

SACRIFICING THE BODY TO THE MANIFESTO: LANGUAGE, FUTURISM AND PERFORMANCE

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I drag the whole curtain down:

Somersault,

And leap over the piano...

The show will be wonderful!

I tear the music sheets to shreds,

Smash the whole set to pieces,

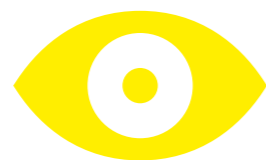
Burst out laughing,

And run out through the foyer...

Mário de Sá-Carneiro, *Tourniquet*, Paris, 1915

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FUTURISM, POETRY, AVANT-GARDE: ACTION!

Over one hundred years on, it would not be redundant to emphasize that the initial impetus of Italian futurism consisted of an ontological and performative reflection on language. Deeply influenced by French symbolists Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Kahn, as well as by the Phataphysics School of Alfred Jarry, F. T. Marinetti, the Italian poet and playwright, was a proselytizing patron of the early twentieth century Parisian anarchist poetry salons¹ which were revolutionizing the art of reading poetry and proposing an art of “words in liberty”.

The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909) was literary in nature. In fact, it consisted of textual action that proposed a rhetorical-political reconfiguration of literary discourse alongside a formal renewal in close dialogue with technological in-

¹ After his stay in Paris, between 1893 and 1896, Marinetti often returned to the French capital, staying in contact with the city’s literary and artistic milieu. During that period, he was a regular at the offices of *La Revue Blanche*, where poetry was violently read, together with Alfred Jarry; the anarchist community of the Abbaye de Créteil, where the same type of readings took place; the *Samedis populaires* organized by Gustave Kahn to restore the intensity of live reading to the printed word and the poetry evenings organized at the Grand Théâtre du Gymnase in Marseille (Beghaus 2000, 272–80).

novation. With a programmatic and militant orientation, the movement wanted to give a voice to, and be the agent of, an avant-garde, which finds expression, through a renewed aesthetic drive, in a new “way of saying”, namely the manifesto². From the statement of this combative intention ensues the encounter with theatre and the *serata*, namely the need to physically confront the audience, at the heart of public space, as well as the full doctrinal manifestation of an art of saying that proposes a radical exploration of the plastic and semiotic materiality of language.

In their aesthetic-political dimension these aspects constitute the historical roots of twentieth century performance, a structuring detail in the history of futurism for the relationships of similarity established with Portuguese futurism. While also in this case the historical dis-alignment with the avant-gardes is a reality, this did not hinder the possibility of a de facto dialogue, albeit a profusely experimental one.

The advent of this movement in Portugal took place in a variety of ways: grants to study in Paris given to artists such as Santa Rita Pintor, Eduardo Viana, Emmerico Nunes, Domingos Rebelo, who upon their return to Portugal contributed to the spreading of those aesthetic ideals. With the onset of WWI some returned, such as Amadeo Souza-Cardoso, Armando Basto, José Pacheco and Eduardo Viana; while others, such as Sonia and Robert Delaunay, settled in Portugal from 1915

² Despite the initial symbolist inspiration, it was futurism that definitely established the manifesto as a literary subgenre.

to 1917. According to Raquel Henriques da Silva, this wave of artists formed a “peculiar geography” that determined an “intense unfolding” of history (2008, 10), which included the history of futurism. In this regard, the Corporation Nouvelle project is important for its combination of poetry and painting. The project was the result of a friendship and artistic dialogue between the Delaunay couple, Souza-Cardoso, Almada Negreiros, José Pacheco and Eduardo Viana³, and benefited from the crucial role of Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, the only truly international Portuguese artist at the level of, and in contact with, the emerging avant-gardes. His connection to futurism was documented in the famous 1916 interview given to the newspaper *O Dia* on the occasion of the exhibition at Liga Naval, in Lisbon. In this interview, he stated his approval of futurist aesthetical ideals: “All of our life is looking ahead. Let us glorify the great mechanical and geometrical splendour, large-scale industry, electric adds, music hall [sic] alongside grand modern theatre and art as the sole universal expression of dynamic sensation” (Souza-Cardoso 1916). The creative dialogue between Pessoa and Sá-Carneiro, from 1912 to 1916, embodies the decisive critical reception of futurism in Portugal, with clear reverberations within the *Orpheu* project. Despite the exhaustively studied differences between them, the dialogues are most relevant to the history of the two movements. They are obvious in the two magazines: *Orpheu 1* includes Álvaro

³ The objective of the project was to organize itinerant exhibitions of painting, poetry objects, sculpture, etc., as well as to publish painting and poetry albums, including one of the precursor works of early twentieth century aesthetical avant-gardism, the famous visual poem in twenty-two panels by Sonia and Cendrars entitled *La Prose du transsibérien*, printed as an accordion-using folded cardboard.

de Campos’ “Triumphal Ode”; *Orpheu 2* announces a series of conferences which, true to the futurist style, never actually took place, along with a few futurist texts such as Mário de Sá-Carneiro’s “Manucure”, Álvaro de Campos’ “Maritime Ode” and Santa Rita’s *hors-texte*. As for *Portugal Futurista*, it features a series of texts ranging from Apollinaire to Blaise Cendrars and from Sá-Carneiro to Fernando Pessoa. I have chosen to systematize this relationship according to an affinity with and belonging of futurism to modernism in which the former is seen as a trend or variation of the latter. However, this ambiguity becomes clearer when taking into account Pessoa’s own testimony in a letter to an English publisher proposing the publishing of a sensationalist anthology which, as transvestite as it may appear, explains this relationship in the following terms: “We are the descendants of three earlier movements – French ‘symbolism’, Portuguese pantheistic transcendentalism, and the hodgepodge of senseless and contradictory things of which futurism, cubism and others of the same ilk are the occasional expressions” (1972, 134). Also in line with this connection are Pessoa’s dialogue with the vorticist current of English modernism (McNeill 2015) and Sá-Carneiro’s with the Parisian cubist avant-garde, as well as the fact that it was only in 1914, when Sá-Carneiro and Santa Rita returned home, that Parisian avant-gardes resonated in Lisbon for the first time, that Sá-Carneiro and Pessoa truly committed to the *Orpheu* project and the crucial role of futurism in the Portuguese modernist emergence became observable.

In fact, Fernando Cabral Martins underscores the need to read *Orpheu* as “an event” that “exposes the very genesis of the

Avant-garde” (2015, 75), and Celina Silva also highlights its “mise-en-scène aimed at generating a revolution in the cultural space-time” (1999, 1295). Similarly, Nuno Júdice had already outlined the more specifically performative aspects (albeit not under this designation) of both movements: the framing of literature in the broader context of the other arts; the dimension of a theoretically based literary group meeting periodically at cafes to “impose themselves as avant-garde”; the use of the manifesto-magazine format, which translated into an innovation not only in terms of content but also graphic layout; and a concern with capturing, shocking and educating audiences (Júdice 1990, 2).

Despite the dearth of theoretical considerations of performance and literature by performance and literature studies, it is possible to identify in these aspects of futurism, and in the light of performance theory, an “instantiation of text” in its performative character insofar as an activation, of its semic materiality, via performance, be it in terms of “typefaces, format, spatial distribution of the elements on the page or through the book, physical form or space” (Drucker 1998, 131-2). This realizes the technical, semiotic and organic foundation of language. In addition, from the perspective of the classic concept of performance, as outlined by RoseLee Goldberg, futurist manifestations take on the “form of solo or group spectacle” presented by the author-actor in venues ranging from the “theatre” to the “bar”, the “café” or the “street corner”, following no specific script. There is also the exploration of “large-scale visual elements”, in events that can last hours or minutes and which could follow a script despite a significant improvisational component (Goldberg, 1979).

In one word, futurism truly distinguishes itself from modernism due to its plastic-literary prank, which in the Portuguese case ensured its singularity and modernity. This genealogic link between *Orpheu* and ideas that were the precursors and the protagonists of futurism via the flow of artists between the French *Belle Époque* and Lisbon dictated its literary character through its alignment with the avant-garde and futurist performance of the time.

PERFORMERS,
MANIFESTOS & ALL:
A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

While it is true that it is possible to detect a type of futurism in Portugal akin to the Italian, French or German, an approach from the angle of the presuppositions mentioned above allows us to trace an expanded chronology of the movement based on the aesthetical-sociological rupture of which it was the protagonist. On the one hand, it is possible to observe in Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso’s parody of Velázquez’ *The Drunkards* (Paris, 1908) a premeditation of futurist actions to follow. On the other hand, it is also possible to see how these were prolonged in a series of texts and actions that very concretely rekindled the futurist legacy in the 1920s.

However, the two magazines *Orpheu* (1915) and *Portugal Futurista* (1917) were the first to become the performative prototype of futurist actions. Falling under the category of magazine-op-

eration⁴, due to the experimental nature of their texts and the public scandal they caused, these publications, along with the immersive-phenomenological space of the café, newspaper articles, works and conferences (in the case of *Portugal Futurista*), were the urban core from which this performative action and language project radiated. For instance, *Orpheu 1*, a venture that included the staging of its management (Pessoa 1968, 60), was orchestrated by Pessoa and Sá-Carneiro at a café table. As for *Portugal Futurista*, seized at the printer's by President Afonso Costa's republican police in November 1917, it exemplified the transgression effect which translates into the symbolic effect that the seizing represented in the public space in terms of its social, aesthetical and political impact. Both magazines reflect the performative matrix of modernism within the Portuguese public space and their role cannot be emphasized or researched enough.

Well before Almada's 1917 talk at the Teatro da República, there was Raul Leal's intervention *O Bando Sinistro* [A Sinister Band] in 1915. The poet, a staunch monarchist, was one of the brightest performative figures in Portuguese futurism and the protagonist of one of the first recorded performances in the public space of that period: the distribution of the manifesto entitled *Apelo aos Intelectuais Portugueses* [A Call to Portuguese Intellectuals] against Afonso Costa and the First Republic. Printed clandestinely with the aid of Santa Rita, Leal began by throwing copies "from the upper gallery of Café Martinho, the leaflets flying about and flooding the floor and tables below" (Leal 2010, 25) and then handed them out in one of the Cascais line

⁴ According to the taxonomic categories proposed by Dias (2016).

trains. A playwright and admirer of Wagner's total theatre, Leal corresponded with Marinetti, whom he had personally met in Paris in 1914. Raul Leal was also a polemist, particularly in the case of António Botto, where he sided with Fernando Pessoa against the conservative morals of the Lisbon Students Action League between 1922 and 1923, having written the pamphlet *Sodoma Divinizada* [Deified Sodom] (1923), which was seized a month after publication. Raul Leal was one of the most important and singular interlocutors of the Portuguese orphic-futurist spirit. In the human drama of his brilliant madness, he personified the existential stance of a true futurist dancer.

On the occasion of Pessoa's death, Almada said: "I did not know of any example similar to Fernando Pessoa's: the man replaced by the poet", adding: "Until, one day in 1935, the poet personally buried the body that had accompanied him all his life" (Almada Negreiros 1935, 48). In Portuguese literature, no one personified the "drama in people" and in language like Pessoa, for whom "art is essentially dramatic" (Pessoa 1999, 84). A subject that deserves a study in its own right is his crucial legacy to a theory of performance and language. In this context, it is also worth mentioning the mysterious episode, of which he was the protagonist, together with Augusto Ferreira Gomes, of Aleister Crowley's disappearance at Cascais's Hell's Mouth during his visit to Portugal in 1930. The staging of the mystery surrounding the obscure disappearance of "Master Therion" on the pages of *Diário de Notícias* and *Notícias Ilustrado*, had lasting repercussions in the press and the impact of an international practical joke, and it deserves a reference in a chronology of Portuguese performance.

Furthermore, Mário de Sá-Carneiro played a preponderant role here. While it is true that the poet always distanced himself from futurism, there are manifold ways of including him in that project. Starting from the end, it is possible to glimpse a dialogue between the moment of his death and the opening of “Manucure”, the most futurist of his poems. In a letter to José Pacheko, dated 6 May 1916, Jorge Barradas testifies: “Before taking the poison, I know he did his nails, put on his finest suit, combed his hair and, after taking the poison, lay down on the bed to wait for death” (quoted in Nobre 1990, 16). This should be compared with the beginning of the poem mentioned above: “In the sensation of polishing my nails, / a sudden inexplicable sensation of tenderness. / I include everything in Me piously” (Sá-Carneiro 2001, 51).

Despite his known vocation as a playwright, the author nevertheless made a distinction between literature and theatre, considering them as “two opposite arts”: theatre as a “plastic art” aimed at “seeing” and literature as an art of *feeling* (Sá-Carneiro 2001, 240-1), as laid out in the article-manifesto “Teatro-arte” [Theatre-art] published in the republican daily *O Rebate* on 28 November 1913. In it the author conceptualizes the drama *in persona* that he embodies as the actor of his art-life. Cabral Martins has spoken at length on this theme extracting an “exhibitionist” and “confessional tone” from the rigorous temporal recording of his texts that has crystallized them as “quasi-theatre” (Martins 1997, 68). Aside from some more markedly avant-gardist poems, such as the “poems without support” that he dedicates to Santa Rita (“Elegia” [Elegy] and “Manucure”, or “Apoteose” [Apotheosis] and “Torniquete” [Tourniquet],

among others), in his youth the author also participated as an actor in theatrical recitals translating and writing theatre plays. But there was also his bohemian café life in Paris, in true futurist style, featured in such poems as “Serradura” [Sawdust] (1915) or “Cinco Horas” [Five o’clock] (1915).

From Guilherme de Santa Rita, who had returned to Lisbon in September 1914 with the mission of spreading the futurist aesthetical ideal, we are left only with the striking testimony of the painting *A Cabeça (Cubo-futurista)* [The head (cubo-futurist)] (1919-1912), the *hors-texte* for *Orpheu 2* and the four paintings for *Portugal Futurista*. Despite this sparse output, Santa Rita’s place in Portuguese futurism is central and he was continuous and fervently remembered (by Sarah Afonso, for instance) for his histrionic and clownish gesture as the “art theoretician” (quoted in Almada Negreiros 1982, 34) or “terracotta model” of futurism, as Carlos Parreira called him (quoted in Neves 2006, 169). This is due to the fact that Santa Rita had become, as a body-canvas, a unique futurist work that, despite not having survived, became crystalized in the anamnesis of that *mise-en-scène*. Moreover, after having had direct contact with it in Paris, he played a crucial role in spreading futurism in the country and turned himself into an *ipsis verbis* example of sacrificing the body to the manifesto. Ruy Coelho, who lived with Santa Rita in Paris, offers the following testimony: “Here is the prankster. Here is Santa Rita. A painter who strolled the streets of Paris until late at night, talking and creating the most fantastical theories of art and who, once lost, did not want to find his way back home. A prank?” (Coelho 2015, 93).

Deeply influenced by the Delaunay couple, José de Almada Negreiros is the most consensual artist among Portuguese futurists for his consistency, for the diversity and singularity of his oeuvre, for his expansive and non-conformist personality that combines with the leitmotif of movement, for the multiplicity and abundance of performances, texts and interventions the legacy of which, in its quantity and quality, is still untapped and calls for a full and detailed systematizing from the point of view of performance.

In his orchestration of innumerable interventions three aspects stand out: the performances and interventions, the programmatic texts and the countless conference-performances. His major texts include “Saltimbancos” (contrastes simultâneos) [Wandering jugglers (simultaneous contrasts)], “Mima-Fataxa” and “Ultimatum Futurista às gerações portuguesas do século XX” [Futurist Ultimatum to Portuguese generations of the twentieth century], published in *Portugal Futurista*; the 1917 surrealist novella *A Engomadeira* [The ironing woman]; *A Cena do Ódio* [The Scene of Hatred], 1915, intended for *Orpheu 3* but only partly published in 1923 in *Contemporânea 7*; the leaflet “Manifesto da Exposição de Amadeo Souza-Cardoso” [Manifesto for Amadeo e Souza-Cardoso’s Exhibition] (1916), which accompanied Sousa-Cardoso’s exhibition in Portugal (Lisbon and Porto); the leaflet-visual poem “Litoral [Coastline]” (1916) and *K4 O Quadrado Azul* [K4 The Blue Square], one of the masterpieces of Portuguese futurism. In these and other texts, the artist explored the performative potential of language in corporeal, plastic, auditory and planographic terms by developing a spatial-temporal instantiation

of the text in the space-time of what Fischer-Litche calls “the semiotic body” (2008). His performances include the opening futurist conference at Teatro República, in 1917, with Santa Rita, wearing the blue futurist worker’s overall that he had designed for the occasion, and the intervention “o pacto do grande frete da poesia: enquanto a Poesia não é” [the pact of the great bore of poetry: while waiting for Poetry]. In line with the notion of the intermedia relation between literature and the other arts, this manifesto was proclaimed by Almada, Santa Rita and Souza-Cardoso in front of the painting *Ecce Homo*, at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, in Lisbon, in 1917, an event for which the three artists shaved their eyebrows and beards and went for a stroll in downtown Lisbon (Almada Negreiros 1959, 20). *Manifesto Anti-Dantas* was written following the famous controversy with Júlio Dantas, after Almada had seen the play *Sóror Mariana* [Sister Mariana] at the Teatro Ginásio on 21 October 1915. The manifesto, published in an experimental brown paper edition, was read aloud to his generational companions while standing on top of a table in Café Martinho. Later, on 15 August 1965, there was a performative reading of the manifesto at Casa dos Galos in Lisbon (Almada Negreiros 2013). In this context, we should mention Almada’s involvement with the ballets russes when Diaghilev’s company toured the Coliseu and Teatro São Carlos in 1917 and 1918. Aside from the passionate manifesto *Os Bailados Russos em Lisboa* [The Ballets Russes in Lisbon], the artist participated as a director, costume designer and dancer in such pieces as *Bailado Encantamento* [Enchantment Ballet], *A Princesa dos Sapatos de Ferro* [The Princess with the Iron Shoes], *Jardim de Pierrette* [Pierrette’s Garden] and *Carnaval*

[Carnival], by Fokine and Bakst, becoming famous for his performances as Harlequin and Pierrot.

Among his most important performance-conferences is *Arte, a Dianteira* [Art, the Frontline], one of his last, held at the University of Coimbra in 1965. It featured a close-up reproduction of a canvas with the famous formula “1+1 = 1” hanging above his head (Almada Negreiros 2006, 343). In his graphic presentation of the concept of knowledge as absolute, in the scope of which he defined art as vital drive, Negreiros proposed a notion of poetry as “voice” and “vocation”, coming to the conclusion that “Poetry is the vigour of personal birth. / One is born a Poet. Everyone. Each one.” (Almada Negreiros 2006, 321-2). This formula sums up Almada’s concept of art as life, an operation in which language plays a primordial role.

FOR A HISTORY OF EPIGONIC FUTURISM IN PORTUGAL

The studies on Portuguese futurism are unanimous as to its fleetingness and intensity. However, a broader analysis of its sociological-performative impact allows us to put this fleetingness into perspective and speak of an epigonic futurism. Sá-Carneiro’s suicide in Paris, in 1916, Santa Rita’s and Souza-Cardoso’s deaths in 1918 and Almada’s departure for Paris in 1919 foretold the end of the first cycle. However, a last breath can be identified in António Ferro’s publication of the manifesto “Nós” [We] in 1921 and in the Coimbra group.

In 1916, Francisco Levita published the manifesto *Negreiros-Dantas* in Coimbra against the “volatile” lust of Almada Negreiros in his disproportionate attention to Dantas, and organized the iconoclastic “Banquete Futurista” [Futurist Banquet] together with two of his friends at the Hotel Bussaco. The graphic and material performativity of the manifesto, in its performative arrangement of visual and spatial experiments on the page and featuring the text on two folded leaves, in true futurist style, along with the experimental happening at Luso, allow us once again to trace a vocation of Portuguese futurism for provocation, between intermedia experimentalism, performance and language. A few years later, and in the same vein, the “Coimbra Futurist Movement”⁵ brought together public space intervention and the manifesto-conference. The beatific mission of the “sensational conference” subtitled “Sol” [Sun], which resulted in a happening with programmatic intentions, was to “exhort humanity to learn how to Be-itself” (S.1925, 5). The conference was presented, and duly baptized with cold water from a fire-hose, at Teatro Sousa Bastos, in Coimbra, on 13 March 1925. The same militant intention is apparent in the tone of the flyer and manifesto simply entitled “Manifesto”, which opens with quotes by Marinetti and proposes “states of mind to be lived in sequence” as well as “dances strong intersections planes sculptures”, because “forms are not inert but always moving” (quoted by Marnoto 2009, 28).

The main figure of this epigonic futurism is António Ferro. Well before joining the National Information Secretariat (SNI),

⁵ Which included António Navarro (Príncipe de Judá), Abel Almada (Tristão de Teive), João Carlos Celestino Gomes (Pereira São-Pedro) and Mário Coutinho (Óscar).

Sá Carneiro's high school friend and colleague brought together pose-theatre, writing and social-cultural intervention, which he cultivated through theatre, literature, cinema, journalism, the graphic arts, scenography, and even couture and decoration. The triad composed of theatricality, literature and public space intervention, together with his futurist and modernist spirit, culminated in a series of interventions and works that are worth mentioning.

António Ferro's notion of art can be elucidated by his words concerning the polemical demonstration on the "SNBA matter" at Chiado Terrasse, in Lisbon, on 18 December 1921:

All Arts are plastic, all Arts can be reduced to forms. Art is truly the outline of life. There is flowing hair in a melody by Debussy, there is a majestic andante in Rodin's *The Walking Man*... In Art everything is plastic; in Art everything is a body. A sonnet by Eugénio de Castro is plastic, Notre Dame is plastic; Ruskin's prose is as plastic as the plastic arts he writes about. In Art all is alive, in Art all is form. (quoted by Rodrigues 1995, 87)

Aside from *Teoria da Indiferença* [Theory of Indifference] (1920), in which he states that "Life is the artist's studio. / Clothes are the posters of the body" (quoted by Henriques 1990, 107), there was also the literary manifesto "Nós" (1921; the third manifesto of Portuguese futurism⁶), an author edi-

⁶ Together with Almada's "Ultimatum Futurista" and Álvaro de Campos' "Ultimatum".

tion personally distributed at the door of the Brasileira in the same year. In that text, written with a theatrical structure in a dialogue between "I" and "The Crowd", the author calls for the creation of a global theatre – "That life may be a theatre in white and gold..." in which every word is "a drop of blood" (Ferro 2006, 159). Then, in 1922 he presented the performance-conference "A Idade do *Jazz-Band* [The Age of the Jazz-Band]" in Brazil, which culminated in a happening-concert with a jazz orchestra and a dancer. In 1923, his experimental theatre play "Mar Alto" [High seas], briefly featuring Ferro as actor, was presented in Lisbon at the Teatro de São Carlos. Echoing the *Orpheu* scandal, this controversial play was forbidden. Ferro also designed a Parisian-inspired studio-theatre to produce avant-garde plays and experimental scenographic projects. This dream came true in 1925 under the name Teatro Novo at the foyer of Palácio Rivoli with an exuberant decoration by José Pacheko. The presentation of the plays *Knock or the Victory of Medicine*, by Jules Romains and *Right You Are* (if you think so), by Luigi Pirandello, considered too bold for Portuguese society of the time, led to the closing down of this aspiring experimental theatre.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Futurism proposes and brings to fruition a new relationship between the word and its corporeal and technical materiality. Broadly speaking, its main contribution to the history of performance is the destabilizing of genres, the exploration of

literature as praxis, as well as an effective epistemological dialogue between the arts. It is in this context that the manifesto, as performative and experimental language theatre, affirms itself as a catalysing event of the, and in the, public space.

Concerning the Portuguese case, it is symptomatic that José de Almada Negreiros, in a retrospective exercise in his *Orpheu 1915-1965*, repeatedly invokes the following set of nuclear spaces of this avant-garde: its experimental character, “the encounter of letters and painting” (Almada Negreiros 2015, 24), the “simultaneity of various kinds of knowledge” (idem, 19) and “plenitude, i.e., that the mental and sensible function is exercised in a ‘natural freedom’” (idem, 20). These are transversal aspects to this history, the protagonists of which literally sacrificed their body. Although futurism did not last in Portugal, the “sociological scandal” (Melo e Castro 1980, 42) that it brought about cannot be overlooked in its lasting historical repercussions. Sharing an aesthetical revolutionary project based on the principles of free art, literature as praxis and the intersecting of the arts, defence of manifesto-action and radical and ontological questioning of the world, Portuguese futurism is a unique and undeniable legacy in Portuguese art.

The reasons for this lack of recognition, especially in the field of performance, are threefold: a difficulty on the part of critics to find a framework for art forms that challenged the epistemological boundaries between art and life, the different artistic languages, art and science, and the past, present and future. Its ephemeral character also amplified the loss, defying historicization and reception. As João Alves das Neves remarked a few

years later concerning Almada there are “very few truly valid documents left from this past of already almost half a century ago that preserve the signature of the impetuous and indomitable talent of Almada” (Neves 2006, 36). The same could be said of all the futurist actions mentioned here. Still, from the point of view of literary studies, the reception of modernism has been mostly through the perspective of *Orpheu* and Fernando Pessoa. As Osvaldo Manuel Silvestre has pointed out, “the futurist avant-garde calls not only for a critical or historiographical revisionism, but for methodological and disciplinary rigour. The instrument of this revision is the concept of performance, or rather, the rereading of the avant-garde under its light” (2008, 878). In other words, choosing to study these movements from the perspective of performance implies questioning that angle, requiring a redefinition of coordinates from the literary field and from the arts themselves, namely regarding the theoretical recognition and practical criticism of such concepts as intermedia literature and performance.

It is in the nature of performances and the avant-garde to start ending fast. The more ephemeral, the more apothecotic its passage and escape from time, the more it persists in a “future-desire” (Melo e Castro 1980, 45) of persevering transformation. As Almada wrote in his manifesto on Souza-Cardoso’s exhibition at Liga Naval in 1916: “We, the futurists, know nothing of History, we know only Life that passes us by” (2006, 20). Performance defies loss insofar as its “deposited acts” and its “spectral meanings” (Schneider 2012, 71-72) last. One hundred years on, what we celebrate here is that performance of art and life.

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