed through the Sensationist Vorticism of

Álvaro de Campos who, accordingly to his self-definition, belonged to «a type of Portuguese/ Who since discovering India/ Has been unemployed» (Pessoa, Poems of Fernando Pessoa 1998, 40). Irene Ramalho likewise suggests:

On the other hand, by its imperial ambition to bring the nation, history, myth, occultism, the past, the future, and the poetic subject into the “Hour” of the ultimate utopian prophecy, *Mensagem* quietly accomplishes the “Work” of that Super poet arrogantly implied in the Nietzschean Superman of Álvaro de Campos’ *Ultimatum*» (Ramalho 2003, 43).

It is precisely in this latter *Ultimatum*’s verse that the clearest Pessoaan abjection towards *material* imperialism takes shape. Verse after verse, Pessoa rails against all the European colonialist as well as imperialist Great Powers, rejecting and deprecating all false oversea myths, compounding the Portuguese one upon all others:

And you, two-bit Portugal, monarchical vestiges rotting as a republic,  
extreme-unction-compunction of Disgrace,  
Artificially in Europe’s war but really and vergogne naturali in  
Africa!» (Pessoa, The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa 2002, 74)

In Álvaro de Campos’ verses it is traceable a clear homogeneity of intents in relation to the ideals which will come to an end with *Mensagem*. Some of the Marine Engineer’s odes could, in fact, be somehow interpreted as *Mensagem*’s forerunners by approaching and managing a similar epic tension, re-covering the same maritime themes and especially by tackling imperialist themes. The *Maritime Ode*, stages de Campos’ mechanical interiorization of the trip arraying his feelings in every way that tracks down the authentically Portuguese bitter aftertaste for discovery: «Ah, the whole dock is nostalgia of stone!» (Pessoa,

Poems of Fernando Pessoa 1998, 48), states De Campos in the opening part of his *Ode* where even the almost sexual meaning of discovery is accompanied by a subtle sense of nostalgia:

*Se Caeiro pôde contrapor à animalidade vigorosa de Whitman a força do pensamento em luta para a resolução dos problemas do ser e não ser, e assim gravou marca pessoal indelével na sua poesia, Campos só artificialmente sustentado pelos nervos, se manteve na atitude preposta da actividade dirigida pelo exterior, e ainda aqui atingiu sinceridade poética apenas quando apoiado na força que provinha do abstracto português do seu ser: a loucura do mar*<sup>42</sup>.  
(Monteiro 1955, 71)

The utopian intention of Pessoaan overseas' conceptualization creates a direct and ideological bridge between the *Maritime Ode* and *Mensagem*<sup>43</sup>, especially, in its theorizing the *Cais Absolúto*, the Absolute Dock, from which all the ships have, ideally, departed:

*Ah o Grande Cais donde partimos em Navios-Nações!  
O Grande Cais Anterior, eterno e divino!  
Do que porto? Em que aguas? E porque penso eu isto?  
Grande Cais como os outros cais, mas o Único.  
Cheio como eles de silencio rumorosos nas antemanhas,  
E desabrochando com as manhãs num ruído de guindastes  
E chegadas de comboios de mercadorias,  
sob a nuvem negra e ocasional e leve [...]*<sup>44</sup> (Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 164)

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<sup>42</sup> [«If Caeiro is able to oppose the strength of a thought struggling for the resolution of the problems of being and not being to the vigorous animalism of Whitman, is therefore able to engrave a personal and indelible mark upon his poetry. Campos just artificially sustained by his nerves, keeps on with the attitude disposed by the activity directed from the outer, and still here he got the poetic sincerity at least when he is backed up by the strength which comes from the Portuguese substrate of his being: the sea madness»]. (my translation)

<sup>43</sup> «A Ode Marítima, quaisquer que sejam os seus traços estilísticos afins da poesia de Whitman, informa-a e agrega-a o sentimento do mar, desenterrado da ancestralidade portuguesa, com que o Poeta a vivifica. É, das composições desta fase de Campos, a única onde perpassa realmente um frémito de epopeia, de raiz no passado, é certo, mas nem por isso de menor apelo para a sensibilidade moderna». (Monteiro 1955, 70) [«The Maritime Ode, whichever its stylistic traits might be similar to Whitman's poetry, shapes and folds on the feeling of the sea, unearthed from Portuguese ancestry, with which the Poet revitalize it. Among the poems of this de Campos' phase, it is the only ode which actually overcomes the thrill typical of the epics, that of roots sinking in the past but and, at the same time, it does not imply a minor appeal to modern sensibility»]. (my translation)

<sup>44</sup> [«Ah, the Great Dock from which we depart in Nation Ships!/ The Great Original Dock, eternal and divine!/ From what port? In what waters? And why do I think about this?/

The dock is thus translated into utopia and the departures and returns are reduced to a pure sense of disquiet, of imaginative dislocation and personal evolution. In this regard, Pessoa himself affirms “I don’ t evolve, I travel”. The dock, therefore, phisically embodies the crave for the overseas, revealing «the ancestral rear of moving off and leaving,/ The mysterious ancestral dread of Arrival and New» (Pessoa, Poems of Fernando Pessoa 1998, 50):

*Cais negramente reflectido nas aguas paradas,  
Bulício e bordo dos navíos,  
O alma errante e instável da gente que anda embarcada,  
Da gente simbólica que passa e com quem nada dura,  
Que quando o navío volta ao porto  
Há sempre qualquer alteração a bordo!<sup>45</sup> (ibidem)*

Trip and discovery are thus dignified with much profounder significations which abstract themselves from the contingent materialism of mere colonial discovery. Hence, ships become, borrowing the term from Foucault, a sort of Portuguese heterotopy: mythologems of the archetypical voyages, symbolic chronotope of the Lusitanian history, and means for the completion of the national *mythogenesis* and mythmaking. In Pessoa’s works, ships are made of the same material of myth, being, according to Foucault, the biggest “imagination repository”. In De Campos’ verses routes and maps

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Great Docks like other docks, but One and Only Dock./ Like them full of rumbling, pre-dawn silences/ Blossoming with morning in a grinding of cranes/ And freight trains arriving/ Under the occasional light black cloud». (Pessoa, Poems of Fernando Pessoa 1998, 49)

<sup>45</sup> «A dock darkly reflected in motionless waters,/ The bustle on board ship,/ Oh, the roving, restless soul of all boarding passengers,/ The symbolic milling crowd among whom nothing abides,/ And among whom, when the ship returns to the port,/ Some change has always occurred on board». (ibidem)

become allegories and underpinnings for trip imagination and overtly denote something different from their contingent definition<sup>46</sup>:

*E o splendor dos mapas, caminho abstracto para a imaginação  
concreta,  
Letras e riscos irregulares abrindo para a maravilha. (ibidem, 51)*

They actually sail towards “that India which does not exist on the maps”, navigating on a Portuguese “infinite sea”, as “floating fragments” of Portugal landing in a mythical utopia called Fifth Empire. Somehow, Pessoa reminds, along with Foucault, that «*dans les civilisations sans bateaux les rêves se tarissent, l'espionnage y remplace l'aventure, et la police, les corsaires*» (Foucault octobre 1984, 49).

On the other hand, the heteronym Alberto Caeiro significantly underlines the imaginative nature of Portuguese ships along with the fictive and suggestive nature of Tagus river:

*O Tejo tem grandes navíos  
E navega nel ainda,  
Para aqueles que veem em tudo o que lá não está,  
A memoria das naus. (Pessoa, Poemas de Alberto Caeiro 1946, 46)*

And seemingly, the Marine Engineer Álvaro De Campos had re-affirmed the deep interweaving between the river, the water and the dream:

*Toma-me pouco a pouco o delírio das coisas marítimas,  
Penetram-me fisicamente o cais e a sua atmosfera,  
O marulho do Tejo galga-me por cima dos sentidos,*

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<sup>46</sup> «O que de sonho jaz nas encadernações vetustas, / Nas assinaturas complicadas (ou tão simples e esguias) dos velhos livros./ (Tinta remota e desbotada aqui presente para além da morte,/ O que de negado à nossa vida quotidiana ven nas ilustrações,/ O que certas gravuras de anuncios sem querece anunciam./ Tudo quanto sugere, ou exprime o que não exprime,/ Tudo o que diz o que não diz,/ E a alma sonha, diferente e distraída.// O enigma visível do tempo, o nada vivo em que estimos!» (Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 51)

*E começo a sonhar, começo a envolver-me do sonho das águas,  
[...]  
Chamam por mim as águas,  
Chamam por mim os mares,  
Chamam por mim, levantando uma voz corpórea, os longes,  
As épocas marítimas todas sentidas no passado, a chamar<sup>47</sup>.  
(Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 163)*

The river's imaginative and evocative power sends back to a lost past typified by symbolic ships through which it is possible to board for a vague and utopian distant America, or, more generally to the World:

*Pelo Tejo vai-se para o Mundo.  
Para além do Tejo há America  
E a fortuna daqueles que encontram.* (Pessoa, Poemas de Alberto Caeiro 1946, 46)

Also in the verses of the last Campos, “*o Campos aposentado*” as Teresa Rita Lopes has named him, resounds the same vagueness and imaginative nature of both ships and trips latently evoking *The Mariner* authored by Fernando Pessoa himself:

*As naus seguiram,  
Seguiram viagem não sei em que dia escondido,  
E a rota que deviam seguir estava escrita nos ritmos,  
Os ritmos perdidos das canções mortas do marinheiro do sonho...  
(Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 241)*

The late Campos transfers his earlier and youngster fascination for the mechanical speed of trips, a sensual identification with swiftness and a broad sense of movement and discovery, into the identification with thought reality.

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<sup>47</sup> «Little by little the spell of seagoing things comes over me./ The dock and its ambience penetrate me physically,/ The tide of the Tagus floods all my senses/ And I start dreaming, I start wrapping myself up in a dream of waters,/ Driving-belts start winding themselves firmly around my soul,/ And the fast-whirring flywheel clearly shakes me.// Waters are calling me./ Seas are calling me./ All distances raise a bodily voice and call me,/ And all seafaring ages felt out of the past are calling me». (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 54)

Ships become a metonymy of thought and of the tricky connection between inner and outer world: «*mas as naus estão em mim*». The fictive and imaginative nature of ships is thus completely interjected<sup>48</sup> inwards the lexicon of seeing and comprehension, ships and their components become nearly an obsessive personification of the self of the poet:

*E vós, ó coisas navais, meus velhos brinquedos de sonho!  
Componde for a de mim a minha vida interior!* <sup>49</sup> (Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 164)

There's a doze and plane permeation of sea and ships as the only possible metaphor to explain his anti-metaphysics understanding:

*Aos próprios palácios distantes a nau que penso não leva.  
As escadas dando sobre o mar inatingível ela não alberga.  
Aos jardins maravilhosos nas ilhas inexplicitas não deixa.  
Tudo perde o sentido com que o abrigo em meu portico  
E o mar entra por os meus olhos o portico cessado. (ibidem)*

Álvaro de Campos also shares with Pessoa “*ele mesmo*” the concept of progress and civilization as once again affirmed in the *Ode Marítima*. Although the engineer identifies himself with the speed and the movement, he longs for the old sailing ships: those sailing ships that encompass that madness which in *Mensagem* represents the most complete sense of discovery:

*Ah, os paquetes, os navios-carvoeiros, os navios de vela!  
Vão rareando-ai de mim!—os navios de vela nos mares!*

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<sup>48</sup> «*Minhas sensações são um barco de quilha pró ar./ Minha imaginação uma âncora meio submersa./ Minha ânsia um remo partido./ E a tessitura dos meus nervos uma rede a secar na praia!*» [«My sensations are a ship with its keel in the wind,/ My imagination a half-sunken anchor,/ My anxiety a broken oar,/ And the weave of my nerves a net to dry on the beach!»] (*ibidem*, 53)

<sup>49</sup> [«And all you seafaring things, my old dream playthings, / Oh, compose beyond me my inner life!»] (*ibidem*, 52)

*Eu o engenheiro, eu que amo a civilização moderna, eu que beijo  
com a alma as máquinas,  
Eu o engenheiro, eu o civilizado, eu o educado no estrangeiro,  
Gostaria de ter outra vez ao pé da minha vista só veleiros e barcos  
de madeira,  
De não saber doutra vida marítima que a antiga vida dos mares!<sup>50</sup>  
(Pessoa, Poesias de Álvaro de Campos 1944, 168)*

The old life of the sea contributes to create that sense of vagueness and indefiniteness with which Pessoa, under the guise of *Álvaro de Campos* really wants to inscribe Portuguese travel history. This outcrop towards past, in fact, hides a subtle willingness to replace the trip with the destination. Thus, the Absolute Dock's counterpart is, almost directly, the Absolute Distance:

*Porque os mares antigos são a Distância Absoluta,  
O Pure Longe, liberto di peso do Actual...  
E ah, como aqui tudo me lembra essa vida melhor,  
Esses mares, maiores, porque se navegava mais devagar.  
Esses mares, misteriosos, porque se sabia menos deles<sup>51</sup>.(ibidem)*

The voyage on the way to an *Absolute Distance* leads to a pure distance, vague and sublime, swallowed by the intentionality of what is actually present and, therefore, contingent, real. In the Campos' *Ode*, there's a still abstract and symbolic extol of the maritime vicissitudes of those Portuguese «hurled out of Sagres/ For the indefinite adventure of the Absolute Sea, to realize the Impossible» (Pessoa, Poems of Fernando Pessoa 1998, 57). Nonetheless, this

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<sup>50</sup> [«Ah, the steamers, the merchant ships, the schooners!/ Those sailing ships—alas!—become rarer on the high seas!/ And I who love modern civilization, I who embrace the machines with all my heart,/ I, the engineer, the civilized mind, the man educated abroad,/ I would love to see again before me only schooners and ships made of timber,/ And hear of no other maritime life than the old seafaring life!»](Pessoa, The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa 2002, 53–54)

<sup>51</sup> [«Because the ancient seas are Absolute Distance,/ Pure Extension, free of the weight of Actuality.../ Ah, how everything here reminds me of that better life,/ Of those seas that were vaster because sailed more slowly,/ Of those seas more mysterious because so little was known about them»]. (ibidem, 54)



abstract utopia dates back to Camões and to the Renaissance myth of the Golden Age allegorically represented by the Lovers' Island that «as a critical model of the present, the Island belongs to the Renaissance Utopian tradition. But as a reward for a future epic project, it brings into the vision of a utopian 'nowhere' a specific, a specifically localized, historical purpose» (Macedo 1990, 35). Fernando Pessoa re-semantizes the term *utopia* on the score of myth so that the original meaning of “*ou-topos*” – “nowhere” – according to the first acceptation Thomas More gave to the word results translated into a vagueness which is preeminent within the Pessoaan definition of Absolute Distance. Consequently, myth and utopia are particularly linked in Pessoa's revision of his home country definition: «*por isso, a utopia tem uma outra face, que é o mito, igualmente enraizado no inconsciente nacional e, como a utopia, designando uma realidade em contradição com o presente mas influenciando-o e agindo sobre ele*»<sup>52</sup>(Apolinário Lourenço 2006, 81). However, the utopian and mythical poetic operation the author of *Mensagem* shapes is two-fold. If on one hand Pessoa overtly rejects the objective of trip, the achievement and the destination to a vague “*no-where*”, on the other hand, he re-encapsulates the utopian and mythical tension inwards Portugal itself. Pessoa rather brings the outer world inside Portugal's idea of itself, matching together universal and national archetypes making of them “a sort of permanent basis in humanity”, as Ezra Pound states in *The Cantos*.

The utopian longing is justified and spurred by the Pessoaan dissatisfaction with the actual Portuguese plight and clearly expresses the willing for a new and different Portugal. Within the protean archetypal

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<sup>52</sup> [«For this reason, utopia presents another face which is myth, equally rooted in the national conscience and that, just like utopia, refers to a reality conflicting with present time, but, at the same time, influencing and affecting it»]. (my translation)

Pessoa's (national) imagination, nostalgia actually represents a further and parallel layer of utopia and mythmaking, and reflects Pessoa's impatience with Portuguese political and social condition<sup>53</sup>. At times, the Pessoaan poetic operation reminds us of what Mannheim affirms in *Ideology and Utopia*, – say: «Without, however, a social life-situation compelling and tending towards individualization, a mode of life which is devoid of collective myths is scarcely bearable» (Mannheim 1998, 31). Nostalgia, differently declined within Pessoa's various heteronyms tinges the verses of the “political” Pessoa as well. In a sense, while the term utopia is reframed and re-semantized within and along the Portuguese borders, the archetypes of this utopian yearning are sunk in vagueness. In *Mensagem*, for instance, the term *distância* (distance) appears only twice and, in particular, in *Os Colombos* where utopia is turned to an absolute beyond assuming the traits of myth, wherein it is able to melt together infiniteness and finitude.<sup>54</sup> This is manifest also in the composition *Prece*: «*E outra vez conquistemos a Distância – do mar ou outra mas que seja nossa!*»<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> «Utopian and nostalgic tension are both of a sense of unease, a critique of a present perceived to be unsatisfactory and inadequate. Both these attitudes are consequently dominated by desire. Utopian projects are born from the desire for a better world; in the same way, the nostalgic gaze is fuelled by the desire for a lost place or time». (Fortunati 2005, 47)

<sup>54</sup> «*Neste longe e neste distante se opera a confusão voluntária da ideia de infinito com a de indefinido, mas está última que se subordina à primeira. É exactamente o oposto de que ocorre na Ode Marítima, onde o emprego dos mesmos vocábulos, ao lado do de infinito, embora sempre conteúdo “des-realizante”, tem uma função inquietadora, dramática e, num certo sentido, dinâmica. Num dos raros poemas de Mensagem de tonalidade próxima da mesma Ode Marítima [...] o Longe do grande poema de Álvaro de Campos não abre, paradoxalmente, para “o Infinito”, mas pela realidade percebida, tocada e vista. Isso sucede porque no texto de Mensagem a verdadeira realidade é o mito que tem a propriedade de conferir finitude ao gesto épico dos navegadores da verdadeira realidade (a mítica) [...]».* (Lourenço 2002, 209) [«Within this distance and remoteness is acted the intentional idea of infiniteness with that of indefinite, but this latter is subordinate to the former. It is precisely the opposite to what happens with the *Maritime Ode* where the use of the same terms, nearby those of the indefinite, still and always “de-realizing” content, has a disquieting, dramatic, and somehow dynamic, function. In one of the rare poems of *Mensagem*, presenting a tone quite close to that of the *Maritime Ode* [...], the Distance of the great poem by Álvaro de Campos does not open, paradoxically, towards “the Infinite” but rather towards a reality perceived, touched and seen. This happens because in the text of *Mensagem* the actual reality is that of myth which possesses the property of giving the finitude of actual reality finitude to the epic gesture of navigators »]. (my translation)

<sup>55</sup> [«And let us once again conquer the Distance–/ Of the sea or some other, but be it ours!»] (*ibidem*, 77)

These verses really mirror the overall conceptualization of a national imaginary devoid of any imperialistic achievement and, according to this understanding; the dreamt trip is what differentiates Portuguese sense of discovery:

*Outros haverão de ter  
O que houvermos de perder  
Outros poderão achar  
O que, no nosso encontrar,  
Foi achado, ou não achado,  
Segundo o destino dado.*

*Mas o que a elles não toca  
É a Magia que evoca  
O Longe e faz d'elle história.  
E porisso a sua glória  
É justa aureola dada  
Por uma luz emprestada.<sup>56</sup> (Pessoa, Mensagem 1934, 72)*

The new realization of utopia is thought as possible in *Mensagem* through the re-constellation of the allegorical meaning of trip which is not real but inscribed in the sign of the myth of the Fifth Empire. The navigators appear as the ultimate accomplishers of Portuguese predestination spurred by the utopian inspiration:

*Só os sonhadores, os loucos, os mártires da realidade, cujo paradigma é D. Dinís, figura central do Poema e símbolo do Quinto Império, merecem louvor, pois só eles sabem que la vrai vie est ailleurs. Algures, mas nos algures desta vida, transcendendo-a de dentro por essa forma de heroísmo “oposto ao mundo” a que Pessoa se referiu. Como D. Sebastião, eles não ficaram soterrados sob as areias da realidade, mas ocultados, adormecidos, à espera de regressar ao que eram e jamais deixaram de ser<sup>57</sup>. (Seabra 1996, XXI)*

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<sup>56</sup> [«Others will have kept What we had to give up./ Others will have power/ To achieve what, during our/ Course, was achieved, or missed./ In accord with given destiny// But what they're nowhere near is/ The Magic which conjures/ Distance and makes it History./ And because of this their glory's/ An aureole of right/ Given by a borrowed light»]. (*ibidem*, 65)

<sup>57</sup> [«Only the dreamers, the fools, the martyrs of reality, whose paradigms D. Dinís, central character of the Poem and symbol of the Fifth Empire, deserve praise as they are the only ones who know that *la vrai vie est ailleurs*. In some place and, of course not places of this life, transcending it from the inside for this form of heroism “opposed to the world” to which Pessoa refers to. Just like D. Sebastião, they had not been buried under the territory of reality

Imagination is always far more important than reality. What is crucial, according to *Mensagem's* author, is the dream which leads the trip. From this perspective the importance of myth results quite apparent in that it is «*o nada que é tudo*» and so, more powerful than reality itself. If, in fact, the poetic of the Marine Eengineer is characterized by a basic disproportion between immanence and metaphysical inclination, Pessoa as author of *Mensagem* swaps the two terms in favor of dream, making no distinction between dream and reality. Differently from Álvaro de Campos, Pessoa “*ele mesmo*” conflates the metaphysical nostalgia of his heteronym marked by the dichotomies everything/ nothing, reality/ unreality, into the possible future of myth which is actually able to give reality to the figures of immanence<sup>58</sup>. This is pivotal in order to grasp the new meaning of trip in relation to *Mensagem* profoundly linked myth and dream as well.<sup>59</sup> As Dalila Pereira Da Costa has accrued, in fact, sea, dream and poetry constitute the three main archetypes of Lusitanian imaginary, “the matrix” of Portuguese essence<sup>60</sup>. It is in fact in the characters of Ulysses and

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but, instead, concealed, numbed, while they were waiting to come back to what they were before and never ceased to be»]. (my translation)

<sup>58</sup> Always in the *Maritime Ode*: «The ships that come in by the sandbar,/ The ships that leave from then ports,/ The ships that pass the distance/ (I imagine myself them from a desert beach)–/ All these ships move me as if they were something else/ And not simply ships seen from up close, even when one doesn't board them,[...]». (Pessoa, *Obras em prosa* 1974, 51)

<sup>59</sup> «*Por isso, o Longe ou a Distância não são aqui substituídos pálidos do sentimento de infinidade tal como Álvaro de Campos o exprime ou grita, mas obstáculos ilusórios – como o horizonte frio, símbolo também do infinito – de acesso a uma Verdade invocada à maneira de Caeiro mas exigida agora pela supra-evidência do Mito e não pela evidência sem mediação mediata da consciência*». (Lourenço 2002, 211) [«For this reason, the Remoteness or the Distance are not here just the pale substitutes of the feeling of infinitude as Álvaro de Campos expresses or cries out, but illusory obstacles – as the cold horizon, symbol of the infinite as well – of the excess of an invoked Truth made in the guise of Caeiro but also demanded by the evidence of Myth and not according to the unmediated evidence mediated by the conscience»]. (my translation)

<sup>60</sup> «*E é partindo sempre da matriz do ser português, a água, e assim, matriz comum do mar, do sonho e da poesia, e que per ela ainda, se reportará a outra derradeira, celeste, a lua, aquela que tudo mede e ritma, em sucessivos tempos de acção e latência – que tudo se criará nesta pátria*». (Pereira Da Costa 1979, 203) [«It is always from the matrix of the Portuguese essence that our counry will be created, the water, which is also the common matrix of the sea,

Dom Sebastião that is exemplarily entrusted this new sense of sea voyage and discovery. Their madness leads them to the pursuit of knowledge, which in the work's section "*Mar Português*" is typified by the sea travels of Vasco da Gama and Fernão de Megalhães. Significantly enough, the weight of Lusitanian maritime heirloom also emerges within the irreverent verses of Álvaro de Campos' *Ultimatum* where madness, the fever for the beyond is translated into a "tremendous Yearning":

I, from the Race of the Navigators, declare that it cannot endure!  
I, from the Race of the Discoverers, disdain whatever's less than  
discovery of [a New World!  
Who in Europe has the slightest clue  
Where the next New World will be discovered? Who knows how to set  
out from a modern-day Sagres?  
I, at least, am a tremendous Yearning, the very same size as what's  
Possible! (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 79)

Certainly, the Marine Engineer embodies this madness, this anxiety for discovery that, simultaneously, reveals the impatience with the modern Portuguese dull condition and the need for a "modern-day Sagres". By the way, D. Sebastião himself affirms in one of the poems dedicated to him:

*Minha locura, outros que me tomem  
Com o que nela ia.  
Sem locura que é o homem  
Mais que bestia sadia,  
Cadáver addiado que procria?*<sup>61</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 42)

Dom Sebastião's foolishness is rather conceivable as the necessary ingredient of the Lusitanian doom. In his excessive heroism there's nothing of

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of deam and poetry, and to which it will be recollected the last one, the heavenly one, the moon that measures and rhythms everything, in different times of action and latency»]. (my translation)

<sup>61</sup> [«This my madness, accept it, those who can,/ Dare whatever it needs./ What, without madness, is a man/ More than a beast after feeding,/ A corpse adjourned, breeding?»] (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 43)

the ironical sense of Quixotism whereas the Encoberto's lunacy is perfectly organic to the divine conception of the Fifth Empire's predestination. Thus Sebastian's heroism results comprehensible if seen only under the light of the future empire envisaged as an imaginary entity. Jacinto do Prado Coelho has keenly noticed that this imaginative conception of the empire and of the colonial enterprise also resides in the Pessoaan way of grasping heroism. *The Lusíads*, in fact, array a kind of heroism also understood as a form of sacrifice made worthy by material rewards, while, «*Pelo contrário os heróis da Mensagem olham e agem obsidiados por um misticismo de objecto longínquo, indeterminado. Não gritam a plenitude humana do triumpho*»<sup>62</sup> (Do Prado Coelho 1990, 53).

The fundamental connotation of Pessoa's imperialism is basically universalistic<sup>63</sup> as it is possible to detect, for instance and significantly, in the opening poem of the second part of *Mensagem*, "Mar Português", *O Infante*:

*Deus quiz que a terra fosse toda uma,  
Que o mar unisse, já não separasse.*<sup>64</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 57)

The symptomatic universalism of Pessoa's conception of imperialism is seldom expressed, i.e., by equivalence between sea and sky, image and symbol of infinitude *par excellence*:

*Deus ao mar o perigo e o abysmo deu,  
Mas nele é que espello o céu*<sup>65</sup>. (*ibidem*, 67)

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<sup>62</sup> [«On the contrary, *Mensagem*'s heroes' sight and actions are guided by the obsession of a distant object's mysticism, which is indefinite. They do not cry out the human plenitude of triumph»]. (my translation)

<sup>63</sup> [«*Porque a realização histórica portuguesa, perante o Ocidente, sempre em si incluirá uma missão de amplitude e carácter universal*». (Pereira Da Costa 1979, 205–6) [«Because the Portuguese historical realization in front of the West, will always include a mission of amplification of universal kind»]. (my translation)

<sup>64</sup> [«God did will that the earth should be all one,/ That what the sea might join be now not torn»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 55)

The universal prerogative of the Portuguese sea is a sort of product of a superior Fate or willingness as the foregoing citations illustrates but, by the other way round, they do express the fundamental imaginative nature of Pessoa's imperialism. This is particularly apparent in *O Marinheiro*, where the theme of dream is crucial so as the disparity between real and imaginary home country. The *dreamt* mariner *dreams* of a *dreamed* homeland, trying to forget his real country. In this dream it is possible to glimpse Fernando Pessoa himself and his youngster longing for an imaginary homeland. Nevertheless, this dreamt land also encompasses a dissatisfaction that leads to opt for an imaginary land:

*Durante anos e anos, dia a dia, o marinheiro erguia num sonho contínuo a sua nova terra natal... Todos os dias punha uma pedra de sonho nesse edifício impossível... Breve ele ia tendo um país que já tantas vezes havia percorrido. Milhares de horas lembrava-se já de ter passado ao longo de suas costas. Sabia de que cor sóiam ser os crepúsculos numa baía do norte, e como era suave entrar, noite alta, e com a alma recostada no murmúrio da água que o navio abria, num grande porto do sul onde ele passará outrora, feliz talvez, da sua mocidades a suposta...*<sup>66</sup> (Pessoa, Poemas Dramáticos 1952, 160)

The dichotomy dreamt/real country accurately punctuates most of Pessoa's works envisaging the final epic, political, and cultural content of *Mensagem*. Somehow, the epic genre and the epic form do not symbolize for Pessoa, a static and immobile form, but represents a dynamic form, able to merge dialogically with other genres. Above all, Fernando Pessoa shows

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<sup>65</sup> [«Peril and abyss has God to the sea given/ And yet made it the mirror of heaven»].(*ibidem*,73)

<sup>66</sup> [«For years and years, day after day, the mariner built his new homeland in a never-ending dream... Every day he placed a dreamed stone on that possible edifice... Soon he had a country he'd crossed and recrossed countless times. He remembered having already spent thousands of hours along its coastline. He knew the usual color of twilight on a certain northern bay, and how soothing it was to enter—late at night, with his soul basking in the murmur of the water cut by the ship's prow – a large southern port where he had spent, perhaps happily, his imaginary youth...»].(Pessoa, The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa 2002, 27)

especially that epic is able to influence, or rather, to affect other genres according to what Mikhail Bakhtin has called *genre's criticism*.

### **2.2.2. An “Epic ao gosto popular”.**

According to Paul Ricoeur, utopia has its own concrete forms and, therefore, its own literary outputs. Somehow, the epic genre represents the most appropriate form to shape national aspirations in a poetic context. In the case of Fernando Pessoa and in relation to *Mensagem*, this relationship results particularly strong. It is quite apparent that this work could rise to and epitomize his foremost personal as well as national ambitions that inevitably interweave together in the Pessoaan poetics. As José Augusto Seabra has keenly pinpointed, in fact, poetics and politics in Pessoa seem to converge almost straightforwardly, «*Numa palavra, poética e política coincidem, sendo opostas. Estamos, num e noutro caso, perante dois tipos de heterónimos, produzindo uma multiplicidade de textos que se entrelaçam*»<sup>67</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem*, Poemas Esotéricos 1996, 46). If previously the common interest in the national mythologization was proved, it must be also demonstrated that Pessoa *ele mesmo* tried, in parallel with the sonorous epic tones of *Mensagem* to affect his home country's collective imagination. During the years of *Mensagem's* final edits (July 1934–June 1935), Pessoa was working on a different series of poems that, just like most of his resurrected works, remained unfinished, the *Quadras ao gosto popular*. As the title suggests, these poems were addressed to popular taste and shaped in form and contents according to tradition. Luisa Freire and

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<sup>67</sup> [«To say it briefly, politics and poetics do coincide even if are opposed. In both cases, we are in front of two different types of heteronyms, producing a multiplicity of texts which interweave reciprocally»]. (my translation)



Jacinto do Prado Coelho<sup>68</sup> both highlighted the fictive nature of the Pessoa taste for popular culture while conversely, Georg Rudolf Lind underlined in his preface to the *Quadras* the contingency of production of the *Quadras* and *Mensagem*, as both of which encompass Pessoa's concern with his home country's plight: «*Mas não esqueçamos que o ano 1934, em que a maior parte das quadras foram compostas, é ao mesmo tempo o ano da publicação de Mensagem; as quadras representam, sem dúvida, uma homenagem do poeta ao seu povo e provam um patriotismo genuíno [...]*»<sup>69</sup> (Pessoa, *Quadras ao Gosto Popular* 1979, 14).

From a formal point of view, the *Quadras* not only reveal the Pessoa predilection for brief forms, but also his two-fold engagement in those genres which tend to affect a roomy audience. *Mensagem* and the *Quadras* actually represent the two faces of the same (political) intention and the extraordinary versatility of their author:

*D'altro canto, legandosi come essa fa, alla contemporanea Mensagem, la raccolta è anche un indice del desiderio, presente in tutta la storia letteraria di quel poeta solitario che fu Fernando Pessoa, di ricreare a vari livelli espressivi, un sentimento politico collettivo: ed ecco da un lato i toni epici e messianici della Mensagem e dei suoi annunci di Quinto Impero, e dall'altra appunto le Quadras con i toni dimessi e anonimi della creazione di gusto popolare*<sup>70</sup>. (Peloso 1977, 130)

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<sup>68</sup> See "Estrutura e tematica das quadras «populares» de Fernando Pessoa" in Fernando Pessoa, *Quadras ao Gosto Popular*. Lisboa: Ática, 1979

<sup>69</sup> [«But it should not be forgotten that 1934 is the year of the composition of most of the quadras and, at the same time, it is the year of *Mensagem's* publication; the quadras represent, with no doubt, a homage the poet pays to his people and are the proof of an authentic patriotism (...)]. (my translation)

<sup>70</sup> [«After all, linking itself with the contemporaneous *Mensagem*, the collection is also an indication of the willingness, present within all the literary history of that lonely poet that Fernando Pessoa actually personified, of re-shaping at different expressive levels a collective and political feeling: from here the epic and messianic tones of *Mensagem* along with its Fifth Empire proclaims, and temporarily, the *Quadras* which display humble and anonymous tones typical of popular taste creations»]. (my translation)

Somehow, the comparison between the two texts overcomes the stale image of Fernando Pessoa as an isolated poet, identified almost completely with his solitary semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares. On the contrary, the parallel between *Mensagem* and the *Quadras* is worthy of depicting a new image of the Portuguese poet, profoundly preoccupied with the cultural and political fate of his country as appears evident in the famous statement “I want to be a creator of myths which is the highest mystery someone can produce of humanity”. Actually, while affirming his willingness to become a mythmaker, Pessoa appears conscious of the power of mythopoiesis and of its capability of influencing the collective imagination. The above citation expresses Pessoa’s idea of literature whose decisive undertaking resides in its need to be and take part of humanity. In this sense, the Pessoaan mythopoiesis follows the original Greek meaning of the word, say, and “*poiesis*” from “*ποιειν*” that is, “crafting”. The *Quadras* represent precisely his inclination for “crafting” poetry, intended as mythos, necessary *fabula* and narration. The *Quadras* embody the multiplicity of Pessoa’s inspiration and concern for literary diffusion at multiple levels. Indeed, this work provides a further layer within the Pessoaan multifaceted preoccupation with the restoration of national literature.

The *Quadras* are rhymed quatrains of popular content, displaying various themes going from love poetry to folk wisdom. Pessoa spans all the specters and overtones of this genre’s tradition but as quite often happens in his work, in spite of the plainness of style and thoughtlessness of the content, it is possible to discover deeper and hidden meanings. In a flighty tone, in fact, in some quatrain, the Portuguese poet reveals some pivotal themes of his poetics, and, especially those which enclose the combination poetry/lying, words/truth as, i.e., in this *quadra*:

*Não há verdade na vida  
Que senão diga o mentir.  
Há quem apresse a subida  
Para descer a sorrir*<sup>71</sup>. (Pessoa, *Quadras ao Gosto Popular*. 1965, 115)

This short and fleeting poetic work vaguely resembles another genre Fernando Pessoa actually explored in the *Inscriptions*, where brief, terse, and epigrammatic common sense affirmations were framed in small and concentrated cameos. This allows us to note the similarities of purposes between this work and *Mensagem*. One of the last quatrains composed by Fernando Pessoa, in fact, reproduces the same topics previously analyzed both in *Mensagem* and in the works of other heteronyms:

*Cantigas de portuguesas  
São como barcos no mar—  
Vão de uma alma para a outra  
Com riscos de naufragar*<sup>72</sup>. (*ibidem*, 35)

These verses could be the epigraph of *Mensagem* as they seem to summarize the overall meaning and intentions. The archetypes upon which *Mensagem* is built up resound in this quatrain: the reference to the old *cantigas* relates back to ancient sea poetry while, at the same time, the ships once more serve as the favorite metaphor between the real and the fictive, the inner and the outer world. These verses also express Pessoa's interest in the potential of poetry and its capacity to affect the human soul. The uncontrollable causes of this preoccupation recur in another quadra and coincide not by chance with those which had animated *Mensagem*:

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<sup>71</sup> [«There's no great truth that can't be warped/ to lie once in a while./ Some people struggle hard to climb/ and come back down to smile»]. (Pessoa, *A Critical Dual-Language Edition of Quadras ao Gosto Popular/Quatrains in the Popular Style* 2003, 139)

<sup>72</sup> [«The ballads of the Portuguese,/ boats on the wavetops,sail/ from one soul to another, risking/ shipwreck, risking wail»].(*ibidem*, 11)

*A terra é sem vida, e nada  
Vive mais que o coração...  
E envolve-te a terra fria  
E a minha saudade não*<sup>73</sup>.(ibidem, 35)

This quatrain introduces the theme of the “waste land”, which is at the core of Pessoa’s epic poem as shows the correspondence between the cold earth and the nostalgia originated by the barren condition of his home country. This poem could appear as addressed to a hypothetical lover. Besides, the lack of a specified addressee in much of the *Quadras* could give rise to a double interpretation: the cool earth could wrap not a person but Portugal itself which in *Mensagem* is defined as “*cadaver addiado que procria*”. The sepulchral metaphor is not newly coined and dates back to António Nobre who, significantly, in a poem entitled *O Desejado* affirms: «*Tenho agora a pátria em sepultura*».

The thematic circularity within these works not only shows the dynamism of the Pessoaan versatility but it also reveals that the long road to writing *Mensagem* is marked by a constellation of different and various poetic underpinnings and forerunners, with whose help the Portuguese poet gives shape to the only book he has ever published in his lifetime.

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<sup>73</sup> [«The land is dead; only the heart’s/ still stirring in the cold;/ O the cold earth enfolds you, but/ my longing has no hold!»] (ibidem)

### 2.3. An Awkward Forefather: *Lusíadas*, Anti-*Lusíadas*, or an Intra-*Lusíadas*?

In his edition of *Mensagem*, José Augusto Seabra defines and analyzes the Pessoaan text availing himself of the interpretative category of *architext* thus placing the definition in a wide variety of genres which would represent the pivotal prerogative of this work:

*A manifestação por excelência dessa arquitetura é a sobreposição na mesma obra de uma diversidade de géneros, ou melhor, de “arquigéneros”, que a configuram poeticamente e que são nada mais nada menos de que os que, com diferentes avatares, atravessam toda a tradição ocidental até à modernidade, constituída da famosa tríade, epopeia, lirismo e drama.*<sup>74</sup>(Seabra 1996, 238)

The analysis Seabra performs appears vitiated from many aspects. Firstly, his determination to interpret *Mensagem* as *architextual* is in order to depict it as an esoteric text. Actually, using once more a Genettian taxonomy, the work could be rather defined simply as a *hypo text*, and, specifically, that kind of derivation «*tel que B ne parle nullement de A, mais ne pourrait cependant exister tel quel sans A, dont il résulte au terme d’une opération que je qualifierai, provisoirement encore, de transformation, et qu’en conséquence il évoque plus ou moins manifestement, sans nécessairement parler de lui et le citer*» (Genette 1982, 11-12). Obviously, the hypo-text in question could not be anything but Camões’ *Lusíadas*, never cited but continuously tested.<sup>75</sup> The reasons leading to a linear interpretation become apparent from the strong

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<sup>74</sup> [«The pre-eminently display of this archi-textuality is the overlapping, within the same work, of different genres, or rather, of “archi-genres” that depict it poetically and that are nothing less and nothing more what, with different avatars, had crossed all the Western tradition until modernity, i.e., the famous triad, epic, lyrics, and drama»]. (my translation)

<sup>75</sup> «*Os Lusíadas* is undeniably the major intertext of *Mensagem*. Pessoa’s poem, however, like other modernist poems, questions not just the content and form of the epic, but its very possibility: “*The Lusíads* is great”, he said once, “but it never really got written”». (Ramalho 2003, 45)

literary as well as ideological bond between these two works. Even if Genette doesn't impose a strict distinction among the different levels of trans-textuality, the supposed architextuality of *Mensagem* would result questionable precisely if confronted to the Camonian work. Regarding to this, Sergio Zatti has spoken about *radical intertextuality* in order to define the strong canonization of a few founding epic texts continuously revised during the centuries: «*Parlare di tradizione nell'epica letteraria vuol dire allora parlare non tanto di una linea ininterrotta di una pratica culturale lungo le generazioni, quanto di una relazione intertestuale tra un poema nuovo e i suoi precursori, una relazione consapevolmente stabilita dal nuovo poeta e dal suo lettore colto*<sup>76</sup>» (Zatti 2000, 5). Quite a lot has been written about the status of the genre of *Mensagem*. Pessoa's personality has often represented a sort of limit in relation to the interpretation of his work. The segmentation of his identity into a series of fragments has often brought to expound his heteronymic *genesis* as an apologetic representation of his dramatic propensity. It is anyway undoubtable that *Mensagem* represents the ultimate endeavour of rewriting an epic poem in verses. As a point of fact, it is from a matter of genre that Pessoa starts his rewriting of Portuguese epic: the para-textual apparatus doesn't leave any doubt of his willingness to face the national literary bard on his own battlefield. As Fernando Pessoa states many times and in various critical contributions, the Camonian *epos* cannot compare with the great epic poems of the past:

*Não ocupa Os Lusíadas um lugar entre as primeiras epopeias do mundo; só a Iliada, a Divina Comédia e o Paraíso Perdido ganharam esta elevação. Pertencendo, porém, à segunda ordem das epopeia, como a Jerusalém Libertada, o Orlando Furioso, a Faerie Queen – e,*

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<sup>76</sup> [«Speaking about tradition within literary epic does not mean, therefore, to speak about an interrupted line of a cultural practice along different generations but, rather, of an intertextual relationship between a new epic poem and its forerunners, a relationship established with conscience by the poet and his educated readers»]. (my translation)

*em certo modo, a Odisseia e a Eneida, que participam das duas ordens –, distingue-se Os Lusíadas não só destas epopéias, suas pares, senão também daquelas, suas superiores, em que é directamente uma epopéia histórica.*<sup>77</sup> (Pessoa, Pessoa, Crítica, ensaios, entrevistas 1999,215)

It is necessary to recall the founding values of the epic, which is capable of embodying shared and cherished values of a specific community. Pessoa intended to revive precisely those prerogatives that are able to create a new national epic poem by focusing on the unifying power coming from this genre. Contemporarily, he avoids the innate dualism of epic because of its antagonistic nature, enlivening it with a utopian ambition by wishing a pacific Fifth Empire dominated by poetry as the initial epigraph – “*bellum sine bello*” – of the work reads. Furthermore, the nature itself of Portuguese history, marked by discoveries and navigations, couldn't impose anything else but a reappraisal of this genre. This is possible to sense as well from the initial title of the work, *Gladio*, which was succeeded by *Portugal*.

The complex relationship that links Pessoa with Camões could be summarized by what Pessoa states in “A Nova Poesia Portuguesa Socialmente Considerada” where he proclaims himself as the resurrected *Supra-Camões*. This statement has also led to *Mensagem* being considered as a counter-*Lusíadas*<sup>78</sup>, interpreting the Pessoaan operation as the rewriting of a text and a

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<sup>77</sup>[«*The Lusíads* do not hold a position among the most important epic poems of the world; only the *Iliad*, the *Divine Comedy* and the *Paradise Lost* gained this stature. Belonging maybe to the second-rate epics, as the *Jerusalem Liberated*, or the *Orlando Furioso*, *The Faerie Queen* – and, somehow, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, that take part to both of the two readers – *The Lusíads* just do not differ from these epic poems which are of the same rank, but from those which are higher, being a historical epic poem»]. (my translation)

<sup>78</sup> «*Reescrever a antiepopéia ou a epopéia anticamoniana supõe, pois, uma radical desmitologização, para empregar o célebre conceito que, aplicado ao texto evangélico por Rudolf Bultmann, tanto escândalo causou há uns trinta anos. Mensagem, texto mítico por excelência, será previamente o poema dessa demitologização*». (Lourenço 2002, 238) [«Rewriting the “anti-epos” or the anti-Camonian epos, therefore surmises, a radical demythologization, to use the famous concept that applied to the evangelic text by Rudolf

genre, as well as a revision of a tradition profoundly rooted in a people's imagination, starting from the opposite side. However, this process should be framed in the wider inner ambit of a certain Portuguese literary tradition whose goal was the deconstruction of the Camonian myth. The Romantic poet Almeida Garrett represents a prior and renowned representative of the primordial effort of revision of the greatest national literary myth. Romanticism had actually initiated a long and renewed dialogue with tradition, of which modernism is just the apex that evolves through a continuous interrogation of the past in an untiring literary and national *auto gnosis*. Regarding this, Maria Irene Ramalho stated that the Pessoaan interest in Keats and his epic work, *The Fall of Hyperion. A dream*, putting on the lute between old and new gods, allegorizes the need and the realization of poetic hold. As reasonably Eduardo Lourenço wrote about Garrett:

*Com o seu Camões começa realmente o processo de autognose de Portugal que terminará com Mensagem. Não é por acaso que no começo e no fim do processo nós encontramos o primeiro e o último dos grandes intertextos da nossa moderna literatura, textos-diálogos nos quais se refaz, com míticos textos alheios (em ambos os casos Os Lusíadas, a lenda camoniana ou o discurso místico-ocultista), a trama inteira do percurso nacional enquanto aventura rematada por desastres de essência redentora, na memória que os evoca ou no messianismo que deles se alimenta*<sup>79</sup>. (Lourenço 2009, 87)

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Bultmann provoked such a huge scandal thirty years by now. *Mensagem*, a pre-eminently mythic text, will be primarily the poem of this demythologization». (my translation)

<sup>79</sup> [«With his *Camões* really starts that process of the Portuguese *autognosis* which will end with *Mensagem*. It is not by chance that in the beginning and in the end of the process we meet the first and the last of the great inter-texts of our modern literature, a dialogue's texts in which is remade, taking advantage of other mythical texts (in both cases *Os Lusíadas* the Camonian legend of the mythical and occultist discourse), the entire plot of national path, as adventure retold by the disasters of redeeming essence, in the memory that evokes them or in the messianism that is fed with them»]. (my translation)



In this case, the definition of *inter-text* given by Lourenço seems quite appropriate to outline the idea of a continuous dialogue with tradition, and specifically, with the ideological as well as literary heirloom left by Camões that constitutes the most considerable reference of the rewriting of the Portuguese historical and literary past. Camões, in fact, set tension within the thematic and literary course in an epic that will be untiringly reappraised by his successors.

### **2.3.1. At the Roots of the Epic Poetry.**

As Margarida Calafate Ribeiro has underlined, *Os Lusíadas*' goal is not just that of representing and celebrating the Portuguese empire but the actual need of celebrating it at the precarious moment of its frailty: «*A subtil ambiguidade discursiva que corporiza Os Lusíadas, aliada à elegância estética com que o poeta o faz torna o poema a mais representativa imagem do próprio reino lusitano, desenhando entre a celebração nação-centro-do-mundo na história do Ocidente e os riscos que a farão deixar de ser*»<sup>80</sup>(Calafate Ribeiro 2004, 8). It is not fortuitous, then, that the principal and fundamental Camões' referent is Virgil, say, the model of an epic able to found solidly a civilization and a culture. The *Aeneid* is the inevitable point of reference of the firm willingness to rebuild and restore a sort of a continuous historical and literary *auto* and *eterognosis* as the initial epigraph «*Mens agitatat molem*» demonstrates. This was a reinterpretation of the Virgilian

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<sup>80</sup> [«The thin conversational ambiguity that *Os Lusíadas* embody, allied with the aesthetic elegance with which the Poet does it, makes of the poem the most representative image of its Lusitanian reign, portraying between the celebration of the nation-centre-of-the-world within Western history and the risks that would bring them to an end»].(my translation)

verse whose translation is “The spirit moves the material”<sup>81</sup>. Seemingly, Camões had referred to Virgil in the opening canto of his work: as such, the Camonian paradigm represents the quintessential starting point of any Lusitanian epic revision:

*O camoniano Império é um fantasma hamletiano, a camoniana Fé um ideal que suscita na geração pós-nietzchiana, de que Pessoa é uma das mais complexas encarnações, um horror ou uma indiferença desdegnosa.*<sup>82</sup> (Lourenço 2002, 241)

*Os Lusíadas* does not just manifest its epic aspiration through the paradigms related to the sense of discovery, which actually belong to the Renaissance, but its mythographic fortune is due to a certain conceptualization of the idea of centrality, or rather, of Western centrality perceived as extremely frial. In *Os Lusíadas*, the Renaissance bard laments the condition of a lost Portugal. It has been highlighted that, since the ancestral form of epic, the grieving of the narrator conveys the audience’s participation shifting it both into assimilation and projection: «Tears, it appears, are the best criteria of the rhapsode’s success; tears are actually the goal of his success» (Greene 1999, 190). One of the epic aims is actually the achievement of a profound empathy with the hero’s sorrow for the community he belongs to, but this participation is possible only through the delivery of the authorial speaker: «The ritual of shared grief no longer springs spontaneously from a hallowed act of memory, but from the creative energy of a given authorial imagination» (*ibidem*, 197). Pessoa seems to take upon himself the authority of *Supra-Camões* and precisely

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<sup>81</sup> Pessoa puts together the first word MENS, the first two letters of the second word AG and the final ones of the third moLEM to compose the entire word MENSAGEM.

<sup>82</sup> [«The Camonian Empire is a Hamlet-like ghost, the Camonian faith in an ideal which provokes in the post-Nietzschean generation, to which Pessoa is part of, one of the most complex embodiments, a horror or a disdainful indifference»]. (my translation)

with this intention, when focusing upon his lamentation, describes himself writing and crying:

*Escrevo o meu livro à beira- magoa.  
Meu coração não tem que ter.  
Tenho meus olhos quentes de agua.  
Só tu, Senhor, me das viver*<sup>83</sup>. (Pessoa, Mensagem 1934, 93)

Significantly enough, Pessoa embraces the important task of revealing another Portugal, naming himself among the *Avisos* in the third part of the work. This way, the Poet seems to conceive myth as a story, a narration with a specific social function as Frye would put it in his *Anatomy of Criticism*:

*O poeta é um órgão de ressonâncias arcaicas e subliminais, trazendo à tona um mundo submarino mas real. Um mito como o sebastianista expande-se e recria-se naturalmente em época-fronteiras de transição, de desequilíbrio, de disorientação ou mesmo da queda, dando corpo poético à insatisfações e aspirações nacionais.  
Não podemos, pois, admirar-nos se os seus principais surtos criadores surgiram no período dos Filipes e na Restauração, no Liberismo e no pós-Liberismo, nas convulsões finais do regime monárquico e nas primeiras disilusões da Republica, tanto em Portugal como no Brasil, tendo havido também um ressurgimento da tematica sebastianista e até curiosas expressões de sebastianismo de esquerda e de direita nos últimos anos do Estado Novo e nas novas ilusões e disilusões de pós-25 de Abril*<sup>84</sup>. (Quadros 2001, 23-4)

Questioning *Os Lusíadas* actually meant for Pessoa casting aspersions on an entire Portuguese identity, in a text which represented an archetype of a

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<sup>83</sup> [«By the waters of heartbreak I write this book./ My heart has nothing of its own./ Through hot tears my eyes look./ I live, Lord, on you alone»]. (Pessoa, Message 2007, 95)

<sup>84</sup> [«The poet is an organ of archaic and subliminal resonance, taking his tone from a submarine but real world. A myth such as Sebastianism spreads and naturally re-creates itself during border-epochs of transition, imbalance, puzzlement or, eventually depression, giving poetic body to the national dissatisfactions and aspirations. We cannot get surprised, therefore, if its principal and former creators appeared in the Filipist or in the Restorations years, during the free trade and post-free trade period, in the final convulsions of the monarchic regime and during the first disillusions of the Republic, equally in Portugal and Brazil, there having been a new raise of the Sebastian's theme and even hilarious expression of the leftist and rightwing Sebastianist during the last years of the *Estado Novo* and in the new illusions and disillusions of the post-April 25th»]. (my translation)

rhetorical nationalism from which Pessoa was trying to save his people and his literature. The supposed obscurity of *Mensagem*, in fact, seems to derive unlikely from the involvement of its author in esoteric, masonry, or messianic ideologies. As Helder Macedo has pointed out: «But his profound awareness of the contrast between the heroic Portugal of his poem and the unheroic Portugal to whom it was addressed, places his redemptive message in an area of ambiguity, if not of insidious doubt» (Macedo 1990, 37). By taking into consideration the poem *Novoeiro*, the closing poem of *Mensagem*, it is possible to realize the Pessoaan disillusion with his present time and the fragile past on which the Portuguese identity leaned in the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Pessoa's aims could be explained perfectly with the brief definition Stephen Sicari gave to define Pound's epic intentions: «compelled by his desire to become the dominant poet of his age, he embarks upon a poem seeking mastery over the particulars of his culture, interpreting the past and prescribing the future. In doing so, he assigns to poetry a most ambitious role, to lead its readers towards a new order based upon the poet's own visionary experience» (Sicari 1991, IX).

### **2.3.2. *Mensagem*, *Os Lusíadas* and the Epic Tradition**

Edouardo Lourenço once affirmed that the most relevant similarity between *Os Lusíadas* and *Mensagem* resides in their strong architectural sense. From a micro-structural point of view, the *Lusíadas*' rewriting presents a retrenchment of the epic structure: the Pessoaan work could be defined as a constellation of “epyllions”, that is, small *epos*, historical-epical cameos of the Portuguese historical tradition. Pessoa's firm wish to reshape an epic work is

hence detectable in the division of *Mensagem* itself. Its downsizing reassumes the three pivotal contents of the legitimate epic: the genealogy and the chivalry material in the first part – which arrays a taste for the original reasons of the epic genre, that is, the telling of a genealogy and that appears most strongly in the restoration of the Arthurian lore – ; the adventurous subject-matter of “Mar Portuguez”– which also gives space to the fantastic imaginary –; and, at last, the mystic ending part which gives space to the inevitable *topos* of prophecy and vaticination. From this perspective, the Pessoaan epic piece appears extremely original in its revision of the great epic tradition without overturning it completely but just retrenching and sizing it up to the modern poetic of fragment. One thing lacking in *Mensagem*’s structure is a narrative continuity and homogeneity. Epic is traditionally defined in relation to its long-flux narration capabilities: an epic work is, broadly speaking, a long poem. Thus, the epic continuity in the Pessoaan work is then obtained through the rehabilitation of mythical time. In fact, among those aspects that Genette defines as “intellectual” and which characterize the text in the intertextual dynamic, it is possible to spot in *Mensagem* a noteworthy change for what concerns the epic time dimension. In *Os Lusíadas* the cohesion of an extremely varied narrative was obtained by a profound time fluency which reveals a remarkable narrating pleasure. More classically, Camões recurs to a Homeric *topos*, that of the narration of a character within the major mainstream of the epic flux. In the fifth canto of *Os Lusíadas*, Vasco da Gama – just like the Homeric Ulysses – tells the story of his travels from Portugal to the court of the king of Malindi. The truthfulness of Camões’s narration is a very important task to him, as implied

in the opening invocation<sup>85</sup> of his work, resounding as a sort of poetic declaration:

In the opening stanzas of the poem, Camões emphasizes the crucial difference between myth and history by asserting, in an explicit contrast with both the classic and chivalrous epics, that the deeds he is celebrating are real and not fabled. And in this terms of his perception of history that he criticizes his contemporaries and, in the colorful image of his seventeenth-century editor and commentator, Faria e Sousa, 'stands before King Sebastião like John the Baptist before Herod, condemning his ways. (Macedo 1990, 37)

Even in the Da Gama's meta-narrative storytelling, the hero does insist on the verisimilitude of his narration<sup>86</sup>. The use of myth does not elide the possibility to project the narration into a rational historicism which eventually opens a debate (that Camões silently brings about inwards his work) upon imitation and intertextuality, fiction and document, that mirrors the Sixteenth century debate about epic and novel or, at least, about the evolution of the epic genre. By contrast, Pessoa does not question the truthfulness of his narration making out no differentiation between myth and reality. Therefore, in *Mensagem* time is paralysed, history is cast in the static and circular time of

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<sup>85</sup> «*Ouvi, que não vereis con vãas façanhas,/ Phantasticas, fingidas, mentirosas,/ Louvar os vossos como nas estranhas/ Musas, a engrandecer-se desejosas:/ As verdadeiras vossas são tamanhas/ Que excedem as sonhadas, fabulosas;/ Que excedem Rhodamonte, e o vão Rogeiro;/ E Orlando indaque fora verdadeiro.// Por estes vos darei hum Nuno fero,/ Que fez ao Rei e ao reino tal serviço:/ Hum Egas, hum Dom Fuas, que de Homero/ A cithara para elles só cobiço./ Pois pelos dozes Pares dar-vos quero/ Os doze de Inglaterra, e o seu Magriço:/ Dou-vos tambem aquelle illustre Gama,/ Que para si de Enéas toma a fama*». (Camões, *Os Lusíadas* 1819, 7–8) [«Observe, it is not or counterfeit,/ Exploits, fantasies such as muses/ Elsewhere have dreamed or invented,/ That you will hear your people acclaimed/Historic deeds, such as their/ Transcend fables, and world eclipse/ Boiardo's Orlando, and Ariosto's too/ Even if all they wrote of him were true.// Instead I give you Nuno Álvares/ Who showed country and king such service;/ It would take Homer's lyre to commend/ Sufficiently Egas Moniz and Fuas Roupinho,/ For France's twelve pears, I give you/ The twelve of England led by Magriço,/ And likewise Vasco da Gama, whose genius/ Snatched from wandering Aeneas»]. (Camões, *The Lusíads* 2002, 5–6)

<sup>86</sup> «*The Lusíads* can indulge in a process of mythmaking by simultaneously subjecting it to a rationalizing, euhemerist critique. Camoes'episode is thus able both to enter into and to exploit the imaginative power of a classical epic tradition, a power that in a small part accounts for the hold that the figure of Adamastor has had upon readers: what has made the episode a para of "world literature"». (Quint 1992, 117)

myth. Pessoa seems to carry the modern *epos* from the prison of mythical time to the freedom of a redemption which coincides with the escape of Portugal from the mist of its historical and literary paralysis. This way, the epic status of *Mensagem* could be shaped in relation to its teleological parabola whose utterance resides in the spirit of Sebastianism itself. The work as a whole frames the path on the way to the Fifth Empire, the Portuguese predestination towards a glorious future. The human power, in fact, cannot anything without the assistance of a superior willing:

*Todo o começo é involuntário.  
Deus é o agente.  
O herói a si assiste, vário  
E incosciente.* <sup>87</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 27)

By the same token, man can only dream what Destiny will then realize:

*A alma é divina e a obra é imperfeita.  
Este padrão sinala ao vento e aos céus  
Que, da obra ousada, é minha a parte feita:  
O por-fazer é só com Deus.* <sup>88</sup> (*ibidem*, 60)

While the heroes celebrated by Camões are simply caught in their real living<sup>89</sup>, the historical characters represented by Pessoa rather appear as talking

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<sup>87</sup> [«Every beginning is unmeant./ God acts there./ The hero's present at himself, many and/Unaware»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 23)

<sup>88</sup> [«The soul's divine and the work never done./ This standard signals to the wind and skies/ That, of the work dared, mine is the part done:/ With God alone the still-to-do-lies»]. (*ibidem*, 59)

<sup>89</sup> «A Camões bastou a história próxima para lenda e Além. O povo, que cantou, fizera da ficção certeza, da distância colônia, da imaginação vontade. Sob os próprios olhos de épico se desenrolou o imaginável e o impossível se conseguiu. A sua epopéia não foi mais que uma reportagem transcendente, que o assunto obrigou a nascer épica. [...] Em certo modo, viveu o que cantou, sendo, assim, o único épico que foi lírico ao sê-lo. Essa sua singularidade, que é uma virtude e, como todas as virtudes, origem de vários defeitos». (Pessoa, *Crítica, Ensaios, Entrevistas* 1999, 215–6) [« For Camões History was sufficient both as legend and Beyond. The people he singed was able to make certainty of fiction, colony of distance, willingness of imagination. Under his epic poet's eyes the unimaginable happened and the unreachable was attained. His epic poem was nothing more than a transcendental reportage

spirits from an ancestor's gallery<sup>90</sup>. It would be possible to state that the work as a whole presents the epic topic of the catabasys which forecloses the initiation path. Certainly, the model is the Camonian hypo-text, e.g., the *Aeneid* filtrated through the *Divine Comedy*. First of all, the articulation itself of *Mensagem* seems to mirror the numerology linked to number three: the work is divided into three sections almost representing the three states of personal and national course. The precise construction of *Brasão* – and, in the end of the whole work – hence represents a sort of revision of the *Comedy's* circles which depart allegorically from the *Hell* of the Portuguese curse, to the Purgatory of the naval enterprises where the navigators, coming across natural and supernatural obstacles receive a sort of expiation, to the suffused and mystic third part where the complaint of the actual state of the country leads to a complete redemption through the understanding of the overall meaning shining through the poetic world and leading to the allegorical realization of the Fifth Empire. The reader is thus involved, guided poem by poem, through the internalization of Sebastianism. The *topos* of catabasys is also realized through the singular lyric personalities that in a few verses depict their own vicissitudes and virtues which resembles a retrenched Dantesque epic expedient. The reverberating absence of Camões has often been underlined. Even if Eduardo Lourenço affirms that *Mensagem* is precisely the text where *Os Lusíadas* are buried, in order to overcome the huge and intrusive hypo-text, it is necessary to re-cross it. Somehow, *Mensagem* represents the revision of the epic genre and content *tout*

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whose subject-matter made become epic. [...] Somehow, he actually lived what he singed as he was the only epic poet to be a lyrical poet as well This distinctiveness of his was also a virtue and, as such, the possible source of many flaws». (my translation)

<sup>90</sup> «The tone of this celebration is melancholy because of the contemporary conditions of utterance for Pessoa himself, fallen as he is on hard times. Also, the depicted figures are consistently addressed or portrayed as objects uplifted from time, as mythic *eidólons*, in Whitman's terms. History is thereby eroded. There is no time here but that of a perpetual fall». (Feijó 1999, 147)



*court* in pairs with Camões. As briefly pinpointed before, the epic genre can never really be unhitched from this circular dynamic of influence and rewriting. The epic reader always has to trace back an origin, whether a literary or a national origin. Taking Camões as a transparent and allegorical Virgil thus means to reconvert the Lusitanian epic tradition and prospective projection: «However what is really evoked in *Mensagem* is not the historical figures themselves, but their memory within the people, which the people, which the poet, through his ritual seeks to revive» (Chang and Ishimatsu 1983, 115). It is precisely from another epic issue that it is possible to identify the genre of this Pessoaan work, i.e. the role of narrator and his relationship with his audience, or rather, his readers. According to Pessoa, the poet, being untrue, is a myth-creator and becomes, therefore, able to mediate between the audience and its collective dream. Myth, being “*o nada que é tudo*”, even in its fundamental unreality, seems all the same to be the only means capable of making history become true. Correctly Bréchon has written in his Pessoaan biography, Pessoa does not perceive any distance between his inner and outer world, hence, reality converts itself automatically and continuously in fiction, that is, in myth:

*A única saída que poderá revelar-se é a do mito. A Lisboa de Pessoa é a de Ulisses, lendário fundador epónimo da cidade (Olisipo), que foi o primeiro «que aqui aportou». É a de Vasco da Gama e dos outros navegadores da época das Descobertas, que partiam do porto de Belém; a de D. Sebastião, o rei «encoberto» à espera do momento em que irá reaparecer, numa manhã de novoeiro, no estuário do Tejo, para reatar o destino português interrompido e fundar o «Quinto Império», que é a reconquista do sentido da vida.<sup>91</sup> (Bréchon 1996, 26)*

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<sup>91</sup>[«The only possible way out is that of myth. Pessoa’s Lisbon is that of Ulysses, legendary and eponymous founder of the city (*Olisipo*), who was the first “who berthed here”. His Lisbon is also that of Vasco da Gama and the other Discoveries’ times’ navigators, who departed from the Belém harbor; his Lisbon is that of King Sebastian, the “covered” king, waiting for the moment he will come back, in a misty morning, at the Tagus’ estuary, to re-establish the Portuguese destiny and to found the “Fifth Empire”, which means the regaining of the sense of life»]. (my translation)

So far, Pessoa seems to transpose the Aristotle statement, according to which the poet is an imitator whereas the adjective is eventually swapped with liar. Yet, it is not really a proper swap as in this statement the most profound sense of the Aristotelic *mimesis* seems to be located. All the same, the Camonian rewriting results particularly keen on its containing the hypo-text while betraying it as a whole. The historical verisimilitude is not parted in the Pessoaan intermeshing of myth and history but rather unified in a wider sense of double time which could be ascribed by what Erich Auerbach intended with the term “figura”, e.g., “something real and historical which announces something real and historical”. The display of the kings and queens on the coat of arms, the numbering of the navigators discoveries and the nation’s most representative characters mentioned in the third part actually represents a path leading towards the realization of a tangible Fifth Empire and a rational Sebastianism. The characters of *Mensagem*, in fact, in their static and yet representative collocating within the significant architecture of the text, refer to a further meaning that does not detach them from the historic time in which they’ve been immortalized and in the mean time, are projected to a much wider temporal parabola. The Auerbachian concept of *figura* could help us in explaining the *Mensagem*’s time dimension as this image perfectly fits with the real meaning of each historical character representation. Every historical singularity does not lose his or her own secular characterization and values, but rather finds the sense and the completion of the latter inside the Sebastianist arc. This is for instance quite ostensible in the poem dedicated to *D. Duarte, rei de Portugal*:

*Meu dever fez-me, como Deus ao mundo.  
A regra de ser Rei almou meu ser,  
Em dia e letra escrupoloso e fundo.*

*Firme em minha recidos tristeza, tal vivi.  
Cumpri contra o Destino e meu dever.  
Inutilmente? Não, porque o cumpri.* <sup>92</sup> (Pessoa, Mensagem 1934, 37)

or even more in that dedicated to *Bandarra*:

*Sonhava, anónimo e disperso,  
O Império por Deus mesmo visto,  
Confuso como o Universo  
E plebeu como Jesus Christo.*

*Não foi nem santo nem herói,  
Mas Deus sagrou sem Seu signal  
Este, cujo coração foi  
Não portuguez mas Portugal.*<sup>93</sup> (*ibidem*, 91)

Pessoa removes from his characters any tragic psychologism lending them that epic-Homeric immobility but allowing them to keep their internal coherence as well as their teleological potential. What Auerbach addresses to Dante would be consequently referable to Pessoa's characters as well. According to Auerbach and Pessoa, within the temporal axioms of the Pessoaan work, in fact, the historical time is totally incorporated in the teleological one. In this sense, it would be possible to speak about reconciliation between human and universal fate. This figural conception of time seems to be reflected by the respective and conflicting ways of conceiving heroism expressed in *Mensagem* and *Os Lusíadas*. If the author of *Lusíadas* celebrates his characters in an elegiac tone Pessoa understands every character as the personification of a precise historical moment, foreshadowing of Portuguese destiny, that is to say a necessity significant for rebuilding the Lusitanian history through the shape of a

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<sup>92</sup> [«My duty made me, as God did the world./ My life was souled by the acts of monarchy,/ Punctual, literal thorough, many-scrupled.// So I lived, in my own gloom, resolute./ I did my duty against Destiny./Uselessly? No, because I did do it»]. (Pessoa, Message 2007, 35)

<sup>93</sup> [«He, anonymous and dispersed,/ Dreamed the Empire in God's eyes./ Confused like the Universe/ And plebeian like Jesus Christ,// He was not saint, no hero,-yet/God consecrated with His call/ This man, who had in him a heart/ Not Portuguese but Portugal»]. (*ibidem*, 91)

mythical path. The Pessoaan conception of heroism thus results almost allegoric. For instance the opening poems of the work which should mirror the invocation to the Muse but Pessoa eventually change significantly this epic topic. If traditionally the first stanzas used to be addressed to an invocation to the Muse, *Mensagem* inverts the order: the very first poem actually frames the position of Portugal both its geographically and fate. It is in the second poem that the invocation appears addressed rather to the pursuit of knowledge which seems to be in the light of the Dantesque Ulysses:

*Os deuses vendem que dão.  
Cumpra-se a glória com desgraça.  
Ai dos felizes, porque são  
Só o que passa!*

*Baste a quem baste o que lhe basta  
O bastante de lhe bastar!  
A vida é breve, a alma é vasta:  
Ter é tardar.<sup>94</sup> (*ibidem*, 22)*

Hence, quite symmetrically, Pessoa rewrites the same topic reframing the naval horizon within the *Absolute Distance*, i.e. the dream and the goal of the trip towards the real truth:

*O sonho é ver às formas invisíveis  
Da distância imprecise, e, com sensíveis  
Movimentos da esperança e da vontade,  
Buscar na linha fria do horizonte  
a arvore, a praia, a flor, a ave, a fonte—  
Os beijos merecidos da Verdade<sup>95</sup>. (*ibidem*, 58)*

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<sup>94</sup> [«The gods are selling when they give./ The price of glory is disaster./ Grieve for happy, seeing they live/Only what passes!//Whom what contents him does content./ Let him content him with that thing!/ Life is short, soul is extent:/ Having's straggling»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 17)

<sup>95</sup> [«Dreaming is to see the forms out of sight,/ Those of the untried far-off, and with light/Antenna movements (hope and will maintained)/ Search the cold line of the horizon ring/ For tree, sands, bird, flower, spring—/ The kisses of the Truth, which are hard earned»]. (*ibidem*, 57)

By the same token, the second poem of the third part resounds with the traits of the former two being devoted to the extol of knowledge:

*Triste de quem vive em casa  
Contente com o seu lar,  
Sem que um sonho, no erguer de asa,  
Faça até mais rubra e brasa  
Da lareira a abandonar!*<sup>96</sup>(*ibidem*, 82)

while, the last verses decree the Portuguese prophecy which aims the work as a whole:

*E assim passados os quarto  
Tempos do ser que sonhou,  
A terra será teatro  
Do dia claro,  
que no atro  
Da erma noite começou.*

*Grécia, Roma, Cristianidade,  
Europa- os quarto se vão  
Para onde vae toda idade  
Quem vem viver a verdade  
Que morreu D. Sebastião?*<sup>97</sup>(*ibidem*)

The real understanding of *Mensagem* would be unattainable without comprehending it within this figural parabola: heroism, in fact, is conceivable just intellectually and in the light of predestination. It is rather heroism of mind or, better, of modern mind. Pessoa is aware that “practical” and colonial heroism can only be told allegorically and has to be interpreted as a mind’s voyage. The most luminous fruit of the mind, according to Pessoa, actually, is dreaming. What leads men to dream is the sense of dissatisfaction which is

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<sup>96</sup> [«Poor man that lives at home/ Content with his fireside—/ No wingbeat of a dream/To fan redder the ember,/ The hearth he should desert!»] (*ibidem*, 83)

<sup>97</sup> [«So when, as reame, the four/ Kingdoms have passed away,/ Earth shall be theatre for/ The clear dawn, just come forth/ From, black, the night, the waste./ Hellas, Rome, Christendom,/ Europe – the four in their pride/ Going the way of a time./ Who’s coming, to live the doom/ Which Dom Sebastião died?»] (*ibidem*)

necessary to go beyond one's limits: «*Triste de quem é feliz!/ Vive porque a vida dura./ Nada na alma lhe diz/ Mais que a lição da raiz-/ Ter por vida a sepultura*»<sup>98</sup> (*ibidem*, 82). Insofar, this exemplifies the pivotal character of Ulysses who, accordingly to the Homeric tradition but also and mostly in the light of the Dantesque one, represents the double allegorical function of returning to the mythical origin while, at the same time, gives back the meaning of knowledge thanks to the departure from one's roots. Specifically, the Pessoaan Ulysses takes back the “*fatti non foste a viver come bruti*” celebrating the knowledge fever as the unique goal of the (human) acting.

### **2.3.3.A New Epic for a New Empire.**

In his *Epic and Empire*, David Quint sets forth a parallelism between the colonizing and the narrative power. The glorification of the epic losers, in fact, is projected compulsorily on the narration of a kind of abstract supremacy above the natural forces. Quite paradigmatically, it is detectable a symptom of this statement in the *Adamastor*'s episode and in the comparison between Camões' one and the Pessoaan revisitation. In the Camonian work, the octaves that include the sea giant are extended to twenty-four stanzas covering not only a considerable portion of the poem but assuming an intense and multi-faceted semantic capability, which justifies the Modernist rewriting. Certainly, the classic derivation makes the giant an allegory of limitation: in his addressing to the mariners, reminding them the impudence of their enterprise, *Adamastor* represents the Renaissance proud of overcoming of the human limits considered insuperable until then, not only geographically but also from an

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<sup>98</sup> [«Poor man that's happy! he lives/On because still alive./No word from his soul he receives/But the lesson a root gives-/Take burial for life»]. (*ibidem*, 83)

intellectual perspective. Thus conceived, the giant is not just the allegory of the limitation but of its overcoming as well, such as the crossing from the unknown to the known. The imagination webbed to monstrous does not just feel the effect of the classical origin but also of that monstrousness related to a certain taste for the exotic with which certainly Camões came into contact during his oversea travels. The *Adamastor*'s physical connotation is actually characterized by the dark-colored skin, which makes it a sort of Caliban, thus embodying a generic monstrosity of the other:

*In più Camões tende ad assimilare le forze africane resistenti alla penetrazione portoghese coi cataclismi naturali che infliggono dure perdite alla flotta di Vasco e, in particolare, il simbolo di questo antagonismo è il titanico Adamastor, il gigante fatto scoglio, imprigionato nel capo di Buona Speranza. Su questa creatura mostruosa, modellata sul Polifemo omerico e identificata con l'ostilità stessa della natura, viene spostata l'aggressività dell'invasione coloniale, e la conquista degli indigeni viene assimilata agli sforzi durati dai civili portoghesi per dominare la natura, che fa pagare un alto prezzo alle vittime della propria sottomissione<sup>99</sup>. (Zatti 2000, 90-1)*

It is not by chance, in fact, that it is precisely Vasco da Gama, the principal character of Camões' masterpiece, literally invested with the role of the conqueror of the unknown and author of the Portuguese overseas conquest, who actually exorcizes the giant, allegorically leading the Lusitanian people towards the real territories of discovery. As David Quint has pointed out, the epic narration from the side of the losers, is generically personified by a natural opposition. The epic dichotomy is not just realized in opposition to a personified

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<sup>99</sup> [«Furthermore, Camões tends to assimilate the African forces resisting to the Portuguese penetration with the natural cataclysms that inflict disastrous losses to Vasco's fleet and, in particular, the symbol of this antagonism is the titanic Adamastor, the giant turned into rock, imprisoned in the Cape of Good Hope. Upon this monstrous creature, modeled upon the Homeric Poliphemus and identified with nature's hostility itself, is moved the aggressiveness of colonial invasion, while the conquest of the natives is rather assimilated to the efforts brought about by the Portuguese civilians to dominate nature which makes paying dearly to the victims of its subjection»]. (my translation)

enemy. As the Da Gama's narration about the Hottentots shows, what is really at stake to Camões is the opposition of fate and nature, which prevents the Portuguese navigators from reaching their sea conquest. What is dramatically underlined in *Os Lusíadas* is the conceited daring of the mariners who are really stirred by the *sapientiae cupido* as, for instance, the episode of Veloso demonstrates. It could be really possible to speak about *ubris* and as such to refer to the classic *topos* of the consequent divine punishment. It also could be affirmed that this scene actually represents what Gustav Jung has defined "the battle for deliverance". As the Jungian psychologist Handerson has implied, in fact, «in the struggle of primitive men to achieve consciousness this conflict is expressed by the contest between the archetypical hero and the cosmic powers of evil, personified by dragons and other monsters» (Jung and Von Franz 1964, 110).

At a more literary level, *Os Lusíadas* still presents the deep conflict, which is basic for the traditional epic, between the celebrated community and the other, even if, in this case the other is allegorical, fatal and generic. The rival figure is thus necessary to the denouement of the *epos* and the defeat of the adversary constitutes the aggregating factor for the people that have virtually or really perpetrated it. In the Pessoaan transposition, *Adamastor* is simply transformed into a *Mostrengo*, literally little monster, a nick name that takes the place of the previous definition, *morcego*, which means a "bat". Even if this change has been widely justified by metrical reasons, the monster's description tends to an inter textual reading which let us see it as linked to Camões' description. The semantic downsizing of this mythical figure brought about by Pessoa is mirrored in a retrenchment of the epic episode as well, which is curtailed to barely three stanzas and twenty seven verses. The Pessoaan monster



does not lose just a metrical but also a more properly “physical” consistency. Any kind of physical connotation actually fades away and this character remains pure spirit of that anxiety of the beyond that motivates the Portuguese navigators. In a sense, the restoration of this figure could be traced back to a parodist re-depiction of the monster as described by Camões as, for instance, the ending rhymes in *-undo* which seem to mock the *Os Lusíadas*’ ones would let intend:

*E disse, “Quem é que ousou entrar  
Nas minhas cavernas que não desvendo,  
Meus tectos negros do fim do mundo?”  
E o homem do leme disse, tremendo,  
“El Rei D. João Segundo!”*

*De quem são as velas onde me roço?  
De quem as quilhas que vejo e ouço?”  
Disse o mostrengo, e rodou trez vezes,  
Trez vezes rodou immundo e grosso,  
“Quem vem poder o que só eu posso,  
Que moro onde nunca ninguém me visse  
E escorro os medos do mar sem fundo?”  
E o homem de leme tremeu, e disse,  
“El-Rei D. João Segundo.”<sup>100</sup> (Pessoa, Mensagem 1934, 62)*

While Camões writes:

*Tão grande era de membros que bem posso  
Certificar-te que este era o segundo  
De Rodes estranhissimo Colosso,  
Que um dos setes milagres foi do mundo;  
Com tom de voz nos fala orrendo e grosso,  
Que pareceu salir do mar profundo. (Camões, Os Lusíadas 1891, 182)*

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<sup>100</sup> [«[...] / And said, “Who is it had dared sound / My caverns, which I never unshadow, / My black roofs of the world’s end?” / And the man at the helm said, with a shudder, / “The King, Dom João Segundo!” / “Whose are the sails my webs brush past? / I see, I hear—whose hulls, whose masts?” / The thing said, and prowled round three time, / Three times prowled round, obscene and vast, / “Who’s come to be master where I live master, / Live where of me none may catch sight / As I ooze the terrors of deep without end?” / And the man at the helm shuddered, and said, / “The King, Dom João Segundo!” / »]. (Pessoa, Message 2007, 61)

Actually, Pessoa just frees the monster from the negative connotation linked to the characterization of the Other perceived whether as a foreigner or a colonized, while the thematic rewriting is articulated inward the Pessoaan work through a series of fragmented signs traceable also in other *Mensagem* poems. Hence, the rewriting of the Renaissance work is displayed by means of the dissemination in the text of quotations and references able to give the whole work an epic and thematic homogeneity. Following this precise prerogative, it is possible to place *Mensagem* in the ambit of the Modernist rewriting. Although renouncing to action, Pessoa dynamizes the dialogic and semantic possibilities of the poetic word, scattering intertextual references throughout the text. On the other hand, one should take under consideration the reasons that led Pessoa choose precisely the *Adamastor* episode and figure to rewrite his epic poem. It should be considered, in fact, that *Adamastor* allegorically represent the Camonian wanting to cross over the “classic” giants of literature and rewrite his own new epic as is also illustrated in the fight between Neptune and Titans:

Adamastor’s presumption mirrors the pride of the modern, no longer content to be a dwarf standing on the shoulders of the giants, but claiming to be mightier than the classical fathers he dislodges. We are brought back to da Gama’s reference to the “*antigos filosofos*”, who had no knowledge of the lands and marvels he has see at first hand, and to the end of his narrative and his assertion that his story surpasses the poems of Homer and Virgil: Camões own presumptions claim to overgo his ancient models. (Quint 1992, 122-3)

This appears particularly significant considering Pessoa’s theorization of the *Supra-Camões* and in relation to the whole sense of rewriting the *Lusíadas*’ model. So far, for instance, the *Adamastor*’ s non-transformation into a rock is transferred, in *Mensagem*, to the king who was responsible for its defeat, e.g., Dom João II, who acquires the magnificent face of a mountain jutting out

towards the sea. This non-transformation seems to be in line with a kind of retaliation law and let the reader glimpse the Pessoaan willingness to violate the epic restrictions from the inside, while preserving the epic formal structures. If, in fact, the inborn nature of the epic genre is founded on a profound dichotomy, as well as on a marked distance towards the Other that must be vanquished as Other, *Mensagem* seems to betray the epic genre only from an ideological point of view. This brief poem dedicated to the rewriting of the figure of *Adamastor* could actually be drawn back to this statement. Pessoa frees the monster from the punitive condition that used to immobilize him to the borders of the unknown to transform it into an image of Hercules' Pillars of knowledge. This advance seems to imply also a rules swap with Dom João II, author of the enterprise which led to the monster's elimination and that «*parece em promontório uma alta serra—/ O limite da terra a dominar/ O mar que possa haver além da terra*»<sup>101</sup>(Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 50).

The peculiar intertextual case that links the Camonian *Adamastor* to the Pessoaan *Mostrengo* results particularly notable also from a proper structural point of view. If, in fact, the modern epic drift used to be realized by the mean of powerful novel influence on the other genres and parodist downgrading (it is sufficient to think about the line which goes from *Dom Quixote* to Joyce's *Ulysses*), *Mensagem* by contrast reveals its originality in its inner deconstruction of the epic genre. Pessoa does not try to recover the absurdity of a possible modern rewriting of the novel genre – the dissolution of which he had already experienced in *The Book of Disquiet*, but he does try to regain the possession of the circularity that Lukács had no hope to find back in the modern

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<sup>101</sup> [«[...]Looms like a promontory mountain-rand—/The land's bourne dominating stubbornly/The ocean that there may be beyond land»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 49)

novel. Maintaining the architecture of the epic poem, deconstructing it just qualitatively speaking and bringing at the most the semantic of the poetic word, Pessoa succeeds in melting myth, epic, and modernity. Along the traditional epic bi-dimensionality, dominated by the Bakhtinian absolute past, *Mensagem* seems to realize a three-dimensional epic poem able to dialogue, by means of utopia, also with the future. At the same time, Pessoa makes of the key feature of his work the pursuit of knowledge, which is the pivotal spirit of the novel. Refusing the patriotism and the anxiety of immortality of the sixteenth-century Camões, Pessoa proposes a new epic model, and at the same time, a new kind of nationalism, profoundly Portuguese and unavoidably poetic.

## Chapter 3

### Fernando Pessoa and the Late-Romantic Enchantment

#### 3.1.A Modernist Poet with a Victorian Imagination.

It is in an article of his youth that Fernando Pessoa pinpoints Romanticism as a crucial moment of a (national) historical and cultural revision epitomized by the personality and the work of Almeida Garrett. Besides, Pessoa's literary insight allowed him to clearly understand that modernity had already started to emerge among those poets who undeniably and profoundly left a mark on his poetic apprenticeship. His Romantic attraction should be tracked to a much broader perspective as the late-Romantic enchantment reveals an issue of poetic nature affecting as a whole the core of the matter of poetry itself and, secondly, a choice both in terms of forms and contents. In Pessoa's terms, poetry is a machine that acts in a two-fold way: on one hand, the poetic engine openly contends that poetry is untrue, while on the other hand, it affirms that poetry is *necessarily* untrue. The inborn affirmation of the falseness of poetry opens up a bottomless pit if seen whether from a theoretical or philosophical perspective but also overtly unmasks a late Romantic wake therein the Pessoan modernist approach. The topic of truth in relation to a work of art sends us back to Heidegger who, in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, contends that what's at stake it is not the actual truth that must be compulsorily conveyed by art, but rather the latter should trigger a dynamic process able to let truth come to the surface. In this sense, not only poetry can be interpreted as *poiein*, but the choice of poetry itself to affect one's cultural panorama is a

constitutive and fundamental part of this notion. Going back to Pessoa's work, this latter claim unmistakably compels us to link this understanding to his way of conceiving mythmaking and that underpins his way to deal with poetry. Heidegger's overall thought could easily be directed to Pessoa's metaphysical or anti-metaphysical concern. I would like to explore this Heideggerian hint in order to focus on Pessoa's idealistic as well as political intentions (both converging in *Mensagem*). The Pessoaan way of grappling with truth and poetry has to do consistently with his conception of the role of poetry itself. The genre's issue, in fact, within the Pessoaan poetic work, is intimately linked to this matter, e. g.; myth is actually conceived along with Frye as an already structured pattern and a necessary and shared cultural trace. In a broader sense, poetry – no matters if untrue – can and must still affect reality and, by the same token, ought to collaborate for the realization of an ideal, i.e., a potentiality or “*o poder ser*” as Fernando Pessoa *ele mesmo* terms it. The fundamental bond which ties Pessoa to late-Romanticism is precisely this last reflection, according to which poetry still has a place within the epistemological and political concern as well as in the enlightenment of the social condition. In relation to this, both Pessoa's mythmaking and political ideals are linked to Carlyle's theories. This has led to *Mensagem's* resulting interpretation of an ideology oriented towards a sort of “cultural elitist” utopia. Beyond the debate about the nature of myth and mythmaking, if we see mythology in the Pessoa's case as an instrument, it is possible to find the presence of Carlyle in order to confirm *Mensagem's* author enchantment with late-Victorian aesthetic matters:

The relationship of poetry to truth was one of the controlling concerns of Carlyle's major period just as it was one of the controlling concerns with Browning's *The Ring and The Book*: how men suppose and state fact, including how men may learn to suppose and state fact, is a crux

in the modern artist's modernism, and Carlyle contributed incomparably to the definition and workability of a modern epistemological aesthetic. (Buckler 1980, 15)

Of course, Carlyle's (as well as Sorel's) influence upon both Pessoa's Victorian imagination is undeniably of epistemological nature. A radical revision of all the old past prejudices and state of facts and, at the same time, his work impels the reader to rethink and reframe their ideological understanding. Carlyle does not just place a thematic influence upon Pessoa, perhaps he influences more the Pessoaan sense of "*poiesis*" intended as crafting and re-crafting of past and tradition. Even if Carlyle affirms the basic discontinuity in history, he in turn re-affirms the need to re-enact the same mythical machinery.

However, what has to be highlighted further is Carlyle's literary power of influence. In *Past and Present*, for instance, the Scottish writer and philosopher makes use of mythology at large and of a late-Romantic recent discovery – the employment of the *persona* device. Browning had seemingly embarked upon the same effort giving birth to a sort of new genre<sup>102</sup> but, above all, to one of the most diffuse, read and representative late-Victorian's books – *The Ring and the Book*. Browning's work is precisely that of fusing two genres (the lyric and the dramatic one) to become consequently a significant passage from Romanticism to late-Romanticism and then to modernity. This blending of different genres actually shows a basic prerogative of modernism. The dramatic monologue, on the other hand, easily conveys a historical point of view, pushing precisely upon this sympathy able to suspend an ethical judgment. It is what happens

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<sup>102</sup> «Seen in this way, *Past and Present* assumes the character of the generic literary formulations of nineteenth-century literature – namely, a narrative objectification of a formally confessional process through which a *persona*, real or imaginary, tells the reader how it is/was with him and reveals in the telling the insights his experiences have taught him». (Buckler 1980, 18)

especially with Browning and at times with Tennyson, and significantly, later on with Yeats's poetry<sup>103</sup> and Eliot's *Gerontion* and in the essay "The Three Voices of Poetry".

Goerge Monteiro has noticed how Fernando Pessoa shapes the issue of poetry and truth through a sclerotic machinery – the *drama em gente* – « [...] which is to say, drama within characters and drama between and among characters [...] » (Monteiro 2000, 19) – drawing it directly from dramatic art<sup>104</sup>:

The basis of acting is misrepresentation...Acting...has all the attraction of forgery. We all love a forger. It is very human and quite instinctive sentiment. We all adore trickery and counterfeit. Acting unites and intensifies, through the material and vital character of its manifestations, all the low instincts of the artistic instinct – the riddle – instinct, the trapeze-instinct, the prostitute instinct...The artist's thirst for glory is made flesh in the actor's thirst for applause. (Pessoa, *Páginas de Estética e de Teoria Literárias* 1966, 114)

According to this last citation, Pessoa spots a concept that was spreading throughout Europe, namely the downgrading of the artist's figure reduced either to a trapeze artist or a prostitute, an attitude which almost directly reminds the reader of Baudelaire and Kafka as well as some pictures by Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. From this perspective, the Pessoaan affiliation with Romanticism could somehow be linked to the modern reaction against the failure of poetic values

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<sup>103</sup> W. B. Yeats shapes upon the Victorian model his own dramatic theory which will ebb into the so called "theory of Masks". Interestingly, he writes: «Every now and then, when something has stirred my imagination, I begin talking to myself. I speak in my own person and dramatize myself [...]. Occasionally, I write out what I have said in verse [...]. I do not think of my soliloquies as having different literary qualities. They stir my interest, by their appropriateness to the men I imagine myself to be, or by their accurate description of some emotional circumstance, more than by any aesthetic value». (Yeats 1955, 532)

<sup>104</sup> In a letter addressed to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, Fernando Pessoa affirms: «What I am essentially – behind the involuntary mask of poet, logical reasoner and so forth – is a dramatist. My spontaneous tendency to depersonalization, which I mentioned in my last letter to explain the existence of my heteronyms, naturally leads to this definition. [...] I continuously change personality I keep enlarging (and here there is a kind of evolution) my capacity to create new characters, new forms of pretending that I understand the world or, more accurately, that the world can be understood». (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 263)



and, consequently, of the role of the artist within the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to Auden, Pessoa insisted on maintaining that poetry “makes something happen” and *Mensagem* is perhaps the most significant testimony of this firm conviction. Pessoa’s epic gesture, in fact, mirrors the endeavour to face the demoting of poetic power upon reality. In Monteiro’s terms, Pessoa could be seen as Browning’s disciple, as the poet considers his task to resurrect relative truths, buried beneath History and Historiography. It is strength that actually unites Pessoa to other poets of his generation<sup>105</sup> who are struggling for an epic act able to affect the confusing reality they had to tackle, «a generation of studiously diminished lyric poets was confronted with an epic subject, one that seemed to cry out from the power and scope of the kind of poetry that Wordsworth wrote in the wake of French Revolution. The results were *The Cantos*, *The Waste Land*, *Spring and All*, *Observations*, and *The Tower*; all the most ambitious work of the modern poets, coming in the twenties, was at least in part the result of the social challenge of the war. And as H.D.’s distaste for wartime “epic” suggests, the poets were all, to varying degrees, suspicious of their own achievement» (Longenbach 1999, 109). The epic enchantment along

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<sup>105</sup> As Jacinto do Prado Coelho has pointed out, «[...] Pessoa pertenceu à sua geração por um clima espiritual que se caracteriza pelo egotismo, pela obsessão de auto-análise, pela concepção do poeta como ser exilado e incompreendido, pelo ódio ao burguês que essa geração procurou escandalizar, pelo romantismo simbolista, pela melancolia, pelo tédio, pelo agnosticismo acompanhado da nostalgia da fé perdida, pelo esteticismo amoralista, pelas audácias verbais mas também, contraditoriamente (porque dessa vez o poeta já não surge exilado mas empenhado na vida terrena), pela afirmação do instinto avassalador, da vontade de conquista, do amor activo à Civilização, ao Progresso, ao dinamismo das máquinas». (Do Prado Coelho 1990, 191)[«Pessoa belonged to his generation for a spiritual climate characterized by egotism, by an auto-analyzing obsession, by the conception of the poet as an exiled and unappreciated human being, by hatred against bourgeois’ that this generation aimed to outrage, by the symbolist romanticism, by melancholy and boredom, by agnosticism matched with nostalgia for the lost faith, by amoral aestheticism, by verbal impudence but also, contradictorily, (as from this perspective poet does not stand as an exiled but involved in worldly life), by the affirmation of the overwhelming instinct, of the conquest will, of the active love for Civilization, Progress, and the dynamism of machines»]. (my translation)

with the late-Romantic enchantment, hide the need and reveal the effort to embody and personify the new bards of modernity.

### **3.2.From Browning to Pound, the Feature of *Personae* and the Issue of Heteronymy**

According to the paragraph below, it is Monteiro's notion that «Browning's creation could be seen – and they probably should be – as the immediate predecessors for Pessoa's heteronymic creations» (Monteiro 2000, 59). It is also Pound's contention that Browning's dramatization of the Self represents a possible modernist epic forerunner, which is apparent in the opening part of the second of his *Cantos*. Here Pound addresses Browning with these verses:

Hang it all, there can be but one Sordello!  
But say I want to, say I take your whole bag of tricks,  
Let in your quirks and tweeks, and say the thing's an art-form,  
Your Sordello, and that the modern world  
Needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thought in. (Pound, *The Cantos* of  
Ezra Pound 1996, 6)

The use of *dramatis persona* profoundly affects modern(ist) poetry and perhaps represents one of the most relevant legacies of the late-Romanticism as the revision of genres epitomizes what was already anticipated by the Victorians. This generic revision eventually implies a conflation of different genres within new forms, able to contain the new reality (Eliot's mythical method is in this case quite representative) and, by the same token, to rid themselves of everything reckoned as superfluous, always looking for the maximum of expressivity. Pound's concern within his research is for a new

modernist epic, capable of reconciling his “make it new” to tradition. His warning of the lack of an Aquinas’ map and his untiring search for new fluid forms, never forgetting his epic ambition, derives from here:

The problem was to get a form – something elastic enough to take the necessary material. It had to be a form that wouldn’t exclude something merely because it did not fit. In the first sketches, a draft of the present first *Canto* was the third. (Pound, *Literary Essays* 1968, 38)

The *Cantos* – and later the *Pisan Cantos* – actually represent the mature output of his epic intentions. His very former gesture to find new and more dynamic forms of expression should trace to *Personae*. Here Pound’s most evident indebtedness to Browning becomes apparent. In an article devoted to the exemplification of Vorticism, the American poet clarifies that letting the poetic Self talk in different voices is indication of the exploration of one’s proper poetics. The diffraction of the lyric self into different *personae* represents two different devices to Pound: on one hand the imitation and re-writing of literary tradition and, on the other, a sort of Yeatsian mystical occultism:

[...] in the search for “sincere self-expression”, one gropes, one finds some seeming verity. One says “I am” this, that, or the other and with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing. I began this search for the real in a book called *Personae* [1909], casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem. I continued in a series of long translations, which were but more elaborate masks. (Pound, *Vorticism* September 1, 1914, 463-4)

This quotation seems to remind us of the very initial phase of the Pessoa heteronymic *genesis*. However, even if Pessoa’s self diffraction stems from drama, it does not completely fit with Yeats’s or Pound’s meaning of “mask”. The Portuguese poet, in fact, rather exposes the inner disintegration of the Self,

as he explains in his letter to Casais Monteiro. In any case, it is possible to take Pound's words and Browning's dramatic procedure as two samples of the first stage of the Pessoaan *drama em gente*, which was already influencing one of *Mensagem's* first poems – *Dom Fernando*. This latter poem dating back to 1913 and which reveals an overtly homonymy with the author, sets out a sort of primordial decomposition of the lyric Self's unity. Moreover, *Mensagem* as a whole, in its intermeshing of genres and features, hosts in his symbolic but fix texturing, a widespread and consistent use of *dramatis personae*. Most of the characters represented within the work actually speak in the first person, Pessoa himself included. Curiously enough, the different historical characters which punctuate the Pessoaan epic work appear as the actual or possible Sebastian's embodiments, the possible realization of Portugal itself. They express a sort of conceptual chance to reach the final and hoped embodiment of Portugal<sup>106</sup>. This is particularly apparent in *Mensagem's* poem “*Tormenta*” where Pessoa makes this tension explicit and Portugal perfectly represents this in-between condition:

*Que jaz no abysmo sob o mar que se ergue?  
Nós, Portugal, o poder ser.  
Que inquietação do fundo nos soergue?  
O desejar poder querer.*

*Isto, e o mysterio de que a noite é o fausto...  
Mas subito, onde o vento ruge,  
O relampago, pharol de Deus, un hausto  
Brilha, e o mar scuro struge<sup>107</sup>. (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 100)*

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<sup>106</sup> «Message se déploie donc dans l'élément d'une matière de la politique (mais non dans la politique), et je voudrais établir ce qui ne semblera, je l'espère, plus un paradoxe au terme de mon intervention: Message n'est pas une œuvre messianique, ni prophétique, quoique mythe et prophétie en soient les matériaux. Message convoque à un travail précise: une élucidation de ce que peut être le Portugal comme concept, et si quelque chose s'y trouve chiffré, c'est ce concept». (Balso 1992, 204)

<sup>107</sup> [«What's in the abyss under the rising seas?/Power to be: us, Portugal./What, from deep in us, surging, is the unease?/The longing for the power to will./That, and the mystery whose pomp night is.../But suddenly, to the wind's yells,/Quick as a gulp the lightning, God's light-house,/Flares, and the shadowy sea bellows»]. (Pessoa *Message* 2007, 101)

The symbolic and archetypal texturing of *Mensagem* gives shape to a symbolical structuring of the historical characters who respond to a precise historical parabola. It is not by chance that the characters, whose articulation resembles the dramatization of the lyric self, eventually appear at a critical moment in Portuguese history:

*[...] je signalerai seulement d'une part que ces personnages sont tous héros de crises successives au cours desquelles l'idée du Portugal fut constituée; d'autre part que, dans le champ des écussons, le dieux ne sont autres que ces personnages, et tous des autoportraits (à la première personne) du poète [...].* (Balso 1992, 209)

Therefore, if at the first stage it is the Self's decomposition that finds a (historical) avatar within *Mensagem's* frame, on a much later stage it is the national Self that is reduced to fragments, finding a historical embodiment in each character, thus determining the final structural architecture. In the end, the use of historical *dramatis personae* is devoted to an iconicity of the most relevant historical moments. Pound and Eliot both make use of this device in order to embody literary traditions in a precise person, writer, poet or character, just like Browning did initially in *The Ring and the Book*. Pessoa's modernism goes somewhat further than Eliot and Pound's, as his heteronymy also has a psychological connotation<sup>108</sup>, or rather, a "psychiatric explanation", as he explains in a letter to Casais Monteiro about the *dia triumphal*, it is the result of an hysteric disposition. The basic heteronymic construction, hence, seems to follow the same pattern as that of either Eliot or Pound: Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de

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<sup>108</sup> «I think this should explain for you the origin of my heteronyms, but if there's any point I need to clarify – I'm writing quickly, and when I write quickly I am not terribly clear – let me know, and I'll be gladly obliged. And here's a true and hysterical addendum: when writing certain passages of Álvaro de Campos' Notes for the Memory of Master Caeiro I have wept real tears». (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 257)

Campos, and Alberto Caeiro are the actual representations of different and precise literary traditions. In his critical writings, Pessoa significantly terms them “*peessoa-livros*”. From this perspective, *Mensagem* is interpretable as the final act of this self’s splintering into a historical teleology. If the use of *personae*, in fact, is originated by a sort of need to select and shape a specific literary tradition<sup>109</sup>, Fernando Pessoa also identifies, with this possibility, the chance to focus on a “selected (literary) tradition”.

The Pessoaan heteronymy has been interpreted as a sort of epiphany. The idea of Portugal conveyed by *Mensagem* relies on the epiphany of a new concept of a home country. Thus, Pessoa’s use of *personae* does not engender a consequential use of masks. According to the author of *Mensagem*, untruthfulness almost straightforwardly and paradoxically leads to an imagined and elevated truth. As Fernando Pessoa himself asserts: «*O meu ardente amor pelo mistério, pela irrealidade, pelo sonho, uniu-se ao meu amor pela verdade para me fazer imaginar como verdade e como essência uma coisa interamente fora deste mundo, algo totalmente essência, em que essência é atribuído. Porém assim que pensei ser possível que a verdade pudesse estar em algum lugar, até mesmo aqui, tão longe [...]*» (Pessoa, *Escritos autobiográficos, automáticos e de reflexão pessoal* 2003, 95).

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<sup>109</sup> «The problem of multiple personality becomes most acute in those poets to whom tradition was not something given and self evident – as to the majority of modern Spanish and Greek poets – but something to be selected from the *musée imaginaire* of literary history, to be renovated and restored». (Hamburger 1969, 114)

### 3.3.Objectivism/Subjectivism

Fernando Pessoa has only recently been considered to be among the most representative European modernist poets. Gabriel Jasipovici<sup>110</sup> was among the first critics in the 1970s who, at last, rightly put the Portuguese poet alongside Kafka, Kavafy, Eliot, Borges, and Pound. Also in relation to Fernando Pessoa, then, it should be taken under consideration that critical perspective which after the Fifties made possible to “expose” the (aesthetic and thematic) relevant relationship between late-Romanticism and modernism. According to this statement, Irene Ramalho has recently contended that «the genealogy of Pessoa’s poetry and poetics as part of lyric poetry as we know it today has much to do with the Anglo-American tradition. Shakespeare, Marlow, Spenser, Milton, Donne, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and Wilde, as well as the Americans Whitman and Poe, are constant presence in his works, whether explicitly or implicitly» (Ramalho 2003, 269-70)

Differently to what Eliot implied, the “dissociation of sensibility” that started affecting poetry from the middle of the seventeenth century, is not *just* “something which had happened to the mind of England”. A parallel reading of both T.S. Eliot and Fernando Pessoa’s critical writings shows that the dissociation of subjectivism and objectivism had already started with Romantic poets. This event greatly touched both modernist poetry and critique and that it is possible to be traced in different and distant poets who produced similar theoretical outputs. It is important to note that the escape from subjectivism, which represents the negative hallmark of romanticism, reveals, on the other

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<sup>110</sup> «When I think of what is most radical in the literature of the past hundred years, of what embodies most clearly the essential spirit of modernism, I think of five grey-suited gentlemen: Constantin Kavafy, Franz Kafka, T.S. Eliot, Fernando Pessoa, Jorge Luis Borges». (Josipovici 1977, 26)

hand, a constant search for a poetic objectification of the (lyric) self, which became a topical issue for modernist authors at large. As Jacques Barzun contended in reference to *Wordsworth*, “He is in effect a dramatist using his own self as a sensitive plate to catch whatever molecular or spiritual motion the outer world may supply” (Barzun 1944, 97-8). This statement undeniably sends us back to Álvaro de Campos declaration of poetry “Feel everything in every way”. Significantly, Fernando Pessoa reframes these romantic acknowledgements as the theoretic springboard of his avant-garde poetic formulations. More emphasis will be put later on the Self-diffraction which is, of course, the most representative prerogative of Pessoa’s aesthetics. On the other hand, it should also be highlighted how the Pessoaan Romantic enchantment has to do, at a primal level, with an escape from subjectivism, which was a prerogative of the first Romanticism and its “great romantic lyric”. The Pessoaan Self’s splintering thus inscribes itself once again within a radical modernist tendency and necessity:

Browning’s experimental use of the dramatic monologue in lyric poetry was undoubtedly inspirational for Yeats and Pessoa from a stylistic point of view. However, the generational distance between them endowed Pessoa’s and Yeats’ s strategies with greater aesthetical and ontological significance as creative responses to the anxiety of the divided self in modern society. Pessoa’s heteronymy and Yeats’ s doctrine of the mask were their respective solution of the breakdown of the homogeneous lyric voice by disseminating it into multifaceted voices, capable of conveying the heterogeneous and fluid realities of the modern self and world. (McNeill 2010, 116)

As a result, Pessoa gave birth to such avant-garde movements as *Sensationism*, *Pauism* and *Intersectionism*. Within these three movements, the poetic Self finds himself objectified differently in the outer world, i.e., within the objects of the material world. If according to the poetics of *Pauism*, feelings



have to find a unilateral correspondence in the outer world, *Sensationism*, a series of scattered and concrete emotions is displayed throughout the text; while, even more dramatically, within *Intersectionism*, different layers of sensations interact within the text, mirroring the self's multilateral splintering. It could be immediately implied that these movements find an unmediated counterpart in Cubism, Futurism, and Boccioni's theory of *stati d'animo*.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, the demise and the decomposition of the lyrical self finds its most significant tradition in the work of late Romantic poets Wordsworth, Browning, and Tennyson. The above quotation from Álvaro de Campos, in fact, could be taken as illustrative of Sensationism, of the need to extend the lyrical self towards what Robert Langbaum has defined the *poetry of experience*:

Whether the poetry of experience starts out to be lyrical or dramatic, whether it deals with a natural or human object or a story that evolves out of someone's perception of a natural or human object, to the extent that it limitates the structure of experience, to the extent that its meaning is a movement of perception, it must be in final effect much the same – both lyrical and dramatic, subjective and objective: a poetry dealing with the object and the eye of the object. (Langbaum 1985, 56)

Most of de Campos' odes could actually be defined as poems of experience if considered from this perspective. The same is true for *Chuva Obliqua* and *Passagem das Horas* which are respectively the most significant poetic works of *Intersectionism* and *Sensationism*. Pessoa thus channels Romantic inspiration through a double articulation: the glorification of the lyrical spontaneity crystallized in the verses of Álvaro de Campos – as, for instance, in his *Salutation to Walt Whitman* – and, on the other hand, Pessoa

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<sup>111</sup> «Intersection of the Object with itself: Cubism. (The intersection, that is, of various aspects of the same Object with each other.)

Intersection of the Object with the objective ideas it suggests : Futurism.

Intersection of the Object with our sensation of it: Intersectionism strictly speaking, which is what we propose». (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 66)

horthonym in his restraint of the poetic emotiveness. In this regard, Alain Badiou has affirmed that Pessoa engages a constant *syntactic machination* whose complexity hampers a sensitive impact to the readers. According to Badiou, the almost algebraic exactness of the Pessoaan poetic language prevents the reader from an ingenuous and immediate identification with the literary discourse. Thus, Pessoa recovered a mathematical sense to both life and poetry, hiding behind metaphors and allegories, a mathematic construction resembling the pre-Socratic assumptions, according to which beauty can be identified with severity. Manuel Antunes, previously to Badiou, tried to unravel the thread of the Pessoaan controversial adhesion to Platonism through his complete rejection of Aristotelism. Subsequently, Almeida Faria attempted to deal with the dichotomies resulting from the infinite aesthetic discussions of the heteronyms and Pessoa horthonym. Faria puts an emphasis on the geometric thought of the Marine Engineer, fed by his adhesion to and admiration of Futurism variegated by that Bergsonian *élan vitale* that he would go to disclaim in the *Triumphal Ode*.

The heteronymic process itself, seen from this perspective, acquires another shape. It actually goes beyond a simplistic negation of the Self as the critic Judith Balso has observed<sup>112</sup>. Seemingly, Eduardo Lourenço re-asserts the fragrant and somewhat “physical” consistency of the personifications of Pessoa’s actual and/or literary Self. In contrast, Judith Balso strongly affirms the paratactic coherence of the Pessoaan heteronymic system – «[...] *l’heteronym est*

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<sup>112</sup> «L'importance de l'inclusion d'une orthonymie dans l'hétéronymie est qu'elle y inscrit un non-être, celui du nom propre lui-même mis ainsi en fiction, et qu'elle atteste en retour le non-être inhérente à tout «nom-de-l'auteur». L'orthonymie n'est à cet égard pas le contraire de l'hétéronymie. Je dirai qu'elle est bien plutôt un hétéronymie redouble, ou «au carré»: le nom-de-l'auteur se voit institué comme fictive, démenant l'existence d'un auteur, tandis que la fiction d'un poète-autre s'avère pouvoir exister sous le nom du même». (Balso 2008, 5)

*un principe d'organisation puissant*» (Balso 2008, 6) – and the fundamental temporality of its construction. On his part, Badiou contends that «ainsi l'hétéronymie est-elle une image possible du lieu intelligible, de cette composition de la pensée dans le jeu alterné de ses propres catégories» (Badiou 1998, 71). Pessoa thinks in terms of Aristotelic and non-Aristotelic categories as he clearly testifies in *Páginas Íntimas e de Autointerpretação* in which Álvaro de Campos and Ricardo Reis respectively embody the Aristotelic and the Anti-Aristotelic type, defining Aristotelic as “classic”. In the *Apontamentos para uma estética não-aristotelica*, the anti-Aristotelism roughly configures itself as anti-classicism: the Aristotelic artist, in fact, subordinates everything to sensitivity:

The Greeks and the Romans (and to lesser extent the men of the Renaissance) tried to impress, onto the reality of a given object or an idea, the sensation it made them feel. But Romantics realized that reality, for us, is not the object but our sensation of it. They were thus less concerned to present the object itself than to convey their sensation of it. That does not mean they withdrew from Reality; no, they sought it, because our sensation of the object – not the object conceived apart from our sensation – is its true Reality, signs outside of our sensation nothing exists, our sensation being for us the criterion of existence. “Man is the major of all things”. Protagoras’ dictum also applies to truth, in its abstract and absolute sense. (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 65)

The issue of truthfulness is automatically interwoven with that of division and this latter one with that of aesthetics. The great achievement reached by modernity is, in fact, that of freeing from a unilateral perspective: «All pre-modern art was based on just one element. This was true for the classical art of Paganism as it was for Renaissance art or Romantic art. Only very recently has art begun to evolve outside of this ancient and rigid mold» (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 65). The relationship between subjectivism and objectivism are transversely touched by experience which, just like truth, is not univocal but multiple. Pessoa affirms occasionally that his self multiplication

derives from the need to feel. However, feeling generally stands for understanding: «Only feeling believes and is truth. Nothing exists outside our sensations» (*ibidem*, 67). Pessoaan aesthetics thus arrives to a Nietzschean conclusion and reaches modernity precisely in its trust in sensations which overtly enacts a shrug of the strict and rigid trappings of the poetic self. Thus the *Supra-Camões's* theory is interpretable in light of the need to cross the boundaries of the self's possibilities as well as those of the nation, which incidentally coincide.

### **3.4.A Romanticized History for a Modern(ist) Epic**

In a relatively recent collection of essays focusing on Portuguese postmodernist literary work, Helena Kaufman accrues that: «it is from Romanticism that was established the complex relationship between people and their history as a literary theme and as ontological question. Two works come to mind: Almeida Garrett's *Frei Luis de Sousa* and Eça de Queiros's *A Ilustre Casa de Ramires*» (Kaufman 1997, 145-6). Undeniably, the issue of history is central to Portuguese literature. Even though it is approached differently and disclaimed in various ways, this issue is absolutely at the core of the literary debate, covering a period from Romanticism to Postmodernism. Nonetheless, if postmodernism elects the novel as its own ground of experimentation, modernism appoints poetry as the paradigmatic means of contrasting the widespread disillusionment with the political, social, and cultural reality and as a reaction to the progressively desolate historical and poetic panorama. Thus poetry flows from a general climate of discouragement, which was already in the air among the late Romantics such as Wordsworth. William Butler Yeats, who

epitomizes the junction between late Romanticism and Modernism, published around 1915 a collection of poems entitled *Responsibilities* and containing, not by accident, a series of poems under the eloquent title *Poems Written in Discouragement*. Yeats' s acquaintance with the national political concern continues to grow consistently for much of the XX th century and manifests itself in the issuing of *The Tower*. Yeats is actually somewhat representative of the late-Victorian's influence on modernism. If, in fact, on one hand, there is a progressive attempt to remove unnecessary subjectivism from lyric poetry, on the other hand poets and poetry become more and more preoccupied with political and national causes, whether under an elegiac or an ironic guise. In "The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism", T.S. Eliot draws a line of coherence between the preoccupation with poetry from mid-to-late XVII th to XX th century and its theoretical understanding. However, significantly enough, the American poet and critic puts an emphasis on the "uses" of poetry, evaluating the weight of poetry within society.

Fernando Pessoa's poetic source could be identified as a profound discouragement with his contemporary Portugal times characterized by a confused and degraded political reality, defined in a page of his as "*a aventura senile moderna*", an "*Odisseia sem Ulisses*". This latter definition offers a clear idea of a widespread sentiment among the Portuguese modernist poets and is characterized by an entrusting King Sebastian with a mad heroism of a national hero:

*D. Sebastião, protótipo da loucura heróica, obsidía com frequência a moderna lírica portuguesa, quer para simbolizar a decadência quer polarizando as esperanças messiânicas no ressurgimento pátrio. Em António Nobre não é apenas o «rey dos desgraçados», «rey dos vencidos», em que o poeta se mira como num espelho; é também o desejado, o que á de vir para nos salvar: «Esperai, esperai, ó*

*Portugueses!/ Que ele há-de vir um dia!» (Despedidas, p. 115). Na Pátria de Junqueiro, o Doido presente a hora da redenção: «A hora grande, a hora imensa/ Já por um fio está suspensa...». O Encoberto de Lopes Vieira, termina por um grito de alma semelhante: «Amanhece! Amanhece! O sol vem perto!» Pascoaes, em A Noite Lusitana do Verbo Escuro, murmura em êxtase visionário: «É ele, o rei da Saudade, coroadado de estrema, que regressa!»<sup>113</sup> (Do Prado Coelho 1990, 49)*

The unsatisfactory condition of modern Portugal displays, in fact, a sort of double attitude in the context of Twentieth century Portugal, caught up in a continuous tension between tradition and innovation, eventually endeavoring a deep nationalistic *afflatus*. Jacinto do Prado Coelho encompasses precisely this double attitude that could be traced back to two key-figures of the Portuguese late-Romantic period, i.e., António Nobre and Cesário Verde. If the former represents a pivotal template of the Saudosist vein, the latter, with the poem *Sentimento de um ocidental* feeds the starvation for modernity within the Lusitanian anxiety of crossing the boundaries of monarchy and periphery:

Thus, it seems that from the 1890s onwards the “Janus-faced quality” of literary modernism was already apparent in Portugal as well. And it seems fair to argue that such ambiguous quality stems directly in this case from the nature of nationalist sentiment itself, as Gellner has pointed out. (Villaverde Cabral 1989, 18)

On the other hand, the ascendancy placed by António Nobre unavoidably connotes the Portuguese modernism, determining its profound involvement with the research for a shared national feeling that will spread out of the

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<sup>113</sup> [«King Sebastian, prototype of the heroic madness, appears quite frequently within the modern Portuguese lyric, both as a symbol of the decadence and as the focus of the messianic hopes of a national resurrection. In António Nobre, he is not only o “*rey do desgraçados*”, “*rey dos vencidos*”, in whom the poet mirrors himself; he is also the desired one who has to come to rescue us: “*Esperai, esperai, ó Portugueses!/Que ele há-de vir um dia!*” (*Despedidas, p. 115*). In Guerra Junqueiro’s *Pátria*, he is the Fool present at the moment of redemption: “*A hora grande, a hora imensa/ Já por um fio está suspensa...*”. O Encoberto by Lopes Vieira ends with a similar soul’s cry: “*Amanhece! Amanhece! O sol vem perto!*”. Pascoaes in *A Noite Lusitana do Verbo Escuro*, murmures in a visionary ecstasy: “*É ele, o rei da Saudade, coroadado de estrema, que regressa!*”»] (my translation)

Saudosist movement. Albeit the Pessoaan undeniable enchantment and involvement within the movement, it should be highlighted that the paradoxical image of Fernando Pessoa is Janus-faced as well. The epic mode, more than the epic texturing, in fact, seems to underpin metaphorically the system of influence that feeds its Romantic concern. The poet's supposed epic heroism is thus represented by the sacrifice of the Self during the search for a superior greatness. Terry Eagleton underlines that in Shelley's aesthetics lurks an individualistic projection and therefore a re-constellation of culture, i.e., pre-eminently, literary culture – within a restrained and close group of privileged people univocally aimed at poetry. Moreover, Frank Lentricchia implies that «the missing term in modernist thinking – Eliot stands by himself– is community: something larger, something more valuable than isolate selfhood, that would include original selves, nourish and sustain them, while also nourishing and sustaining a network of connection, a wholeness (greater than the sum of selves) which the thinker of community believes makes healthy selfhood possible» (Lentricchia 1994, 291). The re-discovery of myth and the extraction of poetry out of the reign of modern scientificity give vent to a religiosity of poetry that characterizes Modernist poetry at large:

The most powerful and persistent claim is that poetry itself is a kind of magic, the poet not only a seer but a magus, bringing into existence what he has seen in dreams. (Hough 1976, 319)

A long lasting critical tradition tends to frame Pessoa's poetry within the narrow definition of a late-Romantic aesthetics. Pessoa's character has often generated a profound misunderstanding of his work. The ostensible and real influence of Romantic poetry should be seen within the wider scenario of the

Pessoan system of (literary) influences. Certainly, his attraction for the English Romantic epic poets (Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats) which dates back to his childhood offers *Mensagem*' author an intriguing frame for the weaving of his national epic. Instead of referring to the "Christianized" epic, these poets had actually elaborated a new mythic frame<sup>114</sup>, or rather, as Harold Bloom put it, they invented *mythopoetic poetry*. The Pessoaan rewriting of the epic genre passes from the revision of its traditional Christian background by means of a sort of secularization of its formal mythography. What is crucial in relation to the mythic revision created by Fernando Pessoa is, precisely, the enhancement of myth as a secular possibility. When he speaks about myth, as for instance in the poem dedicated to Ulysses, he actually refers to literature as a whole. It is through literature that the communicative dynamics with the reader/hearer take shape. It is the mythos intended as re-tellable narration which allows the re-production of forms and contents. For this reason, Pessoa frees his teleological architecture from whatever Christianization and merges it totally in the faceted realm of myth.

However, in many articles Pessoa stresses the importance of overcoming the Christian religion. Sebastianism represents ultimately the possibility of a secular religion. If, in fact, the Christian religion is counted as the third of five empires, Pessoa foretells – concomitantly with the advent of the Fifth Empire –

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<sup>114</sup> As Irene Ramalho pinpoints in relation to Keat's *Hyperion: A Dream*: «[...] *È precisamente neste último que começa a esboçar-se com mais evidência a concepção de uma "epopeia da consciência moderna", como Hart Crane viria dizer a propósito do poema sobre "o mito da América", que intitolou The Bridge. Essa concepção, que tão fecunda viria revelar-se num modernismo anglo-americano, ao das formas por vezes insólitas aquilo que Eduardo Lourenço chamou já "a normalidade mítica do espírito moderno", enforma também, a meu ver, a ambição poética de Pessoa na Mensagem*». (Ramalho 1993, 391)[«It is precisely in this latter one that a conception of an "epic of the modern consciousness" starts to be outlined with more vividness, as Hart Crane implied in relation to the poem about "the myth of America" he entitled *The Bridge*. This conception, which will reveal itself so prolific, went on exposing in a specific kind of Anglo-American modernism, i.e., that of unusual forms, that Eduardo Lourenço termed "the mythical normality of modern spirit" and that shapes, on my opinion, Pessoa's poetic ambition in relation to *Mensagem*»]. (my translation)



the coming of a new possible worship. From this point of view, the Roman Church religion doesn't represent anymore the most adequate underpinning of the Fifth Empire, which is intended as a "cultural empire" where peace "will be the peace which stems from the absence of religious differences". It would be possible to apply to Pessoa what Northrop Frye noticed regarding to James Joyce, namely, that their renouncement of the mythical pattern of the Church from the faith doctrine to the creative imagination leads to the replacement of dogmatic Catholicism with an imaginative universality. The mythopoetic allegorization actually seems to coincide perfectly with the Pessoaan aims to opt for a secularized epic. According to Pessoa's point of view, Romanticism rather represented the starting point of the renewal of (epic) poetry: «*Por exclusão de partes, temos, portanto, infalivelmente que concluir que o Romantismo é, não uma época, mas o princípio de uma época; não é a Nova Renascença mas o movimento precursor dessa Renascença Nova*<sup>115</sup>» (Pessoa, *Crítica, Ensaios, Entrevistas* 1999, 56). The Romantic fascination should not be overvalued in a kind of Bloomian dynamic, in that Freudian vortex of overcoming that elides somehow the importance of Modernism itself. The Romantic works that will be analyzed are, in fact, pivotal to the understanding of the models of the Pessoaan modernist deconstruction of epic poetry. The focus is actually on the epic genre, framing it within the Modernist reappraisal of tradition. The re-crossing and deconstruction of the literary past allows a re-constellation of the epic genre *tout court*. It would be naïve, then, to underestimate the avant-garde value of his work, to place in a sort of *continuum* stemming from the XVIII th century poetry. What the Yale school, in the face of Northrop Frye, labeled the Romantic

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<sup>115</sup> [«Following a process of elimination, we have to conclude infallibly that Romanticism is not actually an epoch but, rather, the outset of an epoch; it is not a new Renaissance but the forerunner of this New Renaissance»].(my translation)

“visionary poets”, including poets from Keats to Yeats, from Blake to Whitman and Merrill, could not take account of Pessoa, as subsequently Bloom tried to do with ease, for instance in his Preface to Irene Ramalho’s work<sup>116</sup>. The Pessoaan utopia should not be ascribed to poetic and literary longing for a neo Platonic Atlantis, but rather to a more concrete search for a politic solution and, at the same time, a modernistic revision of the potentialities of the epic genre as a whole.

### **3.5. *Hyperion’s Message***

Fanatics have their dreams, where with they weave  
A paradise for a sect; the savage too  
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep  
Guesses at Heaven; pity these have not  
Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf  
The shadows of melodious utterance.  
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;  
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,  
With the fine spell of words alone can save  
Imagination from the sable charm  
And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,  
'Thou art no Poet may'st not tell thy dreams?'  
Since every man whose soul is not a clod  
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved  
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.  
Whether the dream now purpos'd to rehearse  
Be poet's or fanatic's will be known  
When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave. (Keats 1958, 1.1-18)

These verses from the first canto of Keat’s *Hyperion: a Dream* could reassume Pessoa’s conceptualization of poetry. First of all, the semantic of

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<sup>116</sup>«Atlantic poetry, whatever its cultural context (and Ramalho Santos guides us to them), essentially is a visionary project because its intention is to locate and raise (in a spiritual sense) the lost Atlantis as a supreme fiction of belief. Pessoa and Crane both had occult proclivities, as did Victor Hugo, Rimbaud, Yeats, James Merrill, and other visionary poets. The fiction of belief for Pessoa was varied, but I think they ultimately reduce to three: Sebastianism, with its dream of messianic Portuguese Fifth Empire; ancient Gnosticism, with all its Renaissance and modern Hermetic descendants; Fernando Pessoa and his fellow heteronyms fused into the *Super-Camões*, eclipsing the major poet of the Portuguese language». (Ramalho 2003, IX)

dream represents the expression of the Pessoaan reshape of the poetic goals which endow the utopian *afflatus*. The Romantic sense of heroism in *Mensagem* derives, with no doubt, from the Keatsian interpretation of the role of the poet as a social prophet who is able to reconcile and unify through the supreme power of the lyric language the dyscrasias of a divided world: thus, the choice of poetry represents symbolically the totality of life. This is particularly fitting with the Pessoaan analysis of his present time and, on the other hand, with his theorizations of Sebastianist Empire which is supposed to unify the rational and the mystic, the female and male and lastly, the opposites that split the prosaic world of modernity. In a sense, Pessoa unites the Romantic aesthetics with the Symbolist influence which proclaims an approach to the text resembling a sort of initiation. By the same token, the theorization of the “chameleonic poet” developed by Keats makes of the Romantic poet a source of inspiration for the Pessoaan Sensationist topic, mirroring the all-absorbing poetic experience. As Shelley had already reaffirmed both in *A Defence of Poetry* and *Adonais*, «the poet is priest and can move beyond religion and magic; he is an ‘acknowledged legislator’ for a future society which will learn to live without the restrictions of law; he, is above all, the liberator and the explorer» (Drabble 2000, 384). This definition attains perfectly the Pessoaan intentions if one considers that the unsaid truth of *Mensagem* is that this work actually represents the fulfillment of the utopia it forecasts. From this perspective, *Mensagem* represents the realization of the Fifth Empire if one equates Pessoa to the proclaimed *Supra-Camões*. The change of the title from *Portugal* to *Mensagem* strengthens the author’s goal to be both the prophet and the author of the Sebastianist utopia while mirroring the firm wish for universality of the poetic language. Ultimately, the title represents better the

intention to send a “message”, the interpretation of this message during the centuries and the proclamation of the advent of a new poetic hero as Pessoa implies in his *Esoteric Writings*. This is quite clear from the rewriting of another topic that Pessoa traces back to Keats’s *Hyperion*, i.e., the *theomachia* between old and new Gods. Beyond the intriguing Ramalho’s reading, the Pessoaan revision is interpretable rather allegorically as the battle for a new Portuguese cosmography *tout court*. The Keatsian fight is to be interpreted as the contrast between the Christian apologists and the prophecies of literature. Anything must have been more appealing to Pessoa’s imagination of a new empire of poets than the cultural manipulation Salazar was bringing about with the regime’s dusty extol of swallowed Lusitanian cultural myths. The fight is set against the petrification of the Portuguese soul, while the Pessoaan intention is that of raising the possibilities of his nation’s being. In one of the clarifying letters regarding his heteronymy, Fernando Pessoa makes use precisely of the word “soul”:

This is the result of a dramatic temperament taken to the extreme. My dramas, instead of being divided into act full of action, are divided into souls. That’s what this apparently baffling phenomenon comes down too. (Pessoa, *The Selected Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 65)

As *Mensagem*’s last part as a whole makes clear, creativity is the only chance that the Portuguese soul has. “*Realizar Apolo espiritualmente*”, as Pessoa proclaims, eventually implies a profound interaction with the nation which is understood, quite Spengler-alike, as a biological identity<sup>117</sup>. The poetic

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<sup>117</sup>«Uma nação é um organismo psíquico em que, com em todos os organismos, lutam, sustendo-o, forças de desintegração. Forças que tendem a dissolvê-lo e forças que tendem a conservá-lo [...]». (Pessoa, Portugal, Sebastianismo e Quinto Império 1986, 67) [«A nation is a psychic organism in which, just like in any other organism, fight, in order to propping it up,

word thus seems to be able to reach the deeper roots of the country, covered in the mist of abyss making possible the rehabilitation of “*a hora*”<sup>118</sup>. As for Keats, poetry represents to Pessoa a further possibility of Creation, a second chance granted to men to give things a name. The modernist poet inherits from the author of *The Fall of Hyperion* the conception of poetry as the final place of the act of being: the revision of the Keatsian aesthetics in a patriotic and Sebastianist sense unties his understanding of poetry as a representative instrument of life and history. If Keats transposes the whole allegory of his work into its mythographic potential, Pessoa never really detaches his “mythical method” from the Camonian paradigm. Actually, Pessoa never conceives his empire of poets just abstractly; his *mythopoiesis* always has to do with the practical realization of the dream. The march of the intellect is not just poetic but spiritual and political as well:

We might say that, whereas Keats could not but fail, *Mensagem* succeeds as an epic of the modern consciousness because Pessoa had the opportunity to combine an imperial faculty with the ideology and geography of empire (however imperially ineffectual by the beginning of the twentieth century). If we also acknowledge that Keats’s ideal of energy caught in repose, the “stationing” he so admired in Milton, is brought by Pessoa, albeit unwittingly, to its uttermost in his projection of national historical characters onto the heraldic symbols of Portugal’s blazon, we might even see *Mensagem* as the perfect stationing of the Portuguese empire, thus poetically translated into the utopian myth of the Fifth Empire. (Ramalho 2003, 56)

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forces of disintegration. There are forces which tend to dissolve it and forces which tend to preserve it»]. (my translation)

<sup>118</sup> «Como para outros modernistas da sua geração, e na herança romântica de Keats, também para Pessoa a poesia é o lugar último do acto de ser, e o modo nacional e patriótico de que o poeta não deixa de revestir a construção do seu poema é, por assim dizer, a própria desconstrução da sinédoque keatsiana: quando para o romântico inglês a poesia representará a vida e a nação, para o modernista português a vida e a nação é que são parte da poesia». (Ramalho 2003, 395) [«As for other Modernists of his generation, and accordingly to the Keatsian heirloom, for Pessoa as well poetry is the ultimate place of the act of being, and also the national and patriotic guise, according to the poet, does not cease to embody the construction of his poem, his own deconstruction of the Keatsian synecdoche: when for the English Romantic poet poetry represents the life and the nation, to the Modernist Portuguese poet are actually life and nation which are part of poetry»]. (my translation)

Maria Irene Ramalho has recently contextualized the Pessoaan imperialistic conception with a Romantic influence in relation to the meaning of Poetry intended as a universal value. The connotations of Fifth Empire, according to the critic, are to be traced back to the overlap between geographical and poetical creation. The longed empire in *Mensagem* is above of all a spiritual empire and all its meanings convey the allegorical process of gaining consciousness of these possibilities. At any rate, the epic rewriting must not only pass through the re-establishment of a new relationship between the poet, or rather, of the sense of Poetry, and the nation, but also through the re-inscription of the Lusitanian tradition within the Western one.

Paradigmatically, during the same years William Butler Yeats started to shape a three-fold conception of the western civilization cycle. The Irish poet sets out three great cultures (the Roman, the Greek, and the Byzantine one) making of Byzantium what Pessoa makes of the Fifth Empire, i.e., the perfect permeation of philosophy and myth, the symbol of the “Unity of Being”, the reign of the pure intellect:

*[...] Fernando Pessoa conseguiu transformar a fragmentação metafísica da antiga cosmogonia gnóstica na visão esteticamente moderna de uma assumida fragmentação ontológica. Ao fazê-lo, estava, aliás, sem que o soubesse, a fazer o mesmo o que o outro gigante da modernidade poética europeia, W. B. Yeats [...]. No caso de ambos, o processo poético tornou-se no reverso do rovescio místico, ao revitalizar como sintaxe o que já não cabia como crença no mundo moderno da morte dos deuses<sup>119</sup>. (Macedo 1990, 138)*

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<sup>119</sup> [«Fernando Pessoa succeeded in transforming the metaphysical fragmentation of the ancient Gnostic cosmogony into a characteristically modern vision of an assumed ontological fragmentation. He did not know he was doing what another giant of European modern poetry was contemporarily doing, i.e., W.B. Yeats. According to both, the poetic process became the reverse of the mystic upturn, a way to revitalize as a syntax what they could not shape as a creed in a moderns world epitomized by the death of the Gods»].(my translation)

Portugal, in fact, just like Ireland, representing the Atlantic border of Europe, starts during the first half of the XX th century a revision of its culture in contrast to the offshore search for oversea colonies. What Edward Said underlines in *Culture and Imperialism* about Ireland, but referable to Portugal as well, is that precisely the peripheral and backward conditions of these countries make it possible for the two Modernist poets to imagine a new national perspective. Pessoa, just like Yeats, tries to rediscover the Portuguese future within its own language and mythography<sup>120</sup>. Recalling Sebastianism actually means a sort of re-conceptualization of nationalism, a positive and alternative revision of Portugal's origins and foundation «it is therefore necessary to seek out, to map, to invent, or to discover, a third nature, which is not pristine and pre-historical (“Romantic Ireland's dead and gone”, says Yeats) but one that derives historically from the deprivations of the present» (Said, 2005, 79). When Eduardo Lourenço contends that it would be possible to circumscribe *Mensagem* between the mythic and the utopian rewriting, he seems to clearly understand Pessoa's purpose to conflate different layers of times. The complaint of the rhapsody is a way of concealing past and present as well as a projection into the future, or rather, the mythical future of utopia<sup>121</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> «In order to avoid the imitative quality of Victorian epic-heroic poetry that they had studied and learned from in their formative years, Pessoa and Yeats selected native legends and myths from their own countries as the material for their re-enactments of the genre. They believed that by drawing directly from their national literary traditions, they would create works which would surpass other re-enactments in originality. This conviction justifies their self-inflated forecasts concerning the value of their works and their own status as poets». (McNeill 2010, 79)

<sup>121</sup> «The reality invented by a communal imagination, from our perspective, is a projection upon a dim past whose blankness is intolerable, whose stretches of vacuity leave a people without a common identity and must be filled in by myth. Primary epic solaces that unbearable insufficiency of the available past so that a people can know where it has come from, whom it has come from, and thus who it is. The epic bard draws upon a stock of legends and

### 3.6. Tennyson and Pessoa: an Idyllic and Dramatic Epic

“After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors,  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanity. [...]”  
T.S. Eliot, *Gerontion*

Glancing throughout Pessoa’s theoretical pages, Alfred Tennyson comes into sight as a key figure. Due to Pessoa’s British education and as his very first heteronym Alexander Search shows his inclination for the Victorian poets appears quite early. However, Tennyson’s paradigmatic role becomes even more obvious in a close scrutiny of the eras of literature, where the English poet appears among the most representative exponents of that poetic ability to combine feelings with intellect. *Maud*’s author, therefore, becomes a model for a process of intellectualization of the emotions which finds its most complete fulfillment in the objectification of the lyric subject in the fragmentation of the *dramatis personae*:

*É lógico que Pessoa coloque o poeta “despersonalizado” no ponto mais alto da sua escala de valores. Este tipo não só sente, como vive estados de alma que não os próprios nos<sup>122</sup>. (Lindt 1981, 240)*

Consequently, Tennyson attains a detachment from the Romantic ingenuous sentimentalism in his engendering a continuous tension between rationality and emotions summarized in an intellectualized sentimentalism. The

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amplifies them with fresh detail. But in order for the communion of grief to occur, this construct projected upon the dark backward and abysm of time has to contain itself that intuition of vulnerability and loss that can make a communion in sorrow conceivable». (Greene 1999, 196)

<sup>122</sup>[«It is logic that Pessoa locates the “depersonalized” poet at the highest point of his scale of values. This type does not only feel but also lives states of mind which are not proper to him»]. (my translation)



overcoming of this dichotomy takes shape in a sort of diffracted spectrum of the poetic subject and represents the most relevant dramatic prerogative of Tennyson's works. In his poems, the English poet is able to stage historical characters, speaking on the first person, with whom the author is able to identify, or rather, they are as a whole the outcome of his fictional and polymorphic aptitude to be something else other than himself. In this regard, the poem dedicated to Ulysses is extremely representative, perhaps Tennyson's best known work, and that surely must have affected Pessoa's imagination. As Tennyson himself implies, the poem is openly declared as autobiographical: the author allegorizes himself in his nostalgic soliloquy while, on the other hand, reconverts the Dantean inspiration conveying a pre-modern drive for nihilism into a keen curiosity towards the beyond:

Oh dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought. (Tennyson, Poems  
1851, 31)

W.B. Stanford highlights that this precise characterization of Ulysses starts from Dante who firstly depicted the Greek hero as a knowledge defender: «It was Dante who revolutionized the interpretation of Ulysses's final fate by presenting him as a man possessed by an irresistible desire for knowledge and experience of the unknown world» (Stanford 1992, 202). In the above verses by Tennyson, the anxiety of crossing over the boundaries of the human limits that

mirrors the overall spirit of *Mensagem* resounds effectively. Tennyson's *Ulysses*, which owes much to the *Divine Comedy*'s Ulysses, actually embodies the pursuit of knowledge and heroism in order to rescue the decadent situation of his land:

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. (*ibidem*, 30)

and of human condition:

Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done [...]. (*ibidem*, 32)

Tennyson's statement that his sources are the Dantesque XXVI canto and the *Odyssey*'s XI book reveals an important feature of his characterization of the Greek hero. Not being able to read the Homeric tradition, Dante only knows Ulysses through Virgil and Statius, Ovid and Horace. This is why he punishes the Greek king with the shipwreck for having dared to trespass the limits of knowledge and knowable, tracing back the idea of *sapientiae cupido* to Cicero and Seneca. Romanticism reinterprets the Dantean conflict between the theological and the poetic judgment, which is clear from a reading comparing this canto to some passages of the *Convivio*. In this latter work, in fact, the Italian poet implies that science represents the ultimate perfection of our soul<sup>123</sup>. The Romantic age reshapes this conflict, having to cope with a time of changing values and of scientific and technological progress, from which stems a profound interrogation of the role of poetry, derived from the interaction

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<sup>123</sup> *Convivio*, I, i, 1

between human and natural sciences: «A great deal of Victorian intellectual effort was spent in trying to hold together a universe which was exploding» (Sanders 2004, 399). Piero Boitani has pointed out that in Tennyson there is a “tragic conscience of the modern civilization”:

*Trasportare l'Ulisse dantesco su un palcoscenico romantico significa, tuttavia, caricarlo di tensioni che riproducono e intensificano la tragica divisione del canto XXVI dell'Inferno. Il desiderio di partecipazione universale che domina l'Ulisse tennysoniano si trova in profondo contrasto con l'esperienza, perché questa è bensì quella dantesca, ma trasformata da una struggente brama romantica: cioè, in primo luogo da una consapevolezza interiore, la quale tenta di articolarsi come conoscenza universale, di ciò che l'esperienza stessa è. E l'esperienza risulta 'immobilizzata' in quanto radicalmente divisa<sup>124</sup>. (Boitani 1992, 120-1)*

The modernist awareness makes it possible for Pessoa to present the character of Ulysses as a myth, a blank and purely literary archetype. The initial poem dedicated to the Greek king sounds rather like an epic inauguration *incipit* functioning as a myth *tout court*. It is not accidental that in the poem his mythical non existence while, on the other hand, myth is precisely linked to its primary function, say, that of foundation. As Karl Kerényi implies, mythology always speaks about an origin and Ulysses actually mythically founds Lisbon, *Ulissipona*. The Pessoaan Ulysses functions as an *arké* both of the Lusitanian culture, history and of literature itself. Pessoa is extremely conscious of what Malinowski has defined as the “social function” of mythology. The fictional nature of myth as well as its archetypal power is perfectly acknowledged. Therefore, it could be possible to maintain that the Pessoaan rewriting ad re-use

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<sup>124</sup> [«Transporting Dante's Ulysses on to a Romantic stage implies, however, charging him with tensions which will reproduce and intensify the tragic division of *Inferno* XXVI. The yearning for universal participation which rules Tennyson's Ulysses is in sharp contrast with experience, in that it is Dante's “esperienza” transformed by Romantic yearning – primarily in a personal awareness which strives to become universal knowledge of what experience itself actually is. And experience is ‘immobilized’ because radically divided»]. (Boitani 1994, 99)

of myth is at one with the general dilemma of modernist engagement with mythopoiesis stemming from a general reason collapse. Pessoa's complete immersion and trust in the power and possibilities of poetry find in the use of myth a flippant image of the drawbacks of the new found in *Autopsicografia* where the poet is labeled as a liar. Pessoa is not preoccupied with realism, he is aware that the social value and power of poetry does not reside in its truthfulness as he himself implies. As to Ricoeur, Pessoa conceives myth both as *fabula* and plot, but above of all, as mentioned before, as mythmaking and human-crafting:

Myth could be many things, including nostalgia for a lost unity, a fascist regression, or a literary structure, but its most important meaning was as an emblem of the human world as self-created. (Bell 1999, 14)

It is well known that Fernando Pessoa had an English translation of *The Divine Comedy* in his library and, therefore, he might have been aware of the Dantesque version of the Ulysses legend. The final shipwreck of the Greek king must have led to an immediate connection with the Sebastian's defeat. Somehow, linking these two figures, Pessoa mixes myth and mythology: on one hand a always regenerating image, a literary semantic structure, deeply rooted in the collective unconscious of his people through the only means of poetry; on the other hand, the mythological character *par excellence*, capable of irradiating the allure of a predestinated foundation, on which Portugal had always put its grounds. Bringing back the foundation of Lisbon, metonymy for Portugal, means depleting the platitudinous lore of the Christian predestination, in which the Lusitanian tradition was reduced from Ourique to Fatima. It is hence necessary to turn back to Bandarra's secular prophecies about King Sebastian's

coming back. Nevertheless, in webbing Ulysses, hero of the intellect, with Sebastião, Pessoa frames himself perfectly within the Modernist dialectic that McFarlane proverbially defined as two apparently incongruous ways of understanding the notion of the modern, i.e., a rational analysis alternated with a purely intuitive vision. On the other hand, Terry Eagleton has rightly highlighted, «Modernism, as Raymond Williams has argued, is among other things a running battle a new mode of rootless, cosmopolitan consciousness and the older, more parochial national traditions from which this consciousness has defiantly broken loose» (Eagleton 1990, 320).

An analysis of Tennyson's *Ulysses* in the light of the Pessoaan reception, highlights the pivotal aesthetic trace of his fascination as the English poet frames the knowledge pursuit within the multiform possibilities of being:

For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am a part of all that I have met; (Tennyson, Poems 1851, 30)

I would put an emphasis on this latter verse which strikes a similarity with those of the Pessoaan heteronym Álvaro de Campos, “*ser tudo de todas as maneiras*” and that guides us along the possible connections among the various heteronyms and more generally, his affiliation with the demise of the (lyric) self, which is a prerogative of the modernist poetic (as, for instance, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Jiménez, just to cite a few). As Luke Thurston has pointed out as regard this, Virginia Woolf welcomed this possibility as an achievement of the modern soul:

The demise of the “monolithic” Victorian ego was, in her eyes, something to be celebrated, for it corresponded to liberation from the “ill-fitting vestments” of nineteenth-century prose, with its conventional structures of plot, character, and “plausibility” tailor-made to construct or misrepresent reality and falsify the “myriad impressions” of the human psyche. (Thurston 2008, 175)

A close comparison between the Pessoaan and the Tennysonian poems, dedicated to Ulysses, actually makes it apparent that one life is not enough. The imaginary trips of the Greek hero, in both cases, does not simply expose the voyage of life, but the necessity of splintering oneself in order to know in a multiple way. For this reason, in Tennyson’s poem Ulysses becomes significantly a name: «I am become a name/for always roaming with a hungry heart» and, respectively, in the Pessoaan one is «*o nada que é tudo*». Thus conceived, the Homeric character becomes the paradigm of the literary possibilities, the potential container of all allegorical significations. Modern since his creation, Ulysses becomes an image of the late-Romantic and modernist acknowledged poet, embodying his former Homeric epithet *polutropos*, i.e., multiform, capable of being everything and nothing as in the *Odyssey*’s Cyclope episode. In this way, Ulysses represents more broadly the polymorphism of myth, which due to its inborn metamorphic nature, is able to revitalize infinite possibilities of re-semanticizations e rewritings. As Michael Hamburger has contended:

The problem of multiple personality became most acute in those poets to whom tradition was not something given and self-evident—as to the majority of modern Spanish and Greek poets—but something to be selected from the *musée imaginaire* of literary history, to be renovated and restored. (Hamburger 1969, 114)

In *The Ulysses Theme. A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero*, W. B. Stanford acutely implies that Tennyson's *Ulysses* reproduces the voices of the five poets and literary traditions it alludes to. According to the critic, the five stanzas represent five different voices, that is, respectively, that of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Byron's *Child Harold*, and Tennyson's respectively. Interestingly, the *dramatis personae* structuring seems to be the emblematic forerunner of the Pessoaan deflagration of the Self into the heteronymic *genesis*. However, it is in *Mensagem's* poem dedicated to Dom Fernando Infante de Portugal that the Odyssean characterization is transposed. Significantly, Ulysses' prerogatives are bestowed on Dom Fernando's figure. It is especially in the madness for a Beyond that this character resembles to the Greek hero: «And this fever of Beyond, which consumes/ Me, and this will to greatness are His name/ In me, deep in, vibrating» (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 2007, 37) Besides the Odyssean transposition, the overlapping of this character with Ulysses allows an almost direct comparison and identification with the proliferation of the Self, or rather, the Soul. In this sense, chivalric heroism is equivalent to the poetic one in name of the nation.

Dom Fernando could actually be interpreted as the embryonic stage of both Pessoaan *dramatis persona* and *Mensagem's* overall purpose that could be reassumed in Helder Macedo's forward to *Mensagem's* English edition: «[...] since the multifaced poem may be understood as the convergence between a *quest* (though a broadly spiritual one, perhaps, rather than religious) and the poet's dramatization of self through the metaphor of nationhood» (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 7) .This statement is backed by a significant poem by Pessoa "ele mesmo" entitled *Navegar é preciso*. In this poem the similitude between

navigation and creation results quite clear, – the necessary abjection of the Self in search of a further and wider aim:

*Cada vez mais ponho da essência animica do meu sangue  
O proposito impessoal de engrandecer a pátria e contribuir  
Para a evolução da humanidade.*

*É a forma que em mim tomou o misticismo da nossa Raça.* (Pessoa, Cartas de Fernando Pessoa a Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues. 1985, 45)

What's crucial about this statement is the fundamental willingness of Self to multiply himself in order to reproduce an ideal, to illuminate the coincidence between Ideal and Reality and, as Badiou would implies, to replace the intensity of the past maritime enterprises with the utmost complex construction of the Self. Similarly, the French philosopher contends that both the heteronymic dynamic and the “idealization” of nationhood pertains to the Pessoaan conceptualization and identification of singularity and universality, i.e., of the Self and the (ideal) whole. Thus, in *Mensagem* Pessoa just like Plato:

*[...] veut fixer idéalement l'organisation et la légitimité d'une cité grecque universalisable, déterminée quoique inexistante, de même Pessoa veut poétiquement susciter l'idée précise d'un Portugal simultanément singulier (par le reprise en blason de son histoire) et universel (par l'annonce de sa capacité idéale à être le nom d'un «cinquième Empire»). (Badiou 1998, 72)*

Nevertheless, King Sebastian's characterization owes much to the myth and the figure of Romantic heroes. Pessoa tinges the national myth with tragic overtones that recall the classical tragic heroes of the late-Romanticism. Young, led by an inborn and supernatural predisposition for knowledge and maritime enterprise, Sebastian perfectly fits with the Romantic imaginary considering



even his final and dramatic defeat. He does perish in the name of the nation – or rather of the ideal of the nation – following that mad heroism that sends us back to a Romanticized Ulysses, as well as a heir of the chivalric tradition similar to that represented by the Pre-Raphaelites and Byron. Although in *Mensagem* characters are just sketched and briefly outlined, Sebastian stands out because of his “human” characterization and identification with the role and the figure of the poet. Sebastian is, in fact, the only character who lacks a specific historical characterization while, on the other hand, is considered as a source of inspiration both for literature and for national history. His madness results, therefore, as a necessary ingredient of poetry and heroism leading us to the final identification of Sebastião and Fernando Pessoa himself, in the *Avisos*, which is the concluding section of the work. In this way, Sebastian becomes an emblem and a means through which Pessoa is able to convey national and universal values, being at the mean time, a national and universal, literary and historical image. It is once again in the epic mode – rather than in the epic genre – that the possibility of the unification between the universal and the particular could be found, as Badiou implies. The epic mode is, in fact, able to transpose the content and convey the message, translating it from the literary into the historical context. This is particularly true in relation to modern epic which can never be really considered detached from its historical concern: «*Dans le modèle épique moderne, don't le récit se focalize sur la dimension mythique de la matière épique et la conséquente structure qui va du plan marveillaux au plan historique, la fonction structurante de l'instance lyrique est reconnue comme épique*» (Da Silva 2010, 219).

### 3.6.1. Myth and Utopia Within the Re-Writing of Modernist Epic

The lyrical and dramatic construction of Tennyson's *Ulysses* does not imply a total rejection of the epic tension. The Greek hero is not, in fact, aloof from his homeland. Precisely in the first and the last part of the poem, the Homeric character is defined as the king of a depressed land who tries to encourage knowledge and, consequently, a civic rebirth. There's a profound correspondence between the king's old age and the aging of the country, which does not turn into a nihilistic withdrawal in intimate poetry, but into the possibilities which reside in this desolated condition. The final verses of the poem contain an invocation of heroism in order to re-appraise the original nature of the country:

We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (Tennyson, Poems 1851,  
33)

Tennyson's historical commitment to the British social condition of his times, even if obscured by his rewritings of classic archetypes of literature, reveals a profound affliction with the role of the poet itself in the dawning age of modernity and positivism. *The Lady of Shylott* actually testifies a deep analysis of the exiled artist who is forced to the margin of his land, but the stirring verses of his *Ulysses* show a tendency that will find a more complete fulfillment in his *Idylls of the King*. The restoration of the old Arthurian lore, in the score of Malory's *Morte d'Artur*, is shaped by a longing for a new ideal country: «The reign of Arthur as depicted by Tennyson is a sort of poetical Utopia, as unreal

and visionary as that of More» (Littledale 2007, 11). The retrieval of the Celtic lore had permitted Tennyson to rediscover the never-ending enchantment it wielded upon the English people spurring the national imagery. In Tennyson's *Idylls*, King Arthur actually represents the values of the English man, his mighty adventures and the egalitarian values of the Round Table makes of him a balanced hero, a hero of civilization (as the Celtic root of the word itself explains) and Christianity represented by the renewal of the Grail theme. Paradigmatically, Fernando Pessoa tries to discover the heterodox Portuguese tradition of the Arthurian legend on the Iberian peninsula to coincide with the Cistercian Order (and thus with the spread of Templars). The heterodox component of the Portuguese translation was precisely the Joachimit presence which would eventually permeate Sebastianist tradition. One of the reasons why it is possible to make a comparison between the Tennysonian and the Pessoaan rewritings of the Arthurian tradition, is their respective enhancement of the chivalric element, which for *Mensagem* is symptomatic of a pre-existing prerogative of the Portuguese translation and re-elaboration of the Arthurian literature:

*Uma das características mais interessantes da Demanda portuguesa, e por conseguinte do PVRG, dentro do contexto narrativo e ideológico da lenda arturiana, é a redução do elemento maravilhoso em face do puramente cavaleiresco. Não que isto queira dizer que o clima religioso seja reduzido à categoria de detalhe sem importância pois, analogamente ao que acontece nas versões anteriores, é o início da Demanda que vem assinalar a queda iminente da sociedade arturiana e dos ideais cortesãos que ela representa<sup>125</sup>. (Brunetti 1974, 91)*

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<sup>125</sup> [«One of the most interesting prerogatives of the Portuguese Quest and, consequently, of the PVRG, within the narrative and ideological context of the Arthurian legend, is the retrenchment of the marvelous element in favor of a purely chivalric characterization. This is not to say that the religious climate is thus reduced merely to an irrelevant detail as, similarly to what happens with the previous versions, it is the *incipit* of the *Demanda* that witnesses the imminent fall of the Arthurian society and of the courtly ideals that it epitomizes»]. (my translation)

On the other hand, the Tennysonian influence on Pessoaan epic rewriting is wide and multifaceted as could be seen immediately by focusing on the initial epigraph, which leaves no doubt about the connection between the two works. The original epigraph of the very first edition of the *Idylls* read: “*mens agitat molem et magno se corpora miscet*” which was eventually changed for “This immense and glorious work of fine intelligence”. These verses reveal unequivocally the fundamental unifying theme, i.e., that of the combination of utopia and literature. The epic’s continuity, quite often put under question by critics, is actually obtained by a latent but strong thematic homogeneity that is reflected in *Mensagem* as well. The articulation of the various episodes, just like the architectural structure of the Pessoaan work, in fact, finds a further and linear cohesion in the knowledge effort and path allegorized by the search for Grail. Obviously, the mythical pattern, in which the Arthurian legend is revised, could only be linked to D. Sebastião, whose departure and awaited return generated the Lusitanian *waste land*. If Sebastianism is the national myth *par excellence*, the epic search for genealogy in the Arthurian saga seems to justify its predestination to a luminous future and the unjust geographical and cultural marginalization of this land. This noble descent is demonstrated by the juxtaposition of many characters linked to Grail symbolism, as in the poems dedicated to D. Affonso de Henriques and to D. Philipa who addressed with the epithet «*princeza do Santo Graal*»; D. Fernando is the one who received from God the sword to wage the Holy War: «*Deu-me Deus o seu gládio, porque eu faça/ A sua santa guerra*<sup>126</sup>»(Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 35); Nun’Alvares, instead, received his sword from King Arthur himself: «*Mas que espada é que, erguida,/ Faz esse halo no céu?/ E’ Excalibur, a ungida,/ Que o rei Arthur te*

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<sup>126</sup> [«God has given me His sword, I am to fight»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 37)

*deu*<sup>127</sup>(*ibidem*, 35)». In the poem titled *O Desejado*, the Grail appears as the symbol of unity in a world divided by the outburst of modernity. In this poem, Pessoa invokes the return of King Sebastian and his identification both with King Arthur and Galahad. The first and the last quatrain, in fact, are addressed to an Arthur-Sebastião, while the central one to a hypothetical Sebastião-Galahad:

*Onde quer que, entre sombras e dizeres,  
Jazas, remoto, sente-te sonhado,  
E ergue-te do fundo de não-seres  
Para teu novo fado!*

*Vem, Galaaz com patria, erguer de novo,  
Mas já no auge da suprema prova,  
A alma penitente do teu povo  
À Eucharistia Nova.*

*Mestre da Paz, ergue teu gladio unguido,  
Excalibur do Fim, em geito tal  
Que sua Luz ao mundo dividido  
Revele o Santo Gral!*<sup>128</sup> (*ibidem*,84)

It seems quite significant that in this context Pessoa specifies “*Galahad com pátria*”. According to *Mensagem*’s author the *quest* or the personal adventure of a knight is not pivotal: the deeds of a hero find a univocal sense only if conceived within the national parabola, thus becoming the imagine of the aspirations of an entire country. On the other hand, in the text *The Holy Grail* by A. E. Waite which was present in the Pessoaan library, there’s the clue for a possible interpretation of this verse. The author of this text actually informs us about a translation of the *Quest of Galahad*:

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<sup>127</sup> «But what sword is it, flaunted,/Makes this halo in the aether?/Excalibur, the anointed,/Given you by King Arthur?» (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 45)

<sup>128</sup> [«Wherever, among shades and words, you are lying/Withdrawn, feel yourself being dreamed! Stand!/Lift yourself from the abyss of non-being/To your new destiny//Come, patriot Galahad, and upward, upward/–But on the height, now, of the supreme test–/Lift the purged penitent soul of your people/To the New Eucharist./Master of Peace, lift your anointed sword,/Excalibur of the End; make without fail/Its blade of Light to the divided world/Reveal the Holy Grail!»] (*ibidem*, 85)

Among Portuguese texts, the National Library of Vienna has a fifteenth century manuscript entitled HISTORIA DOS CAVALLEIROS DA MESSA REDONDA ET DA DEMANDA DO SANTO GRAAL. It was partly printed by Carl von Reinhardstoetter in 1887: a complete edition has been long promised and expected. It is held to be the pseudo Borron Quest indisputably. There is also a sixteenth-century Lisbon manuscript, referred in the text to 1313 and containing a Portuguese version of LIVRO DE JOSEP ABARAMATIA. (Waite 1933, 249-50)

These pieces of information must have been particularly useful to the Portuguese poet who foresaw the evidence of an Arthurian tradition in the Portuguese ambit as well as a historical legitimation in the research of a new Lusitanian identity<sup>129</sup>. It is especially in the figure of Galahad that all the mythmakings in relation to the Grail is focused as he is the character-witness to the whole British tradition on the Iberian island:

It remains to be noted otherwise that the witness of the Holy Grail which reached the Spanish Peninsula was of Galahad and not another. (Waite 1933, 250)

As also Almir de Campos Brunetti underlines in *A Lenda so Santo Graal No Contexto Heterodoxo Português*, it is especially in relation to Galahad that the Portuguese rewriting concentrates its attention on giving much more roundness to a stereotyped and flat character:

*Eis porque é muito mais aceitável falar-se de uma tentativa de «humanização» de seus personagens, até mesmo com relação à Galaaz, personagem pré-fabricado e sem profundidade psicológica, a quem o redactor do PVRG tenta transformar em pessoa fazendo-o, subtilmente, pecar, e cuja transformação não foi mais radical porque qualquer tentativa nesse sentido implicaria na composição de um novo romance<sup>130</sup>. (Brunetti 1974, 91)*

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<sup>129</sup> «A Quest of Galahad was represented now by a Portuguese translation which is held to be fairly close». (Waite 1933, 32)

<sup>130</sup> [«That is why it is more acceptable to speak about an effort of “humanization” of his character, also in relation to a connoted character such as Galaaz who lacks of any psychological depth, and that the PVRG’s writer tries to transform into a person making of him a subtly

This affiliation with the Arthurian legend recurs also in the epithet which defines Dona Philipa de Lancastre “*princeza do Santo Graal*” virtually joined the Breton subject-matter because of her marriage with D. João I. Yet, this fusion also signifies the conflation of the chivalrous material (with its myths and its values) and the heterodox tradition of which the Avis dynasty were the founders. Hence, they represent the union of the local tradition with the Arthurian lore under the *aegis* of the Holy Grail. Nevertheless, this conflation contains a further ideological meaning to Pessoa: the unification of the female and male element, which was divided for too long and which constitute the underpinning of the Fifth Empire, as the Poet implies in the *Portugal, Sebastianismo e Quinto Império*:

[...] *um imperialism andrógino, reunidor das qualidades masculinas e femininas: imperialismo que seja cheio de todas as subtilezas do domínio feminino e de todas as forças e estruturas do domínio masculino*<sup>131</sup>. (Pessoa, *Portugal, Sebastianismo e Quinto Império* 1986, 76)

The Arthurian material appears at strategic points of the work and, especially, with regard to the most significant characters of Portuguese history, with a specific emphasis on those linked to Portugal’s predestination to the Fifth Empire. It is therefore not accidental that the queen is defined as “*humano ventre do império*” and “*madrinha de Portugal*” represented in history as having given life to what has been called the “illustrious generation”.

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sinner, and whose transformation was never too radical as a choice on this direction would have implied the writing of another novel»]. (my translation)

<sup>131</sup> [« (...) an androgynous empire, able to reunite the masculine and the feminine qualities: imperialism filled with the keenness of the female dominion and all the strength and structures of the male one»]. (my translation)

Furthermore, under the Grail's sign the Avis dynasty will be consecrated to a superior destiny objectivated by the Sebastian enterprise. In the wake of such a predestination, Nun'Alvares could not be defined as anything as the direct heir of King Arthur because, according to the local legend, he took as an example Galahad's valor and chastity. The resumption of the relation with the Breton material permits Pessoa to establish a more profound link between a mythical and founding past and a real but uncertain present: «*Que jaz no abismo sob o mar que se ergue?/ Nós, Portugal, o poder ser*»(Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 100). The originality of this operation consists above all of the diffusion of this material trying to fill the chronic emptiness of the Portuguese present: the desire is the dream the Poet tries to transmit to his people. In this sense, the country needs to aspire to the Holy Grail, that is, needs a subject who fulfills this yearning – as Galahad does – transforming himself into the image of a further aspiration: that of an entire people who seems to identify themselves with the “Atlantic soul” which «*se exalta/ E entorna*» (*ibidem*, 71). This way, Pessoa rewrites Sebastianism in the light of the Arthurian legend as well as in a national key trying to obtain the most profound level of identification. Historically, the Arthurian material was diffused in Portugal around the XIII th century by those French noblemen who came to the Iberian peninsula during the wars against the Arab occupation. Thus, it started melting with Joachimism and Judaic messianism. Afterwards, João de Barros (1496–1570) with his *Cronica do Imperador Clarimundo* gave life to the Portuguese version of the Arthurian cycle. Following what has already been said about the Romantic influence on Pessoa's poetic, especially in relation to the conception of a new kind of imperialism, Tennyson must be named among the pivotal inspirers of *Mensagem*. A comparative perspective actually shows many points of similarity,



both of structural and ideological order as for instance, the starting point in the research for a new epic model and, on the other hand, the Holy Grail *quest* as the pursuit of a new and ideal political situation.

### **3.6.2.From Idylls to Epylls: Writing Stories, Telling History**

The idyllic structuring of *The Idylls of the King* permits Tennyson to unify the plot of many episodes from the *romance* tradition, succeeding in collecting them all within the common theme of the Arthurian cycle. Furthermore, the idyll appears particularly appropriate for the central theme: the Author alternates the character's dalliance – lingering on the landscape descriptions which objectivate the states of mind – with the knightly adventures. This helps in defining the traits of that happy and by now lost reign which inspired, in Tennyson's work, the label of "entertaining literature". The idyllic structure fosters a certain narrative ductility: the author, in fact, often proceeds by insistent repetitions (as in the case of *The Passing of Arthur*) which succeed in reaching a close unity: small idylls within the bigger one that contains them and therefore allows Tennyson to privilege some episodes taken from tradition (and, especially taken from his great model, *La morte d'Artur* by Malory). The work that Tennyson creates could be interpreted, then, as the starting point of the renovation process of modern epic, for what concerns structure and contents. Probably, the English poet realized that just from the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the great epic poem did not exert an influence (we're in fact in the novel era) and opted for a further episode fragmentation, which allows the modern reader to focus his attention on single episodes (and thus not necessarily on the whole poem):

From its inception among the later classical poets the idyll was a self-consciously belated genre. Seeking perfection at a time when grandeur no longer seemed to lie within a modern writer's scope, the idyllist of Alexandria dwelt on lesser episodes from saga and heroic poetry; and they condensed and refigured the rhetorical devices of the epic in the interest of a heightened precision of form, an interest that has always served artistic latecomers, in English poetry Jonson, Pope, Pound as well as Tennyson) as a prominent compensation for the shortage of matter. (Tucker 1988, 290)

The compositional conception of the *Idylls* proceeds with a kind of juxtaposition: a first idyll, titled "*Morte d'Arthur*" (subsequently incorporated in *The Passing of Arthur*) was published in 1842. In 1852 a collection of four idylls entitled *Idylls of the King* appeared for the first time: *Enid* which will be extended into *The marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid*, *Nimue* which will constitute the future core of *Merlin and Vivienne*, *Elaine and Guinevere*. Ten years later, another collection appeared: *The Holy Grail and other Poems* that gathered *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettare* and *The Passing of Arthur*. A few years later were issued singularly *The Last Tournament* (1871) e *Gareth and Lynette* (1872) till the final edition of the *Idylls of the King* dating back to 1885 that also contained *Balin e Balan*. The long composing effort of the *Idylls* (1842- 1885) seems, therefore, to represent this "restructuring" of the epic's composition: the first texts, in fact, follow the Malory's model while the most recent ones can be represented with this revision:

But even at this stage he was not content merely to "remodel models", and recognized that only the finding of a modern significance in the Arthurian material would redeem his poem "from the charge of nothingness". It seems evident, however, that he could see at this time no satisfactory way of continuing the epic treatment, and his next step was to abandon the "epyllion" for the idylls. (Priestly 1973, 240)

The compositional archeology of the work envisaged a subdivision into two blocs: the romantic one of the first edition and the epic and ideological of the second, which focused on *The Holy Grail*, whose assembly showed the necessity for a new genre able to harmonize both of them. Consequently, Tennyson probably uses an old term – ‘idyll’ – with a new acceptation. As his son Hallam witnessed, during the elaboration of the *Idylls*, Tennyson was doubtful whether to use epic or drama and, for this reason, the Tennysonian critic F.E.L. Priestly tends to interpret the idyll’s solution as mainly dramatic:

The “three-act” pattern, with four idylls to each ‘act’ is there indeed, but it is by no means the only pattern.[...] The wide range of choice open to Tennyson through the use of the loosely defined “idyll” form allows him to create a dramatic parable of enormous variety, richness and complexity, while retaining the strong and relatively simple shape of tragedy. (Priestly 1973, 136)

The dramatic structure proposed by Priestly likely refers to the contents of the work. The Arthurian path and the character himself, who tries to fight the soul’s dissolution and conquer the carnal temptations, recalls the Titanism-like fate of tragic and this was confirmed by the publication in 1842 of a pamphlet entitled “The Epic”. The epic swerve seems in fact to become manifest in the composition of *Morte d’Arthur* through which Tennyson starts conveying a deeper interest in cultural transmission and involvement. If, in fact, the former *Idylls* tend to frame themselves within an architecture of allusiveness towards tradition, trying to elide the traces of past (literary) tradition, the willingness to reshape the Arthurian lore shows a new path in the Tennysonian poetics. By the same token, Tennyson tackling a retrenched epic was also explored in the

writing of *Oenone*, where the Victorian poet downsizes an entire Homeric episode in two hundred and sixty four verses. In this last work in particular, Tennyson explores the possibilities of a renovated application of miniature epic following the pattern of classical frames from Theocritus and Ovid. Significantly, in *Oenone* Tennyson matches and blends two classical genres in which Theocritus is almost representative, i.e., the *edyllion* (“small picture”) and the *epyllion* (“small epic”). By fusing these two genres, Tennyson gives vent to a new genre, which will be considered highly by the modern pattern of epic poetry. The symbolist allusiveness and especially the possibility of containing both structurally and thematically different literary traditions<sup>132</sup> and numerous topics will be, in fact, re-written and re-shaped by modernity together with its encompassing of small scale genres, multiple citations and referees:

But within the miniature epic as exemplified by Theocritus and in the tradition of the symbolist poets of whom he was a conspicuous forerunner, Tennyson wished to be inexhaustibly suggestive. Once the Christian myth is released in the reader’s imagination as an analogical counterpoint to poem’s fiction, the suggestive correspondences multiply: heavenly discord; [...] (Buckler 1980, 99)

Tennyson uses quite often the persistent repetition of the epic tradition and maintains a codex and a terminology which refer to the chivalry world. However, his sharpest innovation is that of focusing on the human and psychological probe of the characters. Precisely this descriptive predominance in the idylls has been interpreted as conflicting with the narrative requirements

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<sup>132</sup> «Tennyson further enriches the classical texture of the poem in the allusive and recondite style of Homer and Virgil, Aeschylus, Lucretius, and Horace. At this stage of career, Tennyson aligned himself with the “small-scale-and-high-polish school of poetry” of which Theocritus was the luminous ancient model and with whom Tennyson clearly identified». (Buckler 1980, 92)

of the epic genre. One of the most convicted advocates of this position was T.S. Eliot who, reviewing *In Memoriam* writes:

The *Idylls of the King* have merits and defects similar to those of *The Princess*. An idyll is a 'short poem descriptive of some picturesque scene or incident'; in choosing the name Tennyson perhaps showed an appreciation of his limitations. For his poems are always descriptive, and always picturesque; they are never really narrative. The *Idylls of the King* are no different in kind from some of his early poems; the *Morte d'Arthur* is in fact an early poem. (Eliot 1962, 331)

And again:

We can swallow the most antipathetic doctrines if we are given an exciting narrative. But for narrative Tennyson had no gift at all. For a static poem, and a moving poem, on the same subject, you have only to compare his Ulysses with the condensed and intensely exciting narrative of that hero in the XXVI Canto of Dante's *Inferno*. Dante is telling a story. Tennyson is only stating an elegiac mood. The very greatest poets set before you real men talking, carry you on in real events moving. Tennyson could not tell a story and failed: it is rather that an idyll protracted to such length becomes unbearable. (*ibidem*)

If Tennyson was never able to tell a story, by contrast, Pessoa seems to take advantage of this Tennyson's limit in order to tell History. It would be possible to state, actually, that Pessoa makes a subsequent step further in retrenching the epic structure, fragmenting it into a constellation of *epylls*, in the classic sense of "epyllion", i.e., 'small epos' (and Pessoa certainly used to know the dimensions and the prerogatives of the classical genres, as it is apparent from the work of his heteronyms Caeiro and Reis). Of course this retrenchment involves the text both from a micro and a macro structural point of view: it includes a flat chronological articulation, a profound focalization on the hermetic possibilities of the poetic word and an allegorical subdivision of the content of the work.

Pessoa, in fact, contrarily to Eliot, seems to favor this static – and consequently allegorical – structuring of the *Idylls*: the description of the characters by means of the association of images which reflect different states of mind or key-objects which identity of a character. And it is the same for the characters of *Mensagem*, typified by a few traits like the allegorical juxtaposition of the spear, the sword and the Grail vessel itself. Pessoa avails himself of this new way of conceiving epic in order to conflate in his epylls the human and symbolic history of the evocative portraits of Portuguese history. Another distinctive trait of Tennyson’s epic poetry broadly recognized by the critique—and certainly revised by Pessoa – is the representation of the correspondence between the state of minds of the characters and the landscape:

*Nel processo di oggettivazione già osservato, l'io interiore trova in particolare un correlativo nello spazio circostante. Si assiste spesso a un fondersi reciproco di essere umano e paesaggio, che è uno dei tratti distintivi e insuperabili della poesia di Tennyson—[...].*<sup>133</sup>  
(Rusticali 2004, 204)

Tennyson’s influence reveals itself particularly in relation to the need to strengthen a series of episodes – historical episodes in the case of *Mensagem* – with the bond of the Arthurian material that Pessoa feels functional, partly because of the analogy with the Sebastianist myth and history and partly because what they contain traditionally. If Tennyson’s *Idylls* are «[...] a collection of parables that form one parable, since each knight has a different experience in the quest, and each experience has its own meaning» (Priestly 1973, 131), *Mensagem* as well could be interpreted as the history of a series of

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<sup>133</sup> [«Within the process of objectification already noticed, the inner I find, in particular, a correlative in the surroundings. We often assist to a reciprocal intermeshing of human and landscape, which is one of the distinctive and insuperable traits of Tennyson’s poetry»].(my translation)

knights who tried to reach their Fifth Empire, represented by the Lusitanian Grail.

### **3.6.3. *Mensagem* and the Grail Literary Tradition**

Tennyson's influence on the Pessoaan work was most probably exercised through the mediation the work of A. E. Waite just cited before. In *The Holy Grail: Its Legends and Its Symbolisms*, in fact, by analyzing the tradition linked to the Grail, the author implies that the Arthurian legend could be subdivided into three periods: the romantic, the archeological, and the poetic. Tennyson is the most representative exponent of the last tendency, although what the English poet left unfinished with his *Idylls* would need to be continued by another poet:

In the case of Tennyson it added that elevated emotion which belongs essentially to the Spirit of Romance, and this saved English literature during the second half of the nineteenth century. But taking the work at its highest; it may still be that the Grail Legend must wait to receive its treatment more fully by some poet who has to come. The literary form assumed by the Grail IDYLLS OF THE KING – a tale within a tale twice-told-leaves something to be desired. (Waite 1933, 22)

This invitation must have looked particularly captivating for Pessoa who, in parallel to the composition of *Mensagem* proclaiming himself as the Supra-Camões to come. Aesthetic and ideological motivations seem to match his willingness to give life to a new epic able to highlight the renewed Lusitanian epic tradition. By the same token, Waite names Portuguese literature among those literatures which gave their contribution to the Grail literary tradition. Pessoa must have perceived the Victorian poet as essential in the poetic and

genre canon, for what concerns both the narrative material as well as the structure and must have foreseen the weight of Tennyson's epic innovation.

Tennyson is likely to have imagined his epic restructuring starting precisely with the *Mobinogion* and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. In this sense, the *Idylls* must be framed within the renewal of medieval studies during the core period of Romanticism and the English poet brought them to further restoration in relation to the re-elaboration of their contents. Namely, while Tennyson was writing his *Idylls* many other English writers were publishing works on the same subject: George Macdonald published the *Sangreal* in 1863, while on the next year Hawker issues *The Quest of the Sangraal*, and in 1868 Thomas Westwood brought out *The Quest of Sancgreall*. The passage from the initial to the later *nucleus* of his work mirrors a parallel and synchronous ideological revision. Some critics glimpsed in this change a further and deeper process of dissolution of the Victorian beliefs, which had already started with *In Memoriam* and *Maud*. Certainly, Tennyson adds a personal note to his elaborated epic symphony which resound with the decomposing Victorian values with an ideological disdain:

He was more than ever obsessed by the thought that the world was standing on the brink of revolution such as had never been seen before – 'a last dim battle in the west' which, if it came, would be worldwide. 'When I see society vicious and the poor starving in the great cities', he said, 'I feel that it is a mighty wave of evil passing over the world, but there will be yet some new and strange development which I shall not live to see ... you must not be surprised at anything that comes to pass in the next fifty years. All ages are ages of transition, but this is an awful moment of transition...I tried with my *Idylls* to teach men the need of the ideal but I feel sometimes as my life had been a very useless life. (Tennyson 1949, 490-1)



The statement confirms the didactic goal of his work, strongly underlined, at the mean time, by the extensive and variegated use of allegory in the place of the parabola he used initially:

His approach to the Arthurian material had always had in it an 'allegorical drift', or, as he later said, 'perhaps rather a parabolic drift'. He had never intended to 're-model models'. The attraction of the story of Arthur was not simply that it was romantique, picturesque, and dramatic; it also held meanings of universal significance for man and society. And universal meanings are also contemporary; Arthur's story had things to say to Tennyson's own age, as to all ages. His substitution of 'parabolic' for 'allegorical' reveals something of how this conception developed. (Priestly 1973, 128)

Pessoa, in fact, seems to have been fascinated by the central ideal of Tennyson's work: the yearning, the nostalgia, and the dream of a perfect reign, whose pivots are traditionally rooted in England itself and which seem to risk to be displaced by the positivist outburst out during the second half of the XIX th century: «if some Romantics wish to evade political reality through their art, as recent theories of Romantic ideology would suggest, that desire is mediated for most of them by a strong consciousness of the inextricable relation between the histories of art and politics» (Kucich 1995, 244-5).

The *Idylls of the King* are actually dedicated to the Queen Victoria's prince consort, Albert, who arises as the new King Arthur, as exemplifies the initial dedication of the work:

These to His Memory-since he held them dear,  
Perchance as finding there unconsciously  
Some image of himself-I dedicate,  
I dedicate,I consacrate with tears-  
These Idylls. (Tennyson, *Idylls of the King* 1966, 166)

But, beyond this *captatio benevolentiae*, the revision of the Arthurian legend in Tennyson's work appears as anything but entertainment literature. On the contrary, it is inspired and motivated by the fear generated by the decay of his time. The contrast between heroism and anti-heroism expresses the contradictions of the late years of the XIX th century, which were precariously balanced between the old and the new. In the same way, Fernando Pessoa tries to refer back to his times, aiming to demonstrate that past can still be resurrected by the possible return of King Sebastian, despite the omen of decadence brought by the Salazar's dictatorship.

## Chapter 4

# Between the Greeks and the Moderns: Epigraphs, Epigrams, Epitaphs, and Fragments

### 4.1.A fragmented wholeness.

It is by now an undeniable truth that Fernando Pessoa's fortune, both in Portugal and abroad, is marked by and stemmed from a very common attitude or habit of issuing and releasing his poetry in small doses. The new anthological editions which appear on bookshop shelves, seldom mainly contain real *summae* of Pessoaan quotations or extracts from organic works of his. Surfing the Net, it is possible to realize that quotations from Pessoa are overwhelmingly common and numerous, even on sites which are not even vaguely committed to poetry or literature. As a result, his immense production results, thus, reduced to brief aphorisms, intriguing quotations and amputated verses. This state of art is partly due to some inborn prerogatives of Pessoa's works themselves. After all, Pessoa left his immense creation without giving a coherent and straightforward organization. Even the publishing or organizational resolves he drew up during his life are not reliable as he invariably disavowed them (*The Book of Disquiet* perhaps represents, in this ambit, a quite representative case). On the other hand, this diffusion of small doses is also palpable tackling those works which were organically completed by Pessoa himself, as for instance *Mensagem*. Of course, some of *Mensagem*'s compositions started circulating singularly in reviews before the piece's complete publication even though the

work's texturing solidity results unassailable. The stylistic outline of Pessoa's poetry should be explored then, to recognize, beyond his taste for brief forms, the tendency of characterizing his poetry with paradoxical aphorisms, consequently adhering to the classical sense for moral epigrams. Even so, it is in the incisiveness and self-sufficiency of each verse that his bent for fragmentary diffusion is detectable. Leafing through the pages of Pessoa's poetry, it is easy to single out countless potential quotations, fascinating conundrums and nearly oracular affirmations. Somehow, the graphicness that distinguishes Pessoa's verse is nothing but the volition of his conscious or unconscious strategy to ward off his fear for non-celebrity, or rather, his "Erostratic" sake for immortality. Every verse could actually be put on a memorial stone as representative of his unmistakable poetic passage. His hermetic style and the confusion fed by himself within the understanding of his work, both disclose quite a lot about his willingness to be remembered rather than understood. On the other hand, fragmentation should not be taken as an oversimplified hallmark of a poetic of non-finished. Pessoa's approach to fragment is not just a facile impossibility of completing his work<sup>134</sup> but, more appropriately, a keen poetic research that tracks its roots back from his very early education and is evident during his whole life.

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<sup>134</sup> Carla Gago in "*Interstícios – o fragmento em Fernando Pessoa*" contends that the impossibility of a completion represents one of the most representative idiosyncrasies of Pessoa's *poiesis*: «*Para além da pulsão teórica, inerente ao poeta, o que se ouve aqui é uma tentativa de justificação para o que geralmente é referido como uma das maiores idiosyncrasias da poiesis pessoana: a incapacidade de conclusão. Pessoa começa por explicar o porquê da inconclusão dos seus escritos a partir da inevitabilidade da opção pelos 'novos pensamentos', pelas 'associações de ideias extraordinárias', perpassando con tudo, por este recho, uma profunda angústia pelo que ele proprio considera também falta de capacidade*». (Gago 2007, 229) [«Beyond the theoretical drive, for what concerns the poet, what it is at issue is the dint of a justification for what generally is referred as one of the major idiosyncrasies of the Pessoaan *poiesis*, i.e., the incapacity of achieving a conclusion. Pessoa explains the reason of the non-conclusion of his writings from the unavoidable of the option of 'new thoughts', of 'the connection of extraordinary ideas', overtaking this all, a deep anguish generated by what he considers as a lack of capacity»]. (my translation)

The fragmentation that identifies Pessoa's sense of creation, in fact, is also exasperated by the heteronymic splintering which triggers further confusion approaching Fernando Pessoa's production. As I am going to show in this chapter, it is worthy to illustrate that the poetic of fragmentation along with the splintering of the Self is the output of Pessoa's long-life concern with literature intended as indivisible from its theoretical speculation. The importance of considering these two features together makes sense of the Pessoan role, not only within the renewal of Portuguese modern poetry but, additionally, conceiving it as an integral part of European poetry. As Luciana Stegagno Picchio has actually implied:

*La scrittura per frammenti appartiene comunque all'epoca della temperie modernista. "Il frammento", dirà Ungaretti, "è un segmento, con un abisso a monte e un abisso a valle". Ma per Pessoa era piuttosto la rivelazione di una natura che il prodotto di un'estetica, un modo di tendere a quell' "infinito" cui si volgevano in quegli stessi anni, bergsonianamente, anche le avanguardie, a cominciare dai futuristi: "I miei scritti sono tutti rimasti incompiuti", dirà più tardi, "perché ogni volta si sono frapposti nuovi, straordinari pensieri, irrefutabili associazioni di idee il cui termine era l'infinito"<sup>135</sup>. (Stegagno Picchio 2004, 168)*

According to the headword "*fragmentação*" (fragmentation) in the recently released *Dicionário de Fernando Pessoa e do Modernismo Português*, there are three kinds of fragmentation in relation to Pessoa's writings and aesthetics. Firstly, fragment is defined according to the meaning given by Schlegel, as a literary genre, a small work of art filled with suggestive expressiveness. Secondly, fragment can be envisaged as a lost part from an

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<sup>135</sup> [«Fragmented writings belong, anyway, to the age of modernist climate. "Fragment", Ungaretti asserts, "is a segment, with an abyss above and an abyss below". But according to Pessoa, it was rather the revelation of a way of being than the output of an aesthetics, a way of tending to that "Infinite" to which, within the same years, also the avant-gardes were turning to, in a Bergsonian manner, starting from the futurists: "My writings are all unfinished", he will state later, "as every time new ones have interposed, extraordinary thoughts, irrefutable associations of ideas whose end coincided with infinite"]. (my translation)

achieved or missed totality, as *The Book of Disquiet* clearly testifies. Thirdly, fragment can be interpreted, at a more philosophical level according to Caetano's poetry and thought. In the end, the whole three meanings could be alleged to the aesthetic dominion of Romanticism. The taste for brief forms could actually be inscribed within the Romantic predisposition for the fragment, intended as a self-sufficient and round form of poetic or philosophical expression<sup>136</sup>. The appreciation of fragmented poetry can actually be detected as the epitome of the crucial late Romantic ideal of perfection both for its inclination for paradox and ambiguity and for its archaic fascination. The Pessoaan penchant for aphorism and epitaphs is also fed by his historical and poetical belonging to Anglo-American Modernism that revitalizes and restores old forms and contents making of short genres its elective and most representative literary forms. Short form does express a hermetic completeness that also contemplates a creative as well as an interpretative subtlety and acuteness. Modernism makes use of fragmentation at large, especially in the form of quotations, making of intertextuality its privileged device. Nevertheless, citations along with aphorisms become a form of knowledge pursuit as well. As Georg Steiner actually implies in his preface to the English edition of *The History of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin's overall use of quotations is not only representative of his way of

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<sup>136</sup> «O romantismo de Iena estará para sempre ligado à forma do fragmento (talvez até mais do que à própria teoria), que permaneceu a marca mais distintiva da sua originalidade. Querendo-se demarcando e sinalizando uma relativização do conceito de totalidade (mas também do belo e da verdade), o fragmento não consegue negar, contudo, a sua filiação, na medida em que reflectirá sempre implicitamente uma unidade. Para os românticos o fragmento é a parte independente ou auto-suficiente, mas enquanto expressão de um absoluto (do qual, em terminologia pessoana, o «infinito» será o correlativo)» (Eiras 2008, 295). [«Iena's Romanticism will always be bound up to the fragment's form (maybe no more than it will be its own theory), that persists as the more distinctive hallmark of its originality. Looking for, demarcating, and singling out a relativization of the concept of totality (but also of beauty and truth), fragment does not succeed in its negating, in spite of its affiliation in the measure according to which it will always implicitly reflect a unity. According to romantics, fragment is an independent or self-sufficient part, but as expression of an absolute of which, in Pessoa's terms, "infinite" will be its correlative»]. (my translation)

conceiving (modern) history but also a proper modernist way to intend the philosophical as well as the literary text<sup>137</sup>.

It has also been pointed out that Pessoa is perfectly aware of the modern(ist) taste for the brief genres as his references to Edgar Allan Poe suggest. By the same token, quite surprisingly, a long lasting critical tradition has been recently broken which tended to consider *Mensagem* as a closed-up work, devoid of any unfinished left over:

*Contra o desejo de Caeiro, Mensagem inclui partes que constituem (o exigem) um todo. A leitura de cada poema depende do valor que ele ocupa na economia do livro e das relações narrativas e simbólicas que estabelece com todos os outros poemas. Cada poema é portanto um fragmento cuja legibilidade completa se deve procurar numa leitura holística; por outro lado, Roman Jakobson e Luciana Stegagno Picchio mostraram (ver o ensaio «Les Oxymore Dialectiques de Fernando Pessoa» de 1968) como um poema de Mensagem, Ulisses, pede o mesmo protocolo de leitura a partir de macroestruturas formais e semânticas. Neste caso, as partes apenas existe para formarem um todo narrativo ( e performativo, se o fecho do livro, «É a Hora!», apela a uma acção por parte dos seus leitores)<sup>138</sup>. (Eiras 2008, 295)*

From this perspective, *Mensagem* is “complete” in a different acceptation. *Mensagem* is not just complete as it is considered “finished” by its author but as it represents the achievement of Pessoa’s speculations about aesthetics, influences, political ideas, and aims. This small epic poem, in fact,

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<sup>137</sup> [«But Benjamin’s hermeneutic of and by citation also has its contemporary flavor: it is very obviously akin to the collage and the montage aesthetic in the poetry of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, and in the prose of Joyce – all of whom are producing major works at exactly the same date as Benjamin’s *Ursprung*»]. (Benjamin 2009, 22).

<sup>138</sup> [«Contrarily to Caeiro’s volition, *Mensagem* encloses parts that constitute (or require) a totality. The reading of each poem depends on the value they occupy within the economy of the book and on the narrative and symbolic relationships they establish with all the other poems. Each poem is, therefore, a fragment whose complete readability must stem from a holistic reading; on the other hand, Roman Jakobson and Luciana Stegagno Picchio show (see the essay “*Les Oxymore Dialectiques de Fernando Pessoa*” dating 1968) as, for instance, a *Mensagem*’s poem, *Ulysses*, asks for the same protocol of reading starting from the formal and semantic micro-structures. In this specific case, parts exist at least to make up a narrative wholeness (but a performative wholeness as well if the end of the book “*It’s the Hour!*” asks for an action from its readers’ part»].(my translation)

not only sums up the Poet's aesthetic convictions but also his last poetic intentions which find their completion within a reasoned poetry epitomized by a profound bond with Hellenism and with Greece at large.

The Pessoaan attraction towards ancient Greek culture is generally identified with his philosophical attitude: «I was a poet animated by philosophy, not a philosopher with poetic faculties. I loved to admire the beauty of things, to trace in the imperceptible and through the minute the poetic soul of the universe» (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 9). This statement intermeshes with the author's objective of founding a Portuguese neo-paganism availing himself of the various collaboration of his heteronyms. For instance, Alberto Caeiro is said to be born in order to become the emblem of a "scientific neo-classicism" and within the memory-portrait drawn by Álvaro de Campos, the master has «a strange Greek air, which was a calmness from within, not something in his outward expression or features» (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 39). Somehow, Hellenism also appears as the ultimate crystallization of the possibility of a neo-classical and pagan doctrine. This classicist shift is actually part of Pessoa's wider poetic project that coincides with his political and aesthetic concern. Mulling over paganism thus means for Fernando Pessoa to shape a sort of religion of poetry. The need for a creed resembling a laic religion is shaped in his writings both in relation to Sebastianism and classicism. Pessoa's meaning for "religion" which mainly resembles more an intellectual as well as spiritual form of human unification, a social connector, should be analyzed in depth:

The profound saying of Goethe – that a man can do without religion if, and only if, he has science and art – basically means just this: let those who are incapable of a higher art have a lower art. (Or would it be



more correct to say that religion is rudimentary basis for art, science, and morality?) It's as absurd to expect common people to give up religion as it is to expect them to enjoying the theatre, since one and the other are art's rudimentary forms. Art is unsocial; religion is the social form it assumes. (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 150)

In parallel with this statement, Pessoa conceives Sebastianism as a seemingly pagan religion, a new spirituality capable of freeing Portugal from the century-old burden of Christianity. Most of Pessoa's Sebastianist writings precisely underline this prerogative, defining it as a "religious movement, built around a legendary national figure" (*ibidem*, 164) and «not a fusion of Christianity and paganism, as Teixeira de Pascoaes and Guerra Junqueiro propose, but a casting off of Christianity, a simple and direct, transcendental paganism, a transcendental reconstruction of the pagan spirit» (*ibidem*, 162). Classicism as well is understood as a way to progressively convert Portuguese literature both to modernity and to a new kind of mysticism:

What a pagan most appreciates in Christism is the common people's faith in miracles and saints, rituals and celebrations. It is the "rejected" part of Christism that he would most readily accept, if he would accept anything Christian. Any "modern paganism" or "neo-paganism" that can understand the mystic poets but not the feast days or saints has nothing in common with paganism, because the pagan willingly admits a religious procession but turns his back on the mysticism of Teresa of Avila. The Christian interpretation of the world disgusts him, but a celebration at church with candles, flowers, songs, and then a festival – he sees as good things, even if they're part of something bad, for these things are truly human, and are the pagan interpretation of Christianity. (*ibidem*, 151)

As a result, the sprout of the heteronyms from the master Alberto Caeiro becomes more eloquent from this perspective as, in a sense, Caeiro giving life to all the other heteronyms ideally creates a *coterie* of new pagan disciples. It is the master, in fact, who presents a more detailed pagan connotation. Ricardo Reis,

nonetheless, implies that «the work of Caeiro represents the total reconstruction of paganism in its absolute essence, such as could never have been achieved even by the Greeks or Romans, who lived under paganism and hence didn't think about it» (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 153).

The label of “new pagans” is crucial as it encompasses Pessoa's interest in becoming the author of a new modern poetry. The Pessoaan insight actually directs its attention on the need for Portuguese poetry to stir itself from the past and dusty Christian affiliations in order to reach a more European wide-ranging. On the other hand, both Sebastianism and classicism seem to answer a shared modernist belief, according to which the poet is the votary of the poetic word while poetry itself is conceived as halfway between past and present, modernity and classicism:

Much of the complexity of modernism thus stems from its location at crossroads between old and new science, and between orthodox religious belief and something which began to take its place, a primarily “aesthetic religion” in which imagination and sensibility silently usurped dogma and belief». (Nicholls 2007, 52)

The experience of “Orpheu” actually shapes a literary experience that encloses poetry as a human, civil, and humanistic ideal. Eduardo Lourenço has pinpointed, the “Orpheu” generation did not just locate in the mythical character of the god of poetry but poetry itself as a god. Myth and classicism will, thus, represent the two stand-points, the formal and ideal structures of a new poetry, or rather, of modern poetry. Hellenism will appear to Pessoa as the only means and possible goal in order to re-conflate Portugal towards “the centre”, towards that Europe that, as *Mensagem's* opening poem reads, looks at us with Greek eyes.

#### 4.2. From “Orpheu” to “Athena”

As Robert Bréchon contends in his famous Fernando Pessoa’s biography<sup>139</sup>, around 1924 the author of *Mensagem* pauses upon a keen reflection on the issue of pure art. After having defined himself as a futurist, as an *inseccionista*, as a *pauista*, he finally declares himself as a classicist. Significantly, another review takes upon itself the task of expressing this poetic shift and another mythological character is called to epitomize this new poetics that is “Athena” – which eventually symbolizes the slight passage from the experience of “Orpheu”. This swerve allegorizes, if anything, the parabola from a potentially infinite poetic eclecticism and virtuosity to a measured and even-tempered classicism that establishes a stable relationship between sensibility and knowledge. “Orpheu” and “Athena”, on the other hand, basically discharge the same task, that of the conceiving myth as poetry itself, and thus, as “*o nada que é tudo*”. Nevertheless, “Orpheu” used to celebrate the magic and sinuosity of the poetic word, following the music of multiple and versatile signification, aiming at an infinite faceting of semantic color spectrum. Both “Orpheu” and “Athena” tackle art as a sensation, the former registering sensation, a sensual aesthetics of feeling everything in every way, of being everything in every way:

*Assumir a verdade da mitologia, dar à imaginação aquele lugar no mundo que ele ocupa no sonho, ia exigir o esforço da mesma imaginação de Homero e André Breton. Na expressão mítica a*

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<sup>139</sup> «Após dez anos de agitação quase incessante, de investigações de doutrinas novas, de combates por ideias, o ano de 1924 é assinalado por um regresso à calma, por um desprendimento, por uma reflexão interior sobre os valores da arte “pura”. Depois de se ter pretendido romântico, simbolista, “paulista”, “inseccionista”, “sensacionista” ou futurista, o poeta vai proclamar-se “classico”». (Bréchon 1996, 409) [«After ten years of restlessness, of exploration of new doctrines, of ideas’ conflicts, 1924 is the year marked by a regress to tranquility, to abnegation, to an inner kind of reflection upon the values of pure art. After having pretended to be romantic, symbolist, “paulist”, “intersectionist”, “sensationist” or futurist, the poet now proclaims himself a “classicist”»]. (my translation)

*poesia vive uma existência plena: a palavra poética é reconhecida como encantatória, mágica, actuante. É palavra e ao mesmo tempo acto, concilha o Evangelho segundo S. João e Goethe, è Verbo e Acção. A poesia pode dizer como a Maga do poema «Encantamento» de Pessoa, que «outrora a sua voz acontecia»<sup>140</sup>. (Lourenço, Tempo e poesia 2003, 48)*

This return to classicism is understood as the only way to represent modernity and, simultaneously, draws Fernando Pessoa near to Eliot's speculation about tradition and metaphysical poetry. In this regard, Pessoa's precocity in the re-evaluation of seventeenth century poetry<sup>141</sup> which he explores with his *35 Sonnets* should be recalled. In any case, the Pessoaan admiration for Shakespeare is not just confined to dramatic influence but also, and perhaps even more, deals with the sonnets.

Both Eliot and Pessoa actually strive for a kind of poetry mineralized within an intellectual form in spite of a verbal characterization. As Eliot highlights, with regards to Grierson's essay *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler*, metaphysical poetry is not just chronologically encompassed but is chiefly a kind of poetry which is already conscious of modern fragmentation which is not just a formal reduction but also an intellectual drift. On the other hand, according to Eliot, metaphysical poetry

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<sup>140</sup> [«Taking on mythology's truth, giving imagination the same place in the world it occupies in dreams, demands an effort of imagination itself as that of Homer and André Breton. In the ambit of mythical expression, poetry lives of a whole existence; the poetic word is recognized as enchanting, magic and active. And word and act, at the same time, reconcile the Gospel according to Saint John and Goethe, is Word and Action. Poetry is thus able to assert, like the Enchantress of another Pessoa's poem, "Encantamento", that once her voice had been real»]. (my translation)

<sup>141</sup> «There is food for thought, too, in Sena's proposition, that had the British reader given the author of *35 Sonnets* a proper hearing, Pessoa would have been numbered among the first to herald the Modernist rediscovery of metaphysical poetry, for Pessoa anticipated the interest in primarily sixteenth-century English poetry as he worked in isolation to reconstruct the English "metaphysical" sonnet, years before the appearance in 1921 of H. J. C. Grierson's anthology *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, which was so brilliantly promoted by the Anglo-American poet-critic T.S. Eliot». (Ramalho 2003, 9)

is able to render the emotional equivalent of thought without renouncing to emotion:

*O entendimento do que o poeta metafísico estaria sempre mais preocupado com emoções do que com idéias ou pensamentos deve ser terminantemente descartado. Razão e emoção entrelaçam-se no verso metafísico, com violência, expandindo-se como camadas superpostas de uma edificação, mais ainda entrelaçadas com nós vigorosos. Por qualquer ângulo que se examine sua arquitetura, ter-se-à a impressão de uma rede percorrendo vertical e horizontalmente a espinha do sentido, distendendo-o e compactando-o. Se o resultado final è mais emoção, esta emoção é, sem dúvida, em grande parte intelectual<sup>142</sup>. (Daunt 2004, 91)*

According to Hugo Friedrich, in fact, one of the most apparent prerogatives of modern aesthetics is precisely the intellectualization of sensations. Fernando Pessoa himself contends the task of modern poetry is “to extend, complicate, and intellectualize his sensibility, to become, as completely as possible, a *resonateur* for all the forces of the universe, of life, and of mind” (Pessoa *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 213). From this perspective, Pessoa’s meditations upon modern poetry appear to be in line with those brought about by the Anglo-Saxon vanguard that was fighting against sentimentalism and literary conventions looking for an ever growing objectivity. If T.S. Eliot locates and labels this research within metaphysical poetry, Fernando Pessoa encompasses this tension within Greek classicism.

Throughout the Twenties’, the author of *Mensagem* devotes himself to the writing of a work dealing with the reflection upon art and genius. Not

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<sup>142</sup> [«The acquaintance according to which the metaphysical poet is always preoccupied with emotions rather than with ideas or thoughts should be immediately rejected. Reason and emotion intertwine in the metaphysical verse with violence, expanding themselves as overlapping layers of an edification and yet intertwined with vigorous knots. From whatever corner their architecture is approached, one gets the impression of a net going vertically and horizontally along the spine of meaning, either stretching or contracting. If the final output is more emotion, this emotion, with no doubt, is for a great part, intellectual»]. (my translation)

casually, its title, *Erostratus*, reminds us of that Greek who set Diana's temple on fire, in search of immortality. The reasoning on beauty and genius is often accompanied by a subtle definition of Hellenism itself. Starting from a sort of justification of the title dedicated to this classic character, the starting point is the striving for beauty and pure art's sake:

Yet it is admissible to think that there is one sort of greatness in *Erostratus* – a greatness which he does not share with lesser crashers into fame. He, a Greek, may be conceived as having that delicate perception and calm delirium of beauty which distinguishes still the memory of his giant clan. (Pessoa The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa 2002, 208-9)

In a letter dealing with *Antinoo* and *Epithalamium* dating back respectively to 1915 and 1913, Fernando Pessoa contends that if the former is written in a Greek manner, the latter reflects a greater tendency towards a Latin attitude. This differentiation mirrors a neat discrimination between a certain pureness of feelings typical of the Greek soul conflicting with the brutality of the Roman spirit. It is not by chance that *Antinoo* is a homosexual ode thus considered, according to the Hellenistic conception of love and eroticism, a form of superior affectivity. This piece actually re-crosses the scheme of the classic homoerotic poetry:

*Na sequência como Pessoa a nomeia, Antinous não é o «amor proibido» por antítese ao «amor normal» de Epithalamium, mas o amor que os gregos só conheceriam em tal grau de dialéctica sexo-divinização em termos homossexuais, oposto ao amor sensual dos romanos (que não foram mais «normais» que os gregos nessas matérias), sem transcendência além da carne (e por isso há tanto pormenor de licenciosidade em Epithalamium)<sup>143</sup>. (Pessoa, Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa 1994, 32-3)*

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<sup>143</sup> [«Within the sequence, as Pessoa terms it, *Antinous* does not represent the “forbidden love” antithetic to “normal love” of *Epithalamium*, but the love which just Greeks knew at such a dialectical degree of sex-divinization, in homosexual terms, in opposition to the sensual love of Romans (who have never been more “normal” compared to Greeks in this ambit

As Antonio Tabucchi has implied introducing Pessoa's poetry, the Portuguese poet never succeeds in passing from the conceptual to the pragmatic level being persuaded that in the passage from thought to word there is tacit entropy of vulgarity and prosaicness<sup>144</sup>. On the other hand, Eduardo Lourenço has underlined, as regards this, precisely the difficult balance of the Pessoa position divided into reality, fiction and idealism<sup>145</sup>.

Even this statement presumes, on Pessoa's part, an aesthetic claim.

*Antinoo's* sensuality is devoid of any vulgar erotic component, rather it is an ode

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without transcending flash (and for this reason there is so much more licentiousness in *Epithalamium*»)]. (my translation)

<sup>144</sup> «Forse si potrebbe dire che Pessoa non riesce a passare, o perlomeno non riesce a passare senza traumi, dal piano concettuale a quello del a; probabilmente è convinto che nel farsi il Verbo è implicita una certa dose di volgarità. [...] E forse un giorno qualcuno ci dirà con maggiore credibilità di quanto non abbiano fatto finora quei critici che hanno adoperato con lui una frettolosa psicoanalisi che il suo essere "negativo" consisteva in fondo in un fatto tutto suo, interiore e privatissimo, qualcosa di segretamente casto e turpe: una turpitudine speciosa e bianca che partecipa all'impotenza e che è un peccato (o un vizio) dell'intelligenza». (Tabucchi 2007, 23) [«Perhaps, it would be possible to imply that Pessoa does not succeed in crossing or, at least, he does not succeed without being subjected to a certain upheaval, from the conceptual level to that of *pragma*; probably, he's convinced that in making itself Word is implicit a certain quantity of vulgarity, [...]. And perhaps, one day someone will be able to tell us, with a more trustworthiness than it has been done by now, those critics who grappling with him used a certain hasty psychoanalysis, trying to assert that his negativity was not anything but a private thing of his, exclusively inner and private, something secretly chaste and vile: a specious and white turpitude that participates to his impotence and that is a sin (or a vice) of his intelligence»]. (my translation)

<sup>145</sup> *Fernando Pessoa parece ter ocupado no plano erótico esse espaço dificilmente balizado entre Baudelaire e Proust que é o de uma dupla e contrária repugnância em relação ao que a um outro foi consentido. Não é de imaginária indiferença ao sexo, nem pura impotência mas desesperado e duplo combate para sufocar a expressão de um Eros anômalo e de o transformar em Eros «normalizado», culpabilizando-se por não poder nem aceitar-se neles nem traduzi-los com os reflexos do segundo. Toda a sua poesia é o doloroso labirinto desta ambiguidade procurando todas as portas para sair dela sem outro efeito do que o de encerrar-se nele cada vez mais profundamente, até tornar-se no seu próprio Minotauro». (Lourenço Pessoa Revisitado 2003, 130) [«Fernando Pessoa seems to have occupied on the erotic level this space which was unlikely to be balanced between Baudelaire and Proust and that is that of a double and opposite repugnance to what would have been allowed to somebody else. It is not just a matter of imaginary indifference to sex, nor a pure impotence but, rather, anguish and a double fight to suffocate the expression of an ambiguous Eros transformed into a "normalized" Eros, blaming himself for not managing or accepting himself in both of them nor in translating them as reflections of the latter issue. His poetry as a whole is the troubled maze of this ambiguity, trying all the doors to exit from it without no other effect than that of locking himself every time in it even more profoundly, till becoming himself his own Minotaur»]. (my translation)*

to the Hellenic cerebralism of sensitiveness. This is quite clear from an article devoted to António Botto entitled “António Botto e o Ideal Estético em Portugal” published in “Contemporânea” in 1922. This essay would stand as representative of the Pessoaan fascination for Hellenism as a whole as makes it apparent that Pessoa identifies Hellenism especially with two features, the intellectualization of feelings («[...] *dos três critérios de perfeição, só os dos gregos tem objectividade*») and sensibility and the pagan religion of art. The recollection of these two features within the more general label of Hellenism appears clear from the very first words of the essay:

*António Botto é o único português, dos que hoje conhecidamente escrevem, a quem a designação de esteta se pode aplicar sem dissonância. Com um perfeito instinto, ele segue o ideal a que sem tem chamado estético, e que é uma das formas, se bem que a ínfima, do ideal helénico. Segue-o porém, a par de com o instinto, com uma perfeita inteligência, porque os ideais gregos, como são intelectuais, não podem ser seguidos inconscientemente<sup>146</sup>. (Pessoa, Crítica, ensaios, entrevistas 1999, 173)*

Pessoa’s theoretical convictions progressively coincide with a more European aesthetic ideal, which subtly comes from Walter Pater’s reception and that also matches with Botto’s poetry<sup>147</sup> which displays a pathway to achieve a

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<sup>146</sup> [«António Botto is the only Portuguese, among those who publicly write today, to whom could be reasonably applied the name of aesthete. With a perfect instinct, he follows an ideal called aesthetic and which is one of the forms, even if the lowest one of the Hellenic ideal. He follows it, with a perfect intelligence, as the Greek ideals, being intellectual, cannot be followed without conscience»].(my translation)

<sup>147</sup> «*Adentro do ideal estético, os casos de Winckelman e de Pater representam o génio, porque a tendência para a realização cultural imanente no seu estetismo ingénito é, por sua natureza, sintética; o caso de António Botto representa o talento, porque o ideal estético, dada a sua estreiteza e vacuidade, representa já o senso estético isolado de todos os outros elementos psíquicos, e, no caso de António Botto, esteta simples, esse isolamento não se modifica, como no estetismo culto, pelo reflexo nele da multiplicidade dos objectos de cultura*». (Pessoa, Crítica, ensaios, entrevistas 1999, 185) [«Within the aesthetic ideal, the cases of Winckelman and Pater both represent the genius. Actually, the tendency leading to the cultural realization, which is immanent in its inborn aesthetism, is originally synthetic; the case of António Botto precisely represents a bent, as the aesthetic ideal, because of its narrowness and vacuity, already epitomizes the aesthetic sense of all the other psychic elements, just like in the



modern sensibility. But Pessoa's essay's *incipit* stands as a provocative claim that Botto is the only Portuguese poet who can be drawn near Hellenism and, in a certain sense, Hellenism stands for paganism. Even in this context Pessoa confirms his pagan attitude and in which Botto reveals to have had a fundamental task along with Pater<sup>148</sup>.

Nevertheless, Pessoa always shows his alignment with Romantic aesthetics, endorsing a poetic tension which goes from visible to invisible, pursuing a sort of hybrid imagination able to web intellect and image subsuming them in a supreme fiction. By the same token, this willingness is underpinned by the almost seeming consciousness of the generative power of Greek myth, which the German Romantics started to be persuaded of. The continuous referring to Greek mythology is in line precisely with this statement and simultaneously, demonstrates the willingness and perhaps the need to go back to an already made conceptual structuring, able to evoke a multitude of meanings and intertextual possibilities. Come what may, if the Pessoa procedure seems to transfer a modernistic method, – that of cutting, re-appraising and give new meaning to past literary tradition(s), – on the other hand, his mythological and mythic conception rather traces his works back to Romanticism and to its ideal of myth as a nutshell of knowledge possibilities if not really an instrument of knowledge as Cassirer has implied.

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cultivated aestheticism because of the glint of the multiplicity of cultural objects»]. (my translation)

<sup>148</sup> «The relationship with Pater is more specifically relevant in the larger context of Pessoa's ambition of being a creator of civilization. A project for a revolution of conscience which would provide both spiritual and intellectual fulfillment through the revival of Paganism is present in the plans for Athena from the very start, and is the cornerstone of the work of Pessoa's heteronym António Mora». (Malafaia and Bastos da Silva 2004, 224)

### 4.3. Deconstructing the Novel, Rewriting the Epic

The art of James Joyce, like that of Mallarmé, is art preoccupied with method, with how it's made. Even the sensuality of *Ulysses* is a symptom of intermediation. It is hallucinatory delirium-the kind threatened by psychiatrists – presented as an end itself. (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 222)

This assumption of Fernando Pessoa reveals a fact true regarding his convictions about the modern(ist) way of addressing genres. Fernando Pessoa's keen insight appears as anything but ingenuous as it grapples untiringly with method. This is pivotal to grasp the Pessoaan idea of the evolution and restoration of genres. Actually, Fernando Pessoa seems to deconstruct genres at their core by the means of fragmentation itself. This is quite unmistakably apparent skimming through the pages of most of his works: *The Book of Disquiet*, *Mensagem*, the English production and most of his aesthetic reflections. When, once again, Antonio Tabucchi accrues that Pessoa turns the genres upside down through poetry, this statement appears particularly manifest if considering *The Book of Disquiet*. Within this non-novel the plot is totally annulled along with its role within the teleological dynamic of the text, that is, both as a chronological denouement and logic pattern. This non-novel, this anti-novel – just to cite a few of the myriad of labels *The Book* received from its very former issuing – contemporarily subverts another consecrated frame the autobiographic novel. Pessoa admittedly points to the work of the Swiss Romantic writer Henry-Frédric Amiel whose work's title, *Fragments d'un journal intime*, could be successfully attainable to Pessoa's only novel. The highlight upon the fragment is convulsively transposed to Pessoa's ideal of an autobiography able to adhere to the modern dissociation of the Self: «If there is

an “I” in *The Book* (and, of course there is, *The Book* is overwhelmingly written in the “first person”) that “I” is, as Sena was the first one to note, an “anti-I”» (Ramalho 2003, 265).

At the same time, the fragmented narration of the work exposes the conflation, within the novel genre, of a contemporaneous deconstruction and reformulation of the great Romantic lyric. This is exemplified by the contrapuntal representation of author’s states of mind and description of the outer world. There is, actually, a brisk and continuous interweaving between the narrating Self and the view from his window. Rather than metaphysics of sensation as João Gaspar Simões has extensively speculated, with *The Book of Disquiet* Fernando Pessoa gives life to a phenomenology of seeing:

*Criei-me eco e abismo, pensando. Multipliquei-me aprofundando-me. O mais pequeno episódio – uma alteração saindo da luz, a queda enrolada de uma folha seca, a pétala que se despega amarelecida, a voz do outro lado do muro ou os passos de quem a diz junta aos de quem a deve escutar, o portão entreaberto da quinta velha, o pátio abrindo com um arco das casas aglomeradas ao luar – todas estas coisas, que me não pertencem, prendem-me a meditação sensível com laços de ressonância e de saudade. Em cada uma dessas sensações sou outro, renovo-me dolorosamente em cada impressão indefinida. Vivo de impressões que me não pertencem, perdulário de renúncias, outro no modo como sou eu.<sup>149</sup> (Pessoa, Livro do Desassossego por Bernardo Soares 1982, -33)*

Therefore, intellectualized impressions give vent to a depersonalization and a fracturing of the Self generated by visual perceptions. Interestingly

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<sup>149</sup> [«By thinking so much, I became echo and abyss. By delving within, I made myself into many. The slightest incident – a change in the light, the tumbling of a dry leaf, the faded petal that falls from a flower, the voice speaking on the other side of the stone wall, the steps of the speaker next to those of the listener, the half-open gate of the old country estate, the courtyard with an arch and houses cloistered around in the moonlight – all these things, although not mine, grab hold of my sensory attention with the chains of logic and emotional resonance. In each of these sensations I am someone else, painfully renewed in each indefinite impression.

I live off impressions that aren’t mine, I’m a squanderer of renunciations, someone else in the way I’m I»]. (Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet* 2002, 91)

enough, it could be possible to catch a similar phenomenon in Joyce's *Ulysses* and, in particular, focusing on the Proteus' chapter. According to the Linati schemata, in fact, this chapter coincides with philology and, therefore, with language. If one would look for similarities between the two books the first self-evident prerogative would surely be the centrality of language on one side, and the pivotal role of visual understanding. *Ulysses'* third chapter sets Stephen Dedalus wandering along Sandycove beach testing the human faculties and realizing the limitation of human perception. Somehow, the image of "Proteus" that stands hugely within the sea-paramount of Dedalus' Telemachia's last act once again shows its mythic and mythological evocative power. Actually, it not only sends back to philology (as the Linati schemata almost straightforwardly suggests) and so to a flourishing of meanings and language(s) but, if drawn near to *The Book of Disquiet* it also evokes the liquid possibility of an infinite feature mutability that is in line with the Pessoaan heteronymy and de-personalization.

Within *The Book of Disquiet*, the supposition of a granitic poetic "I" is put on the test bench by the dissociation of the integrity of the Self cracked into a series of debris: «I make landscapes out of what I feel» (Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa* 2002, 275) as he writes in a page of *The Book*. But the mirroring between internal and external settings is translated into debris, in a non canonical pattern: just like Pessoa himself asserts in a letter "it's all fragments, fragments, fragments!" But it is precisely in this form, and just in this form, that the possibility of reproducing the flashes and the randomness of his thoughts and the importance of their fragmentation is suggested to the author. Both the Joycean and the Pessoaan process, not only display a fragmentation concerning the re-constellation of the meanings springing from the debris of sensations, but also affirm a state of the art of modern

understanding which almost coincides with allegory. The use of allegory, in fact, emphasizes a disarticulated and intellectualized perception that, simultaneously, also engenders and contains an inner mention to History.

Allegory, therefore, affects perception and description of these disarticulated feelings and images. Just like to Stephen Dedalus in the “Proteus” chapter, Pessoa (and his heteronyms in different ways and at different levels) strives against symbolic attitude, the “illegitimate talk of the symbolic” (Benjamin 2009, 160) that “has an immeasurably comforting effect on the practice of investigation into the arts”, as Benjamin asserts. A similar attitude is detectable in the *Faust* which proverbially characterized by fragmentation. The philological efforts made to re-build this work staging the Pessoaan confrontation with Goethe have progressively tried to give it at least a formal order. But as Maria José de Lancastre, editor of the most recent edition of the piece has highlighted the inorganic and disjointed nature of Pessoa’s *Faust* linking it to the cutting technique typical of the cinematography of the time. The opening pages of *Faust* resound with a Baudelairian echo:

*Ah, tudo é simbolo e analogia!  
O vento que passa, a noite que esfria  
São outras cousa que a noite e o vento—  
Sombras de vida e de pensamento.* (Pessoa, Primeiro Fausto 1952, 76)

However, reading the subsequent verses a doubt arises, i.e., that perhaps Pessoa is not completely aware of the difference between symbol and allegory as the following verses seem to suggest:

*Tudo que vemos é outra cousa.  
A maré vasta, a amaré ansiosa,*

*É o eco do outra mar é que está  
Onde é real o mundo que há. (ibidem)*

The first verse quoted here actually encloses the modern meaning of allegory sending the recollection of the meaning beyond the evoked image: meaning is always beyond. This important feature allows us to understand the possible intention of the author to consciously keep the text disjointed. As briefly affirmed before, fragmentation acts inside genres eroding the reader's expectation. Literature in fragments, in fact, often represents a sort of negation of a pre-constituted frame, or rather, system of organization and referring:

*Pour l'écrivain qui choisit de s'exprimer en sequence brèves et discontinues, il existe une antinomie constitutive entre la vie de la pensée et l'attitude systématique. Seul un Pessoa qui, par personnage interposé, s'avouait dans son Livre de l'intranquillité «dépouillé jusqu'à l'âme de savoir seulement faire un effort» devait récuser l'activité systématique non pas comme une offense, mais comme encore une de ses intolérable et épuisantes manifestations. Fasaint allusion à sa propre «lassitude de toutes les hypothèses», les héros de Pessoa note en effet: «Les faiseurs de système métaphysiques, les fabricants d'explications psychologiques, connaissent une souffrance encore pire. Systematiser, expliquer, qu'est-ce d'autre que bâtir encore? Et tout cela, arranger, disposer, organiser de façon consternante, de la vie!»  
De façon générale, lorsque les écrivain de fragments refusent au système toute productivité intellectuelle, c'est parce qu'il est intempestif, dispotique, voire pathologique. (Susini-Anastopoulos 1997, 131-2)*

It is not reckless to think that *Faust* had to be ascribed to another heteronym. *Faust's* subtitle is not fortuitously “subjective tragedy” underling the interiorization of the dramatic definitions of characters. Fragmentation within the dramatic genre not only represents a modernistic reappraisal of this genre but also and especially Pessoa's peculiar way of staging his *drama em gente*. And it is the case of *Mensagem* that represents the extreme effort to go beyond

lyrical individualism, splitting the Self within each character just like the author with his various heteronyms. As he does with the novel genre, Pessoa resets the plot, the long denouement which characterizes the epic. Once again, Fernando Pessoa deconstructs the content within a semantically profound structuring so that the poetic innovation is collocated in a shared symbolic grammar. The blazon, the sea adventures, and the prophetic parabola eventually underpin this deconstruction which also resembles a sort of intellectualization of the plotting potential of these genres. *Mensagem* actually epitomizes a sort of rationalization of past national as well as classic epic poems. What Pessoa looks for is the reader's intelligence, the interpretation of his words in the same manner as a chess game. The reader must focus on each fragment, from each poem, each epitaph to another in order to recollect the meaning of the whole work. What Fernando Pessoa seems to be apt at reproducing a sort of mythical method, a tidy chaotic representation of modern reality through its most representative form, that is, fragmentation and, at the same time, a rewriting and revision of past forms, genres, meanings and literary traditions. The epic genre seems affected by inner erosion being completely re-thought through the brief genres. *Brevitas* thus appears as one of the prerogatives of the Pessoaan genres' revision and appears even more striking from the perspective of *Mensagem*. No matters how, his willingness to be an anti-Camões could be interpreted as a willingness to write a short epic. *Mensagem* covers most of the short poetic forms, going from the sonnet, to the epitaph, to the epigram. What remain of the classic epic is just the texturing and the thematic content. Nevertheless, it would be worthy to draw a little attention to titles. *Mensagem*, beyond its hermetic, occultist, and recondite meanings encloses a meaning, a message. The noun is singular and not plural as the variety of poems would

suggest. The title, therefore, goes back to a unitary sense and meaning and let just one possible understanding of the work shine through. Pessoa's reformation of the epic genre through brief ones and fragmentation resembles Eliot's one with *The Waste Land* which straightforwardly denominates itself as an epic of modern consciousness. Since its very first approach, *The Waste Land* presents a fundamental fragmentary nature, fragmentation actually represents the form and the meaning of the work staging the modern(ist) condition:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dread dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket of no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water. (Eliot 2006, 58)

It is a "heap of broken images" that appear to the reader as the sole background for the understanding of the whole poem, say, an epic poem that cuts out traditions, quotations, allusions from the great epic tradition, compelling the reader to a continuous passage from the hyper-text to the hypo-text. Modern poetry is no longer able to give a meaningful and complete representation of modern reality and until the end of the work the author is conscious of this insufficiency. The symbolic system thus appears weakened being characterized by an effective arbitrariness of meanings generated by fragmentary signifiers. After all, Fernando Pessoa had seemingly affirmed within the closing poems of *Mensagem*:

*Ninguém sabe que coisa quer.  
Ninguém conhece que alma tem,  
Nem o que é mal o que é bem.  
(Que ânsia distante perto chora?)  
Tudo é incerto e derradeiro.  
Tudo é disperso, nada é inteiro.*



*ÓPortugal, hoje és novoeiro*<sup>150</sup>. (*ibidem*, 104)

This affirmation of uncertainty and dispersion does not just contend a national complaint. It is, instead a cultural and poetic assertion. What Fernando Pessoa, just like Eliot, feels to be at stake is the possibility to achieve any sense of unity of understanding. The long poem is no longer just a frame capable of giving sense to a reality reduced to debris. Somehow this acknowledgment could be traced back to how *The Waste Land* was influenced by Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. As the philological history of Eliot's work testifies, *The Waste Land* starts to be de-organized in the sense of fragmentation after the reading of Pound's poem:

Between the poet's first mention of "broken images" and his last mention of fragments, he assembles a number of fragments and broken images which constitute the poem. *The Waste Land* presents itself to the reader as the remains of a poem rather than as a complete poem, *just as the culture and the world it describes are only the remains of a culture and of a world.* (Eliot and Bloom 2007, 29) (my emphasis).

I put some emphasis on these last words of Bloom as they suggest the meaning of Eliot's fragmentation procedure, which coincides with a shift in his attitude towards poetic responsibility. This shift generated by the reading of Pound's fragmentary long poem and collocated as early as 1922, mirrors a change in Eliot's convictions about poetry's social function and affects also the form of poetry itself. The incipit of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, in fact, at a

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<sup>150</sup> «No-one knows what she destre./No-one has seen what soul is hers,/What is bad, what is good, in there/(What distant agony mourning near?)/All's uncertain and is the end,/All is entire./O Portugal, fog you are...». (Pessoa, Message 2007, 107)

midway between Pound's *auto da fé* and poetic biography, complains his youngster art for art's sake attitude:

FOR three years, out of key with his time,  
He strove to resuscitate the dead art  
Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"  
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—[...] (Pound 1920, 9)

The ingenuous conviction of the possibility of finding the sense of poetry in past forms results not fecund as this prefigured long poem looks rather like the assemblage of parts of a whole work. *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* will thus be a milestone for modernist arrangement of long poems and will not just exercise great influence upon *The Waste Land* but also upon Pound's subsequent "epic" research and production. Just like Eliot, Pessoa is aware of the gradual fragmentation of signifiers but, on the other hand, according to the Portuguese poet, a sort of epiphany still seems possible. The recurrence of the term "hora", meaning "now" (coming from "agora") seems to venture the possibility of moments of co-existence of past, present, and future, of reality and fiction, between what it is and what it could be. "*A Hora*" appears precisely at the end of the foregoing citation describing Portugal as disjointed and fragmentary. This "hour" permits the ransom of that unredeemable past, the conciliation between the antinomies that punctuate his poetry. This is even more true with regards to *Mensagem* which encloses all the three times of Portugal, being the country's future enclosed within its past. It is, then, within the "hour" that the epiphany makes a human transcendence possible: "*o homem e a hora são um só*" we read in one of *Mensagem's* poems. But most of all, the possibility of a unitary and contemporary understanding goes back to Hellenism and to Portugal's affiliation to Hellenism: «*A Cultura Grega essência, da nossa civilização,*

*porque essência da inteligência, ou parte superior dela*<sup>151</sup>» (Pessoa, Ultimatum e Páginas de Sociologia Política 1980, 31) and inasmuch he had previously asserted that from Greek it is possible to see the whole world. Consequently, “*a hora*” would and should be that moment able to bridge the time of possibility to that of realization. Ancient Greece would thus represent Portugal’s past and, at the same time, also its possible future. Even Álvaro de Campos in a writing of his dating back to 1924 wrote:

*Arte portuguesa será aquela em que a Europa – entendendo por Europa principalmente a Grécia antiga e o universo inteiro – se mire e se reconheça sem lembrar do espelho. Só duas nações – a Grécia passada e o Portugal futuro – receberam dos deuses a concessão de serem não só elas mas também todas as outras. Chamo a sua atenção para o facto, mais importante que geográfico, de que Lisboa e Atenas estão quase na mesma latitude*<sup>152</sup>. (Pessoa Ultimatum e outras páginas de sociologia política, 206)

Significantly, this writing dates back to 1924, say, the first year “Athena” was published. De Campos actually establishes a geographical and cultural symmetry between Lisbon and Athens that gives even more reason to the choice of the title of this review which registers the classicist Pessoaan swerve. Furthermore, Ricardo Reis’s poetry acquired a certain importance in the review. His Horatian odes had much to do, in fact, with a Greek content, whether it be epicurist or stoicist. His even-tempered composing poetry incarnates the Pessoaan ideal of modern(ist) poetry and somehow implies that the only way to be modern is to follow the traces of Greek’s predecessors.

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<sup>151</sup> [«Greek culture, essence of our civilization as essence of our intelligence, or its higher part»]. (my translation)

<sup>152</sup> [«Portuguese art will be that in which Europe – chiefly intending as Europe ancient Greece – looks and recognize itself without remembering of its mirror. Just two nations – say, past Greece and the Portugal of future – received from gods the accordance to be not just themselves but also something else. I would recall the attention to the fact, more important than the geographic perspective that Lisbon and Athens are almost on the same latitude»]. (my translation)

#### 4.3.1. “Da Grécia Antiga vê-se o mundo inteiro!”

“We might do something for the island. Hellenize it!”. These words belonging to Joyce’s *Ulysses* somehow reflect an overall attraction shown by modernist poetry towards Greek classicism. Of course, these words rather express a willingness to change and subvert the iconography of classic myth but it is undeniable that Joyce testifies a more general interest towards the classic world and that could be associated to the efforts stretched by many Modernist poets. And it is precisely to a general tension towards a utopian historical and geographical perspective, that generally the Greek myth (and, conversely, also the myth of Greece) is revised. When, in fact, Boaventura de Sousa Santos speaks about a “Peripheral Atlantic”, this definition could be detected as a worthy label also concerning Ireland. In order to give due to this impossible comparison with ancient Greece, James Joyce acutely inscribes his operation under the sign of ironic subversion thus registering an amputated utopia. Even though, Portugal and Ireland could be understood under the common discrimination of “Peripheral Atlantic” considering their common and eccentric Janus-faced condition and position to England. On Pessoa’s part, *Mensagem’s* opening poem somehow gives us not only the coordinates of Portugal’s ideal geographical re-collocation but it is possible, if anything, to understand them as the coordinates of the work’s system of influences. Approaching the poem as a kind of conundrum, we could imply that it allegorizes the re-positioning of Portuguese literature exactly in the centre of Europe: the English arm which “distantly supports the hand that holds the face”, the other arm lingering upon Italy, but significantly guided by “reminiscing Greek eyes”. Nevertheless,

António Mora affirms: «*Da Grécia antiga vê-se o mundo inteiro, o passado como o futuro, a tal altura emerge, dos melhores cumes das outras civilizações, o seu alto pináculo da Gloria creadora*» (Pessoa, *Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação* 1966, 114). Greece, then, also stands for a grounded creativity and for an all-embracing literary and mythical imaginary. This is apparent throughout Pessoa's creation but particularly fossilized in *Mensagem* that keeps this catching-all as the ideal and formal subtext of the work. But Pessoa's Hellenistic influence dates back to his years in Durban where he becomes confident with Latin and Greek languages and literature. This inheritance fructifies a few years later when in the "Athena" review the Portuguese poet publishes a group of epigrams he had translated from English into Portuguese and collected with the title *Da Antologia Grega*. Pessoa had translated them from the Walter Paton *Anthology* he himself held in his library. He had initially thought about assigning them to Ricardo Reis, the Greek heteronym *par excellence*. This dint of translation gives birth to a series of epigrams written on the score of the Greek model entitled *Inscriptions*. Pessoa had always been attracted by classic genres but ancient epigrams seem to affect his tension towards an incisive and brief kind of versification. *Mensagem* appears as the work which has mostly absorbed both *Inscriptions'* formal texturing and thematic patterning. One way or another, *Mensagem* stages a sort of epitaph of Portugal, a celebration and a memorial of its past glories, a complaint for its actual fractured condition, and a glorification of its possible future. Every composition actually displays a sort of epigrammatic shape resembling the formal construction of the *Inscriptions* which are «*uma série de legendas funerárias, pequenos quadros de uma galeria em que se retratam diversos tipos de humanidade. [...] Fazem, concisos, o resumo da vida que os viveu, à*

*maneira daqueles representantes da civilização helénica ao inscreverem nas pedras do seus túmulos, em duas ou tres linhas, o destino que lhes havia cabido»*<sup>153</sup> (Monteiro 1955, 53). This is precisely the same scheme as the structuring of *Mensagem*'s poems, especially in relation to the formal prerogatives of a few poems of “Brasão” and, namely, those portraying Dom Duarte, Dom Fernando Infante de Portugal, Dom Pedro, Dom João, and Dom Sebastião who all belong to “The Inescutcheons” grouping. The poems-epitaphs of “As Quinas” present an overall homogeneity both in content and structure. They, in fact, all present an equal number of verses per stanza, they are mostly made up of two stanzas (only the one dedicated to Dom Fernando is structured in three stanzas). All these composition are not only written in the first person, but respect the thematic structure of the Greek epigrams displaying within each stanza a sketchy resume of their lives and an outline of their destiny, or rather of the fate they have been consecrated to. Oscar Lopes has noticed within the *Inscriptions* the juxtaposition of two times, the times that punctuate the arbitrary parabola of time between life and death:

*Na sua literalidade, a estrutura das Inscriptions é de uma imediata e chocante juxtaposição de dois tempos: por exemplo, a imediata juxtaposição da fragil Chloé, no viço dos catorze anos, à sua sombra agora esquecida em distantes relvados; a juxtaposição entre o cheiro da humida terra arável e as narinas já mortas do seu ex-proprietario, provavelmente um abastado labrador da Ática ou Magna Grécia; a juxtaposição imediata da imagem das maozinhas de uma criança, abarcando tão pouco espaço, e o nada a que elas se reduziram; a juxtaposição entre a ossea ruína da mão de um amante sobre o espaço vazio onde, outraoura, acariciou uns seios*<sup>154</sup>. (Lopes 1986, 19)

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<sup>153</sup> [«A series of inscriptions on a gravestone, small pictures in a gallery where different types of humanity are depicted. [...] They make a small sum up of their life, in the same manner of the ancient Greeks who used to scratch on the gravestone, in two or three line, the destiny they came upon»]. (my translation)

<sup>154</sup> [«On a literary level, the structure of *Inscriptions* is that of an immediate and upsetting juxtaposition of two times: i.e., the immediate juxtaposition of the fragile Chloe, in the flower of her fourteen years, to her now forgotten shadow in the distant meadows; the juxtaposition between the smell of the wet, the arable ground and the just dead nostrils of its

Nonetheless, *Mensagem's* poems present a further connotation. To these two times, these historical characters are also projected towards the symbolic realization of a (glorious) national future which is the hallmark of *Mensagem* grammar of temporality. This prerogative is particularly apparent in *D. Fernando, Infante de Portugal*:

*Deu-me Deus o seu gladio, porque eu faça  
A sua santa guerra.  
Sagrou-me seu em honra e em desgraça,  
As horas em que um frio vento passa  
Por sobre a fria terra.*

*Poz-me as mãos sobre os ombros e doirou-me  
A fronte com o olhar;  
E esta febre de Além, que me consome,  
E este querce grandeza são seu nome  
Dentro em mim a vibrar.*

*E eu vou, e a luz do gladio erguido dá  
Em minha face calma.  
Cheio de Deus, não temo o que virá,  
Pois, venha o que vier, nunca será  
Maior do que a minha alma.<sup>155</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 35)*

The three-fold system of juxtaposition of different layers of time is detectable from an analysis of the alternation of verbs which go from past (“*Deu-me*”; “*Sagrou-me*”; “*Poz-me*”; “*Doirou-me*”) to present (“*me consome*”; “*eu vou*”) and, in the end, to future crystallized in the concentration within the same

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former owner, probably a reach worker from Attica or Magna Grecia; the immediate juxtaposition of the image of the little hands of a child, occupying such a small space and the nothingness they are reduced to; the juxtaposition between the bony ruin of the hand of a lover upon the empty space where, once, caressed a breast». (my translation)

<sup>155</sup>[ «God has given me His sword, I am to fight/His own holy war./Consecrated me His, in glory and blight/For those hours when a cold wind at nightfall/Takes the cold land once more//Laid hands on my shoulders, made golden my/Forehead with the gazing;/And this fever of Beyond, which consumes/Me, and this will to greatness are His name/In me, deep in, vibrating./I advance, and the light of the lifted sword is giving/Calm to my face. Full/Of God, I am not afraid of whatever/Will come, since, come what may come, it will never/Be larger than my soul». (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 27)

verse of present and future: “*não temo o que virá*”. The presence of different levels of time is possible just because of the feature of predestination and utopian projection. These two poles are the real coordinates of the Pessoaan idea of time and which *Mensagem* in all represents.

It should be recalled, in fact, that both *Inscriptions* and *Mensagem* are thought and realized in a completely pagan manner so that a Christian time polarization would be unattainable. Within the foregoing poem, in fact, the only possible projection into future is the realization of Fifth Empire. This is even more apparent as far as concerns the “Epitaph of Bartolomeu Diaz” which is overtly built up as a classic epitaph:

*Jaz aqui, na pequena praia extrema,  
O Capitão do Fim. Dobrado o Assombro,  
O mar é o mesmo: já ninguém o tema!  
Atlas, mostra alto o mundo no seu hombro.*<sup>156</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem*  
1934,64)

A careful analysis clearly indicates that this poem is precisely written upon the traditional pattern of a classic epitaph, which was a funeral oration pronounced to pay homage to heroes during official celebrations. As happens with the other compositions mirroring the epigrammatic architecture, the celebration as well as the complaint does not concern just the single (historical) character but, at an allegorical layer of understanding, it concerns Portugal in its entirety as well. What gives homogeneity to the exteriorly disjointed texturing of *Mensagem* is, on the contrary, its fundamental and strong archetypal and allegorical frame. The epigrammatic patterning, in fact, is absorbed within the

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<sup>156</sup> [«Here lies, on the small last shore,/ The Captain of the End. Cape Awe doubled,/The sea's the same: who fear it anymore?/ High on your shoulder, Atlas, flaunt the world»]. (Pessoa, *Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa* 1994, 63)



epic intentionality and thematic subtext. After all, as Alastair Fowler asserts, the epigrammatic, epitaph genre is bent for a ductile and metamorphic torsion being able to mingle itself with other genres:

Epigram was well adapted to a metamorphic destiny. As Renaissance theorists such as Minturno and Robertello explained, its diverse tones allowed it to resemble many larger forms. Epitaph could be seen as a miniature tragedy, encomiastic epigram as miniature panegyric or ode. Even the historian and the epicist could give matter to the epigrammatist. Modulation involving epigrams worked in two contrary ways: either it could assimilate features of other kinds, or it could contribute its own to them. (Fowler 1982, 196-7)

But what unifies *Mensagem* to *Inscriptions* is also a strong thematic boundary. Death actually seems to permeate these two works, a sense of human frailty which can be compensated just by Fate and Destiny or, at least, by dreaming: «We pass and dream», as the first *Inscriptions* says. After all, it is said in *The Mariner*, the reason one dies resides a scarce attitude to dreaming. As Jorge de Sena has underlined, the topic of life as dream which is crucial from the very first verse of the first *Inscription*, is necessary to Pessoa to craft his ideal of a pagan attitude, of a non-Christian characterization of his poetry<sup>157</sup>. This dreaming attitude is the crucial theme of “Mar Portuguez” where just the first poem reads «*Deus quere, o homem sonha, a obra nasce*». In *Mensagem* God almost stands for predestination, while in the *Inscriptions* a profane and classic wording persists: « [...] looked towards where gods seem./ From behind

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<sup>157</sup> «*De resto, a Vida como Sonho, tema muitas vezes suposto característico do Barroco europeu, e mais especificamente, via Calderon, do espanhol do Século de Ouro, está muito longe de ser alheio à uma atmosfera das literaturas da antiguidade clássica, e é pelo contrário um tema fundamental na encruzilhada de stoicismo e de epicureismo em que se situa a parte confinante com Platão, do pensamento classicizante de Fernando Pessoa*». (Pessoa, *Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa* 1994, 74) [«After all, Life as a Dream, a theme often considered characteristic of the European Baroque, and more specifically, through Calderon, i.e., of the Golden Century’s Spain, is not that far from the atmosphere of classic antiquity, and it is, on the contrary, a pivotal theme within the intersecting of stoicism and epicureism where it is located the bordering side of Plato which is that of the classicizing thought of Fernando Pessoa»]. (my translation)

me the common shadow stole./ Dreaming that I slept not, I slept my dream» (Pessoa, *Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa* 1994, 118). Poetry tilts itself to a sort of philosophical consolation that resounds with stoic and neo-platonic echoes that had tinted most of the hortononym poetic production as well. Ricardo Reis as well had, in fact, expressed within his poems a stoic and imperturbable attitude towards death:

*Sereno aguarda o fim que pouco tarda ,  
Que é qualquer vida? Breves sois e sono.  
Quanto pensas emprega  
Em não muito pensares.*

*Ao nauta o mar obscuro é a rota clara  
Tu, na confusa solidão da vida,  
A ti mesmo te elege  
(Não sabes de outro) o porto. (Pessoa, *Odes de Ricardo Reis* 1946,  
144)*

Upon the *Inscriptions* an overall sense of human caducity predominates and dream is the only possible escape from a transient sense of life: «Life lived us, not we life». In this sense, the second inscription where fate is set out as “mighty” appears as extremely significant:

*Me, Chloe, a maid, the mighty fates have given  
Who was nought to them, to the peopled shades.  
Thus the gods will. My years were but twice seven.  
I am forgotten in my distant glades. (Pessoa, *Poemas Ingleses de  
Fernando Pessoa* 1994, 116) (my emphasis)*

People are thus compared to mighty fades, and the shades are filled with people. As Ana Paula Quintela Ferreira Sottomayor has pointed out Pessoa

seems to heir the Hellenic concept of *amekania*<sup>158</sup>. The passing of this young girl makes it even more possible to highlight the extreme transience of human beings. *Mensagem* does not betray the same disproportion between human action and Fate, conceived as a superior Destiny. This is particularly true in relation to the epitaphs concentrated within the first part of the work and, precisely, within the section entitled “As Quinas”. All written in the first person and of a variable dimension, these poems present a clearer origin than the *Inscriptions*. In Dom Duarte, King of Portugal this disproportion reveals itself to be anyway adequate to human possibilities:

*Firme em minha tristeza, tal vivi.  
Cumprí contra o Destino o meu dever.  
Inutilmente? Não, porque o cumprí.*<sup>159</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934,37)

While, in D. Pedro, Regente de Portugal it is perceivable a sort of compliance and total acceptance towards a superior but adverse Destiny:

*Não me podia a Sorte dar guarida  
Por não sere um dos seus.  
Assim vivi, assim morri, a vida,  
Calmo sob mudos céus,  
Fiel à palavra dada e à idéa tida  
Tudo mais é com Deus.*<sup>160</sup> (*ibidem*, 40)

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<sup>158</sup> Cfr. «A inanidade da Vida do Homem, a impotência humana para reagir perante os Deuses e o Destino (a *αμηχανία* dos Gregos do período arcaico), noções a todo o momento presente nos epitáfios de Fernando Pessoa, como já tentamos por evidência, ao analisar a 1 e a 13». (Ferreira Sottomayor 1978, 89) [«The inanity of Man's Life, the human impotence to resist Gods and Destiny (the *αμηχανία* of the Greeks of the archaic period), notions which appear at all times in Fernando Pessoa's epitaphs, as we have already tried to underline in analyzing [the *Inscriptions*] 1 and 13». (my translation)

<sup>159</sup> [«So I lived, in my own gloom, resolute./ I did my duty against Destiny./ Uselessly? No, because I did do it»]. (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 34)

<sup>160</sup> [«Fate could not give me any place of refuge,/ Not being one its spies./ So I lived, so I died, all my life/Calm under mute skies,/ Loyal to the pledged word and held belief./ With God all the rest lies»]. (*ibidem*, 39)

Lastly, King Sebastian's epitaph rather resembles a Dantesque one resounding with Ulysses' echoes. The speaking I actually explains the story of his defeat against Fate, for his willingness to go beyond the gifts of Destiny introducing the leading theme of (positive) madness:

*Louco, sim, louco porque quiz grandeza  
Qual a Sorte a não dá.  
Não coube em mim minha certeza;  
Por isso onde o areal está  
Ficou meu ser que houve, não o que ha.<sup>161</sup> (ibidem, 42)*

On the other hand, the only possibility for human beings to pass their limits is that of putting and crafting one's own fate in the much wider one of History. It is not by accident that the fifth *Inscription* is the one which perhaps could be isolated as a *Mensagem's* direct forerunner. Significantly, in this inscription fate is written with a capital letter whether referring to a soldier or a warrior:

I conquered. For barbarians heard my name.  
Men were dice in my game.  
But to my throw myself did lesser come.  
I threw dice, Fate the sum. (Pessoa, *Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa* 1994, 118)

Even if in this case, it is about a capital Fate, the human agency is subjected to that of a superior destiny, as we read in *Mensagem*, «*Todo começo é involuntario./ Deus é o agente. O heroe assiste, vario/ E incosciente*» (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 27). Almost the same sense of human frailty pervades the characters of *Mensagem* whose destiny is marked by a “capital” god just

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<sup>161</sup> [«Mad, yes, mad, because I would have greatness/ Such as Fate gives to none./ No tamping down in me my sureness;/ Therefore, where the sand dwells, the worn/ Part of me stopped, not the enduring one».] (*ibidem* 43)

because the predestination is that of History, or rather, the Sacred Portuguese History. Nonetheless, just as in *Mensagem*, the *Inscriptions* reveal a profound sense of predestination: every character, especially those speaking in the first person, seems to have achieved precisely what they had deserved in the name of a bigger teleology. This prerogative also mirrors, once again, the Pessoaan attitude towards poetic creation conceived as a sort of religious act, a human gesture scraped against the whimsical and inexorable act of Time as, significantly, the last *Inscription* displays:

The work is done. The hammer is laid down.  
The artisans, that built the slow-grown town,  
Have been succeeded by those who still built.  
All this is something lack-of-something screening.  
The thought whole has no meaning  
But lies by Time's wall like a pitcher split. (Pessoa, *Poemas Ingleses*  
de Fernando Pessoa 1994, 122)

#### **4.3.2. Inscriptions**

Walt Whitman is undoubtedly a key figure in Pessoa's imagination belonging to that English education that as he himself has implied is fundamental to his literary background. Maria Irene Ramalho, George Monteiro, and Eduardo Lourenço have extensively explored the presence of the American poet within the work of either Alberto Caeiro and Álvaro de Campos who, more than any other heteronym, interiorized the lesson of Whitman translating its vitalist attitude into its former Futurist odes. Significantly enough, in 1916 Fernando Pessoa asserts that the Marine Engineer is «a Walt Whitman with a Greek poet inside. He has all the power of sensation that Whitman had. He has all the vast power of intellectual emotional and physical sensation that characterizes Whitman» (Pessoa, *Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-*

Interpretação 1966, 140). A poem like *Antinoo* appears very much in the mood of *Leaves of Gras*' "Calamus" section, subtly asserting a sort of affinity between homoerotic love and the ideal of classic and pure beauty: "I am the poet of the body,/ I am the poet of the soul" (Whitman 1996, 46) the American poet claims in "Song of Myself". From another perspective Whitman's vitality gives Pessoa an authoritative predecessor of his readiness to embody a multitude of beings, oxymorons, contradictions and opposites. The verses of *Leaves of Grass* seem to have cradled Pessoa in his celebration of the primacy of sensation and, at the same time, of the power of poetry. This religion of poetry that leads almost straightforwardly to the power of the poet himself depicted as a prophet, or rather, as a national poet:

[...] Whitman's growing sense of the power of poetry, and thus of the poet: religion operating as poetry – and only as poetry – can make the nation, vivify it: or, in the language of a late poem like "Passage to India", "eclaircise it". (Pearce 1985, 66)

These words immediately reminds us of Pessoa's *Mensagem's Ulysses* where it is affirmed that myth, both mythologically and allegorically intended as poetry and/or narration is able to "fertilize" the nation. After all, Whitman himself had written:

Great are the myths...I too delight in them,  
Great are Adam and Eve...I too look back and accept them;

Great the risen and fallen nations, and their poets, women  
sages, inventors, rulers, warriors and priests". (Whitman 1996, 142)

These verses could appear as a summary of *Mensagem's* objectives. Whitman is conscious and convicted of the power of poetry which reveals itself

pivotal for the growth of the nation. *Mensagem* embodies the Pessoa translation of this Whitmanian tension in its contamination of national and political ideals with aesthetic ambitions. As Irene Ramalho has accrued, «[...] in *Mensagem*, Pessoa builds the Fifth Empire by wholly translating history and politics into “pure poetry”» (Ramalho 2003, 80). Simultaneously, Irene Ramalho links this state of art to Pessoa’s introjections of another Whitmanian feature that is the conversion of this poetic assumption into a poetics of national and Atlantic arrogance. Certainly, Whitman’s paradigm passes through the Romantic ideal of poetry but I would here recall that while the author of *Leaves of Grass* is celebrating a just born big nation, Pessoa is celebrating the funeral of Portugal’s glorious past trying to imagine a different future. I would rather imply that the more consistent heritage Whitman leaves to Pessoa is that utopian attitude that tries to accomplish particular and universal, singularity and totality. This is quite clear within the “Inscriptions” which appear in correspondence with the 1871 *Leaves of Grass* edition. Most of the poems of this section are a sort of premise to the whole work displaying a presentation of the author’s ambitions, poetic aims, aesthetic ideals, and preoccupations with the reception of his production as “Poets to come”:

POETS to come! Orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater  
Than before known,  
Arouse! For you must justify me.

I myself but write once or two indicative words for the future,  
I but advance a moment only tho wheel and hurry back  
in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fullt stopping,  
Turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face,  
Leaving it to you to prove and defined it,  
Expecting the main things from you. (Whitman 1996, 175)

Whitman's "Inscriptions" are also conceived as an epic premise to the collection, containing an electric heralding of the nation. Whitman is certainly the model of Alberto Caeiro's crystalline verse, of the ecstatic exalts of sensation and machines, but, chiefly, he is the bard of the new America. Significantly, in "To a Historian", Whitman affirms: "I project the history of the future". This verse could actually have been written by Pessoa himself in his will to re-convert- through *Mensagem's* poetry- past into future. The poem Fifth Empire really typifies this intention, epitomizing the internalization of the Whitmanian epic exuberance:

*Triste de quem vive em casa,  
Contente com o seu lar,  
Sem que um sonho, no erguer da asa,  
Faça até mais rubra a brasa  
Da lareira a abandona!*

*Triste de quem é feliz!  
Vive porque a vida dura.  
Nada na alma lhe diz  
Mais que a lição da raiz-  
Ter por vida a sepultura.*

*Eras sobre eras se somem  
No tempo que emeras vem.  
Ser descontente é ser homem.  
Que as forças cegas se domem  
Pela visão que a alma tem!*

*E assim, passados os quatro  
Tempos do ser que sonhou,  
A terra será teatro  
Do dia claro, que no atro  
De erma noite começou.*

*Grecia, Roma, Christianidade,  
Europa –os quatro se vão  
Para onde vae toda idade.  
Quem vem viver a verdade  
Que morreu D. Sebastião?<sup>162</sup> (Pessoa, *Mensagem* 1934, 82)*

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<sup>162</sup> [«Poor man that lives at home/ Content with his fireside- / No wingbeat of a dream/  
To fan redder the ember,/ The hearth he should desert!// Poor man that's happy! He lives/ On  
because still alive./ No word from his soul he receives/ But the lesson a root gives- / Take burial  
for life.// Era on era, the main/ Time eras bring to be./ Discontent makes a man./ Let the blind



Being the celebration of the national achievement, the Fifth Empire, this poem reveals the spirit of the Portuguese epic soul and that much seems to owe much to Whitman's sense for search and discovery. Nevertheless, there is another detail that strikes the reader's attention: both Whitman and Pessoa's *Inscriptions* do not deal solely with Death and with the frailty of human acting in respect of the agency of Time, but rather foster the principal need of poetry and the sake of knowledge as the vital answer to the inexorable passing of Time, as the initial epigraph to the 1891 *Leaves of Grass* edition exemplifies:

COME, said my Soul,  
Such verses for my Body let us write, (for we are one,)  
That should I after death invisibly return,  
Or, long long hence, in other spheres, [...] (Whitman 1996, 147)

On the other hand, Whitman's "Inscriptions" seem to have influenced formally Pessoa's own *Inscriptions* then ebbed into some *Mensagem's* texturing schemes. If Fernando Pessoa's work more faithfully respects the model, Whitman rather makes of them epigrams made of paper and ink. Most of the poems grouped therein *Leaves of Grass's* first section, in fact, actually re-cross the meaning and the form of burial markers but rather refer to a reader that to a vague seafarer as the paradigm of the genre would require. The epigrammatic form actually recurs every time more explicitly in this need for interaction, just

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powers tame/ Themselves that the soul may see.// So when, as dreamed, the four/ Kingdom have passed away,/ Earth shall be theatre for/ The clear dawn, just come forth/ From, black, the night, the waste.// Hellas, Rome, Christendom,/ Europe – the four in their pride/ Going the way of a time./ Who's coming, to live the doom/ Which Dom Sebastião died?»] (Pessoa, *Message* 2007, 83)

as if the writing in the shape of a burial marker would foster the communication as in “Thou Reader”:

THOU reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,  
Therefore for thee the following chants. (*ibidem*, 175)

Another *Inscription* precisely takes the shape of a memorial carving but the topic of the address to the wayfarer profoundly undertakes the need to underline this necessity of complicity with the reader, an ideal book’s reader:

STRANGER, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to  
Me, why should you not speak to me?  
And why should I not speak to you? (*ibidem*, 175)

The epigram as a burial marker or the ode on a tomb represents of course a topic of Romanticism not only as a gothic fascination but also as a Hellenist reminiscence. Fernando Pessoa has certainly been subjected to this Romantic and late Romantic enchantment as previously beckoned in the foregoing chapter and it is known with certainty that he read, during his years in Durban, Keats and Coleridge and even tried to translate “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”. But Whitman’s influence appears quite consistent both as concerns formal features (as De Campos’ odes demonstrate) and concerning Pessoa’s poetic consciousness. Eduardo Lourenço has contended that Fernando Pessoa would embody the anti-Whitman: «*Em forma de poemas assombrosos (e de ninguém mais o diria) Whiman era exctamente tudo quanto ele não era e, por não sê-lo, aspirava ser sem conseguí-lo*<sup>163</sup>» (Lourenço Tempo e Poesia

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<sup>163</sup> [«Whitman, in the form of astonishing poems (and no-one will affirm it anymore) was precisely everything he was not and, for this reason, he aspired to be»]. (my translation)

2003, 81). If there is in a sense an anti-Whitman attitude that is the last Campos, the anti-metaphysical Campos who opposes to Whitman's vitalist attitude a nihilist and existentialist withdrawal in himself. It is the Campos of "Tabacaría" that converts his former Whitmanian instinct to be a "cosmic" man into an observer of the day-by-day meaningless consuming of life, assisting to the nonsense of human acting in front of the evenly power of death.

Coinciding with the late De Campos, starts paving a sense of finitude of both things and humans starts paving its way. Nostalgia for an irremediable past marks out the passage into a lucid conscience of a human destiny that can be ransomed just by memory. If Reis appears as a dialectical synthesis of this desperate nostalgia, De Campos progressively passes from a national nostalgia for a lost past symbolized by a petrified *saudade* in the imaginary Absolute Mole from which all the ships depart, to a compassion for human nature and thus, for human destiny. Contemporarily, Pessoa hortononym seems to proceed from an opposite parabola. If the very former poems approach the theme of death and nostalgia from a nearly intimist attitude, he progressively gets to a more complex formulation of this issue, perhaps the most complete one, which is that of *Mensagem*. This work actually embodies the possibility of going beyond the personal finitude characterizing the particularity of human beings and finds a sense in a collective reasoning. *Mensagem* seems to say that the only possibility to escape from death on look of immortality is acting for one's History and collectivity. Whitman's *Inscriptions* and Pessoa's *Mensagem* both respond to the same need that of legitimation and search for immortality, and, especially of poetry's immortality.

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