

Orpheu et al. Modernism, Women, and the War

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Keywords

Little magazines, Poetry, Modernism, The Great War, Society, Sexual mores.

Abstract

The article takes off from *Orpheu*, the little magazine at the origin of Portuguese modernism, to reflect, from a comparative perspective, on the development of modernist poetry in the context of the Great War and the social changes evolving during the first decades of the twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic.

Palavras-chave

“Little magazines,” Poesia, Modernismo, A Grande Guerra, Sociedade, Costumes sexuais.

Resumo

O artigo parte de *Orpheu*, a revista que dá origem ao modernismo português, para reflectir, numa perspectiva comparada, sobre o desenvolvimento da poesia modernista no contexto da Grande Guerra e das mudanças sociais emergentes nas primeiras décadas do século XX dos dois lados do Atlântico.

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It is frequently repeated in the relevant scholarship that Western literary and artistic modernism started in little magazines.¹ The useful online Modernist Journals Project (Brown University / Tulsa University), dealing so far only with American and British magazines, uses as its epigraph the much quoted phrase: “modernism began in the magazines”, see SCHOLLES and WULFMAN (2010) and BROOKER and THACKER (2009-2013). With two issues published in 1915 and a third one stopped that same year in the galley proofs for lack of funding, the Portuguese little magazine *Orpheu* inaugurated modernism in Portugal pretty much at the same time as all the other major little magazines in Europe and the United States. This is interesting, given the proverbial belatedness of Portuguese accomplishments, and no less interesting the fact that, like everywhere else, *Orpheu* was followed, in Portugal as well, by a number of other little magazines. Not always so original and provocative, to be sure, but with some of the same innovative collaborators, Fernando Pessoa foremost: *Exílio* (1916), *Centauro* (1916), *Portugal Futurista* (1917), *Contemporânea* (1915-1926), and *Athena* (1924-1925). Not to mention *Presença* (1927-1940), the journal that has been said to have inaugurated the Portuguese second modernism (or is it the anti-modernist modernism?) (cf. LOURENÇO, 1974: 165-194).

Just by way of example, in England John Middleton Murray’s *Rhythm: Art Music Literature Quarterly*, later *The Blue Review*, was published between 1911 and 1913; *The Egoist* ran between 1914 and 1916, preceded by *The Free Woman* (1911-1912) and *The New Free Woman* (1913); the only two issues of Wyndham Lewis’s *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* came out in 1914 and 1915, *Blast 1* immediately before the Great War began, *Blast 2*, the “War Number,” a year later. The vorticists said that the war killed *Blast* – as indeed it killed *Blast*’s Gaudier-Brzeska. The vortex in the title does not let us forget the great facilitator of Western literary modernism, the American cosmopolitan poet and opinion arbiter and taste-maker, Ezra Pound, who had meanwhile invented the name for vorticism. Readers of the “vertiginous” 1917 *Ultimatum* by Pessoa/Campos cannot help but immediately think of the iconoclasm of *Blast*, with which Pessoa was familiar since he had copies of the two issues of the magazine in his library. The affinities between *Ultimatum* and Pound’s and Lewis’ manifestos in the first issue of *Blast* have been noted by Patricia Silva (Cf. Silva [McNeill], 2015: 173-177). Unlike *Blast*, however, *Ultimatum* does not blast Marinetti. In the United States, Alfred Stieglitz’s *Camera Work* ran between 1903 and 1917; his 291, between 1915 and 1916; the last issue of Alfred Kreymborg’s *Glebe*, first published in September 1913, appeared in November 1914; it was followed by Kreymborg’s very influential *Others: A*

¹ This is an extended, revised version of the paper presented to the Lisbon Workshop “1915 – Modernist Legacies and Futures.” Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 20 February 2015. My thanks to Monica Varese Andrade for her wise comments and suggestions. When not otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

Magazine of the New Verse, running between 1915 and 1919. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* started in Chicago in 1912; *The Little Review* appeared first in Chicago as well, in 1914, and was published until 1929 in such varied places as San Francisco, New York City, and Paris. So, *Orpheu*, appearing in 1915, was not too Portuguese late, after all.

Some of these international and often transcontinental little magazines, on both sides of the Atlantic, were founded and edited by women. This is the case of *Poetry. A Magazine of Verse*, founded in Chicago in 1912 by Harriet Monroe, who edited it for many years, having another woman, Alice Corbin Henderson, as co-editor. Unlike most little magazines of the modernist avant-garde, *Poetry* was not at all short-lived and is still running today. Also American and also a two-women's venture was *The Little Review*, started in 1914 by Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap joining her in 1916, as co-editor and as a companion and lover; the last issue of the journal came out in 1929. In England, there was *The Egoist. An Individualist Review*, running between 1913 and 1919 under the editorship of two other women: Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver. The suffragette Dora Marsden had been responsible for the more politically engaged *The Free Woman* (1911-1912) and *The New Free Woman* (1913). The American poets Marianne Moore (*The Dial*, 2nd series, 1920-1929) and H.D. and the latter's lover, Maecenas, and life companion, Annie Winifred Ellerman, better known as Bryher, a writer herself (*Close Up*, 1927-1933), were also instrumental as little magazine editors in bringing out exciting new poetry and art, often systematically neglected by established, profit-minded (male) publishers. The most interesting case is, of course, that of James Joyce, whose *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was first serialized in *The Egoist* (1914-1915) and then published in book form by the Egoist Press (1916), which was first set up by Dora Marsden and Harriet Weaver precisely for that purpose. Joyce's writing of *Ulysses* was also subsidized by Harriet Weaver and first serialized in the US in Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review*. The consequences of the daring gesture of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap are well known: in 1921 the US Post Office refused to distribute *The Little Review* on charges of *Ulysses's* "obscenity." Since no mainstream publisher would touch the book, another lesbian, Sylvia Beach, had it published by her Shakespeare & Co. in Paris in 1922. However, it is possible that the serialization of *Ulysses* was just the excuse for the American authorities to fold an American inconvenient, subversive, anarchist journal, run by two lesbians.

The role of women editors and publishers during the first decades of modernism elicited an interesting remark by their contemporary, the American poet and publisher, Robert McAlmon: "It is some kind of commentary on the period," wrote McAlmon in his autobiography, "that Joyce's work and acclaim should have been fostered mainly by high-minded ladies, rather than by men. Ezra first brought him to Miss Weaver's attention, but it was she who then supported him." And McAlmon concludes: "*The Little Review* [meaning Margaret Anderson

and Jane Heap], Sylvia Beach, and Harriet Weaver brought Joyce into print." (MCALMON, 1938: 74). Later I will come back to the implications of McAlmon's reference to Pound and the contrast he poses between "high-minded ladies" and "men,"² but first I want to point out that these intelligent, gifted, and committed women were performing all these important tasks in the art world at the onset of modernism at a time when they had not yet conquered, or had barely conquered, the right to vote. Katherine Mansfield, who collaborated with Middleton Murray in *Rhythm* and *The Blue Review*, was the exception; in New Zealand, where she came from, the 1893 Electoral Act, for reasons I will not go into here, had granted all women the right to vote.³ What I am suggesting is that the fate of modernism, including the literary fortune of some of the most innovative authors of the period (most of them male) was largely and ironically in the hands of disenfranchised women. Women of means, intelligence, and some kind of power in the literary and artistic world, to be sure, but politically disenfranchised nonetheless. Just remember that Bryher had to contract a fake marriage with Robert McAlmon in 1921 to be allowed to take possession of her large, inherited fortune. With very rare exceptions, women's position in society required the "protection" of a father or a husband.

The women editors I have mentioned (some of them also poets) had fine minds, artistic sensibility, and great intellectual curiosity, were well educated and very knowledgeable about literature and the arts, as well as being dedicated readers of poetry, and independent enough to cultivate a taste of their own. Even if all of them were not always very vocal publicly about such political issues, they were feminists, and thus always running the risk of being defined as "high minded" by "men," especially when the latter's work was questioned by them according to editorial criteria. In a literary world dominated by men, these women editors did not hesitate to discuss aesthetic issues from their own point of view in order to challenge poets, such as Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, or Hart Crane, often by asking for clarification and revisions, and even by rejecting poems. I have here Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson and their *Poetry* particularly in mind.

² Feminist critics have abundantly criticized the masculinist bias of modernist discourses on modernism. See, for example, SCOTT (1990; Introduction).

³ For dates of full female suffrage all over the world, see DALEY and NOLAN (1994: 349-352).

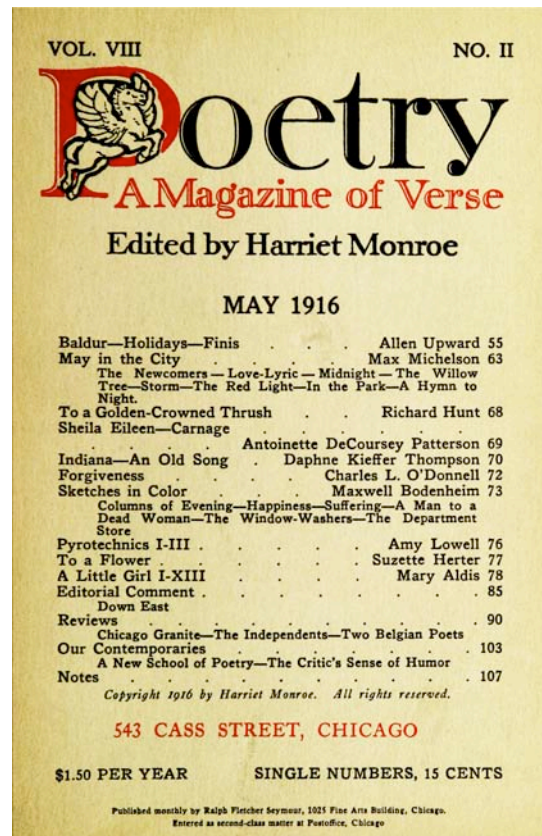


Fig. 1. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, edited by Harriet Monroe, vol. 8, n.º 2 (May 1916), front page.

Even though the general perception today is still that the most original and exciting work of *Poetry* was due mainly to the influence of Pound, who was the magazine's foreign correspondent between 1912 and 1917, the two women editors did not allow themselves to be cajoled by him and knew very well how to hold their ground (cf. MAREK, 1995).⁴ An important objective of theirs was to understand and educate America poetically, and thus to address a wide range of readers, by balancing the novelties of international experimentation with free verse, symbolism, imagism, cubism, and Dadaism, on the one hand, and more traditional, regional, ethnic, and sentimental poetic production, on the other. To Pound's dismay and impatience, *Poetry* took a long time to publish "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." When Eliot's poem finally came out in the June 1915 number, it made a striking splash at the end of the issue, preceded as it was by a series of well-wrought poems expressing conventional feelings of longing or idealized regret. The issue included a tribute to Rupert Brooke by Harriet Monroe and several mournful poems dedicated to the English poet, who had died months before. On the other hand, Alice Corbin Henderson, the sharper and less conventional of the two co-editors, did not hesitate to ridicule what she found were the excesses of faddish experimentation, exaggerated insistence on novelty,

⁴ For an excellent review article about *Women Editing Modernism*, see CANELO (1997a: 201-205).

and poetic self-indulgence. When *Others, an Anthology of New Verse* came out in 1916, edited by Alfred Kreyborg, Henderson made fun of its claim to be “a new school of poetry” (emphasis added). Her hilarious remarks are worth quoting: “Replacing the outworn conventions of the I-am-bic school, we have now the I-am-it school of poetry.” And she adds a comic parenthetical “(NOTE: *Les I-am-its* are not to be confused with *Les I’m-a-gists*, who are already outclassed and *démodé*.)”⁵

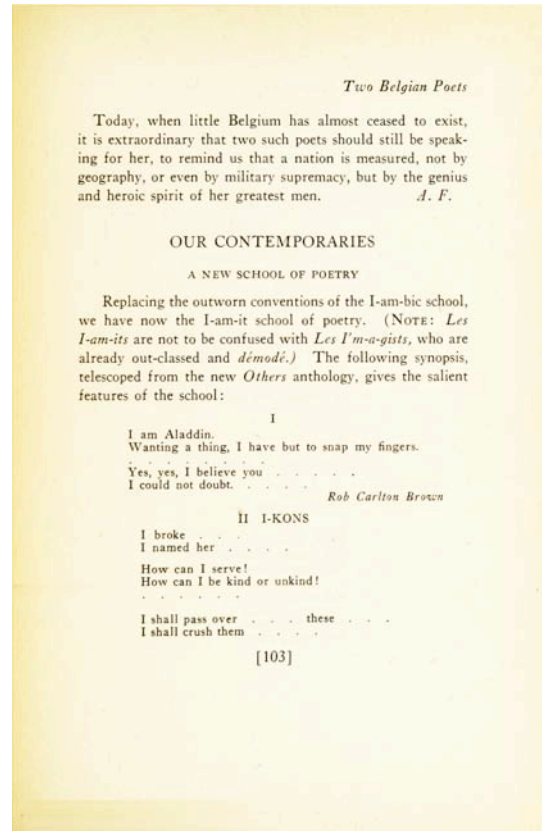


Fig. 2. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, edited by Harriet Monroe, vol. 8, n.º 2 (May 1916), p. 103

After a series of quotes of poems overladen with the poetic “I,” Henderson concludes, “We regret to say the printer announces that there are no more I’s in the font.”⁶ What I find interesting about this story is that this “high-minded lady” did not let herself be intimidated by such well-established “men” as Maxwell Bodenheim or William Carlos Williams, who immediately provided outraged protests on behalf of Kreyborg. Whether we think she was being fair or unfair,

⁵ The temptation here is to bring in Álvaro de Campos’s *Ultimatum*: “Passae, frouxos que tendes a necessidade de serdes os istas de qualquer ismo!” [Pass by, you milksops who need to be ists of one or another ism!] (PESSOA, 1982: 509-520 [512]; 2001: 72-87 [76]).

⁶ *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, vol. 8, n.º 2, pp. 103-105. Strangely enough (or typically enough?), Alice Corbin Henderson’s name is not given credit on the review’s cover and her critical notes are simply signed “ACH.”

Henderson never stopped considering Kreymborg's anthology "sheer bosh" (in a letter to Monroe; *apud* MAREK, 40).⁷

The two women-editors of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* played a very important role in consolidating Anglo-American modernism, but the politically radical editorship of *The Little Review* presents a much more interesting case for my purposes here. Margaret Anderson's "Announcement" in the first issue of the journal (March 1914, pp. 1-2) is clearly written by a woman who wants it to be perceived as having been written by a woman, and a woman who is fully aware of the place she has no choice but construct for herself in a male-dominated society. It anticipates much of the independent and daring, anti-authoritarian, anti-patriarchal, and anarchist stance that would be the hallmark of the journal. It is not just that the author of the "Announcement" does not hesitate to proclaim hers and the journal's feminism "ardent,"⁸ as if foreseeing Wyndham Lewis's condescending, disparaging, and sexist advice to suffragettes in the first issue of *Blast*, published a mere two months later (*Blast* 1, July 1914: 151):

TO SUFFRAGETTES.

A WORD OF ADVICE.

IN DESTRUCTION, AS IN OTHER THINGS

stick to what you understand.

WE MAKE YOU A PRESENT OF OUR VOTES,

ONLY LEAVE WORKS OF ART ALONE.

YOU MIGHT SOME DAY DESTROY A

GOOD PICTURE BY ACCIDENT

THEN ! –

MAIS SOYEZ BONNES FILLES!

NOUS VOUS AIMONS!

WE ADMIRE YOUR ENERGY. YOU AND ARTISTS

ARE THE ONLY THINGS (YOU DON'T MIND

BEING CALLED THINGS?) LEFT IN ENGLAND

WITH A LITTLE LIFE IN THEM

IF YOU DESTROY A GREAT WORK OF ART YOU

are destroying a greater soul than if you

annihilated a whole district of London.

LEAVE ART ALONE, BRAVE COMRADES!

While *Blast* advises feminists to take their hands off art lest a great work be destroyed, *The Little Review* believes that "revolution is art" and thus presents the

⁷ Actually, the anthology includes a fine, imagist poem by Wallace Stevens ("Six Significant Landscapes") which uses the "I" only in the third of its six stanzas, the one Henderson, of course, chooses as one of her examples of *I-am-itism*...

⁸ When *The Little Review* first came out, the suffragist movement in the US was at its peak. For an interesting reflection on the often neglected relationship between feminist print culture and the development of "canonical" modernism, see CHAPMAN (2014).

anarcho-feminist Emma Goldman as an artist: “a great artist, working in her own material as a Michael Angelo worked in his” (*The Little Review*, vol. 3, n.º 5, August 1916, p. 1).

Anderson explicitly rejects any kind of “tolerant,” “paternal” recommendations concerning herself as a human being and her job as an editor. She is fully aware that her conception of art in its relation to life, the way she sees art as part of life and life as part of art, that is to say, the way she projects the experience of art as indistinguishable from the experience of life, will provoke some eye-brow raising among colleagues and friends, whom she clearly envisions as male, authoritarian, patronizing, and hierarchical, and not at all sympathetic to what may be perceived as a gross confusion between the artistic and the personal. For Margaret Anderson, as for the artist Jane Heap who joined the journal in 1916, the artistic is personal, the personal is artistic. We are still too far from the 1960s’ “the personal is political,” but the spirit is already there. Unlike Jane Marek and other feminist scholars, I think that what concerned these women editors was less sexual difference than hierarchization of difference (cf. MAREK, 193-202; SCOTT, Introduction.)⁹ As we shall see, the opposite was true of the Portuguese *Orpheu* group. For the first Portuguese modernists, sexual difference was a major issue, whether delicately interwoven in some poems or violently erupting in others.

The subtle cross-dialogues between the two editors of *The Little Review* throughout the whole journal enhance the original conception of the journal as a constructive “conversation” among editors and critics, artists and poets, readers and the public in general. The most striking example is the so-called “blank” issue. Anderson had promised not to compromise (the journal’s motto was “Making No Compromise with the Public Taste”), and yet, by the time issue n.º 5 of vol. 3 came out, she regrets that she has not kept her promise and vouches to let the next issue of the journal come out with only submitted material considered by her to be of aesthetic value. “If there is only one beautiful thing for the September number it shall go in and the other pages will be left blank” (p. 2). And so they were.¹⁰ Evidently, no creative writing submissions were deemed worthy of publication, and the “one beautiful thing” was Jane Heap’s ironically amusing sketches of the daily life of the editor, Margaret Anderson, which deliberately confuse art and life: she practices piano eighteen hours a day and takes her Mason and Hamlin to bed with her; gathers her own fire wood in a horse wagon; gobbles huge amounts of fudge for breakfast; is determined to convert “the sheriff” to anarchism and *vers libre*; indulges in “swimming” by sprinkling herself with a garden hose; has her

⁹ I am closer to Rachel Blau DuPlessis’s notion of negotiation [of difference] in her *Writing beyond the Ending*. See DUPLESSIS, 1985: 43.

¹⁰ Confronted with a similar situation of lack of publishable material, Pessoa had a proto-Álvaro de Campos produce “Opiário” for the first *Orpheu*. See below.

picture taken astride a superb horse but actually rides a decrepit animal; and gets bored listening to anarchist Emma Goldman's lectures.

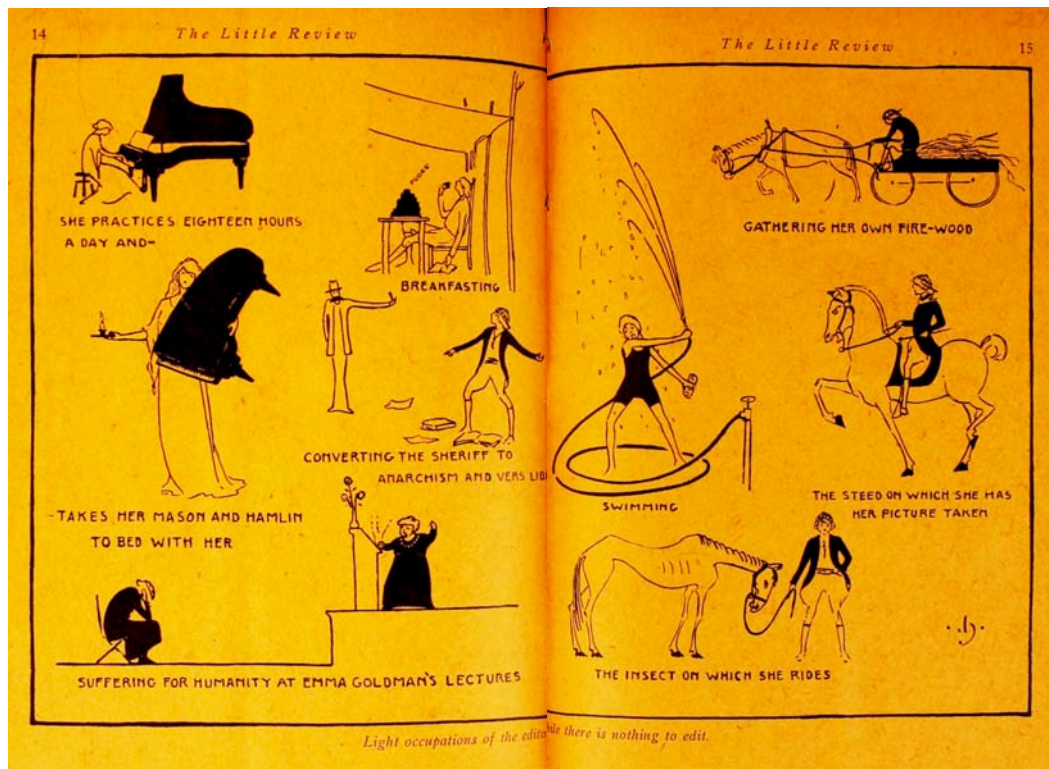


Fig. 3. Jane Heap's cartoon, *The Little Review*, Edited by Margaret C. Anderson, vol. 3, n.º 6 (September 1916), blank pages issue.

The reference, in Jane Heap's cartoon, to Emma Goldman's activism, side by side with the comic disclosure of Anderson's intention to subvert social authority poetically, is an oblique commentary on *The Little Review's* political engagement. Both Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap were openly critical of conventional society and its hypocritical laws; they supported women's suffrage, birth control, workers' unions and struggles, and called for open, public debate on sexuality and sexual relations with a view to changing current social mores through a better understanding of difference. The March 1915 issue of the journal carried "two points of view" regarding a lecture delivered in Chicago by Edith Ellis, Havellock Ellis's wife, on "Sex and Eugenics." The first point of view is an enthusiastic response, by a certain Mary Adams Stearns, to "Mrs. Ellis's Gift to Chicago" on the little discussed topic of sexuality (pp. 12-15); the second one is Anderson's scathing critique of "Mrs. Ellis's Failure" even to mention homosexuality in her talk (pp. 16-19). Since Ellis's lesbianism and her open marriage were common knowledge, in Anderson's angry remarks we can hear her disappointment at a lost opportunity to challenge the established social mores formally and eloquently about what is normal or abnormal sexuality, what may be considered private or public, and what is or is not acceptable in society, and why.

Thus, side by side with original poems, art, and literary criticism, *The Little Review* carried fierce social criticism, often penned by Margaret Anderson. The already mentioned “blank number” dedicates a lot of space to “The San Francisco Bomb Case” (pp. 16-17). The “case” concerned a bomb that exploded during the San Francisco Preparedness Day Parade on 22 July 1916, killing ten people and wounding 40. Five innocent people were indicted just because they were union leaders, organized workers, and strike organizers that big business wanted out of the way. A thorough explanation of the crass and tragic mishandling of justice, including an appeal for financial support to arrange for proper defense, appears on p. 29 (“Facts about the Preparedness Bomb”), and one suspects that Jane Heap, who had just started working for the journal, had a hand in it. Anderson’s outrage at the condemnation of two of the indicted appears on pp. 17-19, where she also vents fierce indignation at what she felt were the incompetent efforts of her friends Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, other anarchists, organized workers, and labor unions to find good lawyers for the convicted.

The Preparedness Parade was meant to prepare the US’s entrance in the war. The organized workers did not want to have anything to do with it because they knew that war abroad would mean utter misery for the majority of the people directly affected by it and great profit for big business in the US. For no other reason was the Chamber of Commerce behind the organization of the Parade. As Anderson writes in “Armageddon” in the 1914 September issue (vol. 1, n.º 6, pp. 3-4), with sharp lucidity that would be more than welcome today, “as long as devastation and horror do not exist on his own piece of land, Uncle Sam doesn’t care – while he can harvest his wheat and sell it at a good high price to starving people.” But she does have a prophetic word of warning for Uncle Sam’s illusions of exceptionalism: “As long as we cultivate the ideal of patriotism, as long as we put economic value above spiritual and human value, as long as in our borders there exist dogmatic religions, as long as we consider desirable the private ownership and exploitation of property for private profit – whether by nations or by individuals – we maintain those elements of civilization which have led Europe to the present crisis.” The journal’s pacifist concern runs through all the issues for the duration of the war. The US entered the war on 6 April 1917. The April 1917 issue carried a piece by Margaret Anderson: a blank page entitled “WAR,” having at the bottom the following, bracketed comment “[We will probably be suppressed by this].”¹¹

¹¹ On the social, political, and industrial climate in the US right before it entered the Great War, see ZINN (2003: 359-376).



Fig. 4. The blank page from the “War Number” of *The Little Review* (April 1917).

However, and as has been often pointed out, WWI ended up being a liberating experience for some European women. In England, for example, by replacing the men that had volunteered and later been conscripted to the war, women got proper jobs for the first time in their lives and experienced the sense of freedom the new condition brought them. They were competent and efficient performing “male” work, were proud of themselves, and felt like citizens, even though they could not yet vote. We might say that the war contributed to women entering politics before winning the suffrage. The situation cannot be compared to the realm of modernist little magazines, where women, likewise disenfranchised, had nonetheless played important roles from the very beginning. But when the English poet Richard Aldington, assistant editor of *The Egoist*, went to the trenches in 1916, the American poet H. D., his wife, who had already been doing some editorial work for the journal rather informally for some time, replaced him. Curiously enough, however, what happened officially was that her name was simply added to that of her husband, both identified as assistant editors from then on, although Aldington was fighting in the war, was eventually wounded and unable to do any editorial work. Finally, in 1917, the name of T. S. Eliot appeared as their replacement.

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I now turn to a modernist little magazine apparently with no women, no war, and no explicit involvement in politics: the Portuguese *Orpheu*, whose goal was to revolutionize poetic discourse by celebrating *poets* and excoriating *lepidoptera*. *Lepidóptero* (lepidopter) was Pessoa's and Sá-Carneiro's derogatory term for a weak poet, one who, not possessing proper light, one presumes, could not help but gravitate, like a moth, towards an alien light (SÁ-CARNEIRO, 1978: I, 148 ff; 15 June 1914).¹² Some poems may weave wars of old into their fantasy creations of refined sensibilities, as in Angelo de Lima's depiction of Semiramis's death ("[Semi-Rami] Morreu na Guerra em um País Distante" [She died in the War in a faraway country]) but the Great War is totally absent from the pages of the journal ("Ninive," *Orpheu* 2, p. 15).¹³ On the other hand, for reasons that can be understood but I will not discuss at length in this paper, no woman had anything to do with the conception and creation, let alone founding, planning, and editorship of *Orpheu*. More than that, there is no woman poet contributing to it.¹⁴ Of course, women are all over the pages of the three *Orpheus*, but they do not represent real, empirical women; they are rather totally "paper women," female figures conventionally, if not stereotypically, invented by the pen of *Orpheu* poets – strange, exquisite woman figures who have no historical counterpart and no plausible existence outside the male poets' gendered imaginations.¹⁵ The Horatian "Lídias," "Neeras" and "Cloes" of Ricardo Reis, himself a "paper poet" of sorts, fall beautifully into this category – with a vengeance, since they are doubly "mulheres de papel." Significantly enough, José Saramago would much later translate – in paper, of course – Pessoa's paper Lídias in Ricardo Reis's odes into a historicized Lídia-of-flesh-and blood in *O ano da morte de Ricardo Reis* (1984).

The mismarried women in *Livro do desassossego* [The Book of Disquietude] constitute an interesting case of paper women. According to the provocative male writer, mismarried are all married and some single women. Their mysterious portrait emerges from the imagined, sexist pen of whatever imagined persona Pessoa was playing with at the time, perhaps Vicente Guedes, since the texts captioned "Conselhos às mal-casadas" date from c. 1915 (the year *Orpheu* came

¹² In his 1965 "evocation" of *Orpheu*, Almada Negreiros identifies *leptidópteros*, implying mimicry, as one of *Orpheu*'s pejorative terms. The others were *literatura* (literature) and *bota-de-elástico* (stick-in-the-mud). See NEGREIROS (1965: 23-30). Almada attributes the choice of the term (*leptidópteros*) to Sá-Carneiro. See GIRALDO GIL (2016), "Orpheu 1915-1965: una reedición" (www.pessoaplural.com).

¹³ It is true that Portugal joined the war effort only in March 1916; but the US did so even later, in April 1917, the same year that Portuguese troops were sent to Europe to fight. However, Portugal had been fighting the Germans in Africa since 1914. For Pessoa's genuine concern with the Great War, see António Sousa Ribeiro, "Modernist Temporalities," included in this special issue.

¹⁴ Maria José Canelo addresses this issue very perceptively in her M. A. thesis, regrettably still awaiting publication. See CANELO (1997b: 11-12).

¹⁵ I borrow the expression "paper women" from RIBEIRO (1996). Particularly important to me is Ribeiro's analysis of José de Alencar's a-historical images of women in his novels.

out). Teresa Sobral Cunha places them in what she calls the “first” (Vicente Guedes) *Livro do desassossego* (PESSOA, 2008: 147-149).¹⁶ The contours of these “inferior” women are traced by the condescending, “altruistic” advice of the self-assumed “superior” male. Women are inferior presumably because they are mismarried, which seems to mean that they are incompetent to deal with their supposed hypersexuality, and so in great need of the advice provided in these sketches. Pessoa displays in these fragments, no matter how tongue-in-cheek, the age-old, western, masculinist ideology that the feminist philosopher, Genevieve Lloyd, would thoroughly expound many years later: male is reason, i.e. bodiless intellect; female is body, i.e. pure sex or sheer physical sensation (see LLOYD, 1984). “A mulher é essencialmente sexual” [the woman is essentially sexual], Pessoa’s surrogate author proclaims, and goes on to state that while “a inferioridade feminina precisa de macho” [female inferiority needs a male], “o homem superior não tem necessidade de nenhuma mulher” [the superior man needs no woman] (cf. PESSOA, 2010: I, 100, 95). However, how superior and “macho” this self-appointed, would-be concerned educator of “inferior” women is, remains highly ambiguous. In a sketch roughly of the same period (Pizarro dates it tentatively “1916?”), entitled “Declaração de diferença,” a troubled male voice reflects on the possible permeability of sexual difference and the dangers, for men, of “feminization,” male action running the risk of being thwarted por “um cio feminino” [by female rut] (pp. 198-200).

Pessoa’s well-known note on his “sexual problem” (“by temperament feminine with a masculine intelligence ... “a mild sexual inversion” that “stops in the mind” but he fears might eventually “go down into [his] body”) cannot but come to mind (see PESSOA, 1966: 27-28). Sexual and gender inequality was abysmal in early twentieth-century Portugal, but prominent Portuguese women were also already fighting for suffrage, and things were changing, however slowly. The *Orpheu* people (“os de *Orpheu*”) could not but have been aware of such a formidable woman as the distinguished physician, Adelaide Cabete (1867-1935), who in 1914 founded the Conselho Nacional das Mulheres Portuguesas [National Council of Portuguese Women]. Now, if women could be “like men,” men might well be “like women” – a disturbing thought. Safer to imagine idealized, paper women.

¹⁶ Pages included in the essay from now on. For dates of sketches, I follow Jerónimo Pizarro in his monumental, two-volume, critical edition. See PESSOA (2010).

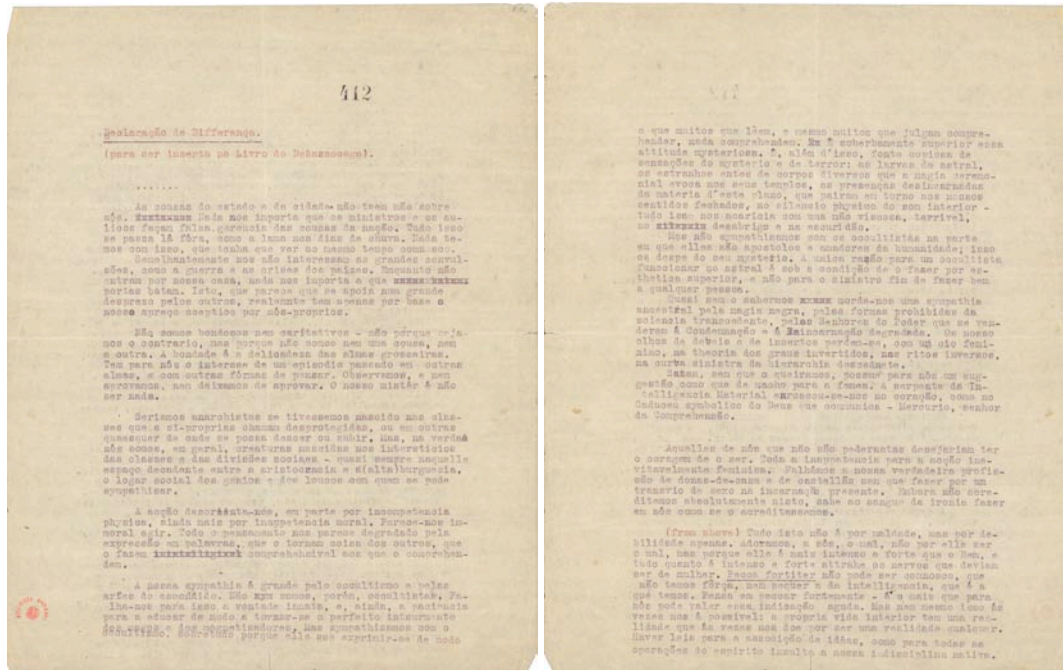


Fig. 5. BNP/E3, 5-56, sketch entitled “Declaração de diferença.”

In the little magazine, even when no imaginary woman is made poetically present, as they are in Sá-Carneiro’s “A desigualável” (“Ai, como eu te queria toda de violetas | E flébil de setim...” [Oh, I wish you were all made of violets | and plaintive satin...]) or in Alfredo Pedro Guisado’s “Adormecida” (“E tu adormecida há tanto tempo, em pranto” [And you so long asleep, in tears]) (*Orpheu* 1) or in Ângelo de Lima’s exotic and mythic female impersonations (“Sou a Grande Rainha Neitha-Kri” [I am the Great Queen Neitha-Kri] or in “Violante de Cysneiros” and “her” poems (modestly inscribed to some of “her” male colleagues) (*Orpheu* 2), the fluid feminine imagery subtly interweaving the poetic discourse throughout, and made easier by the grammatical gender difference of the Portuguese language, speaks loudly of the uneasiness of early twentieth century Portuguese male poets in a changing world where women were still supposed to be revered and desired (albeit at a distance), but whose mysterious otherness was increasingly feared and, therefore, apotropaically spurned through idealization. The fabrication of a woman poet in Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues’s impersonation of “Violante de Cysneiros” (at Pessoa’s suggestion, we recall) cannot but be read in this way as well.¹⁷ A “generation” that claimed to be “superior” for being free of “sentimental complications” and even free of a “woman’s voice,” as Sá-Carneiro boasted in a letter to Pessoa, needs the proverbial frailty of woman to assert its own virility. No wonder the first *Orpheu*, after lingering on the exquisite post-symbolist gestures and imagery of the embellished, languid femininity of poems by Sá-Carneiro, Ronald de

¹⁷ On the “woman’s place” that Violante de Cysneiros occupies in Portuguese modernism, see KLOBUCKA (1990: 103-114); cf. CANELO (1997: 139-144).

Carvalho, Alfredo Coelho Guisado, and Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues, not excluding Pessoa's "O marinheiro" or Almada's "Frizos," closes with the post-discoveries ennui of the Portuguese masculine subject of "Opiário" by Álvaro de Campos "in the bud," immediately followed by the provocatively feisty and would-be very male "Ode triunfal," by the full-fledged Campos.¹⁸ Actually, the subject of the magnificent "Triumphal Ode" swings sharply between a man "roaring" and a woman "possessed." In *Orpheu 2*, the dialogue between tradition and innovation is more balanced, as Mário de Sá-Carneiro's "Manucure" and Álvaro de Campos's "Ode marítima" contrast sharply with the plaintive tones of hankering after unattainable beauty in poems by Ângelo de Lima, Eduardo Guimarães, Raul Leal, and Luís de Montalvor. The experimental intersectionism of Pessoa's "Chuva oblíqua" underscores the utter poeticity of the *Orpheu* agenda.¹⁹

The third *Orpheu* was left incomplete, but its structure remains basically the same: the geography of Sá-Carneiro's poems of symbolist inspiration is shattered by Almada's "A cena do ódio," a poema that compels me to correct my previous statement that there is no Great War in *Orpheu*. The war, mirrored in the violence and destructiveness of Almada's poetics, is raging outside, but the *Orpheu* poets' vocation is *poiesis*, as Almada's outrageous poem parenthetically has it: "(Ha tanta coisa que fazer, Meu Deus! | e esta gente distrahida em guerras! [So much to be done, My God! | and these people distracted by wars!])."²⁰ And what is that "so much" waiting to be done, according to the poet? What is to be done is making poetry accomplish the utter destruction of the bourgeois and literary *status quo*, as when Álvaro de Campos refuses to be "casado, fútil, quotidiano e tributável" [married, futile, quotidian, and taxable] in "Lisbon Revisited (1923)" or when, in *Ultimatum*, he declares Western civilization to be totally and obscenely bankrupt (PESSOA, 1981: 290-291; PESSOA, 1982: 509-520 [513]). As in many other moments of lyric poetry's self-definition, the main goal of the Portuguese modernist avant-garde was to disclose poetry as the radically and sublimely other.²¹

¹⁸ In the famous letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro on the genesis of the heteronyms (13 January 1935), Fernando Pessoa explains that, since the issue of the first *Orpheu* was too short, he came up with an older poem by Álvaro de Campos, "Opiário," revealing the Engineer-poet "em botão" [in the bud] as it were (PESSOA, 1982: 93-99 [97]).

¹⁹ For some discussion of the aestheticization of sex in modernism, see RAMALHO SANTOS (2003b; chapter five). For the "superior generation" and the absence of a "woman's voice" ("boca de mulher") among the poets-of-the-*Orpheu*-to-be, see Sá-Carneiro's letter to Pessoa of 2 December 1912 (SÁ-CARNEIRO, 1978: I, 33 ff).

²⁰ Years later, right in the middle of the Second World War, an American poet would sanction *Orpheus'* seeming obliviousness of the real war outside by insisting that the "soldier is poor without the poet's lines" (cf. the closure of Wallace Stevens's "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" [1942]; STEVENS, 1971: 407).

²¹ But see RIBEIRO, "Modernist Temporalities," in this issue, for the impact history, war, and violence also had on the poetic endeavors of the Portuguese modernists.

The Great War would soon strike the *Orpheu* people, nonetheless. If in the third *Orpheu* the havoc that the war was actually wreaking all over Europe seemed to be a mere metaphor for the aesthetic changes the Portuguese modernist avant-gardes were engaged in, in *Portugal Futurista* (1917) the stance changed. In his provocative “Ultimatum futurista às gerações portuguesas do século XX” [Futurist Ultimatum to the Portuguese Generations of the Twentieth Century], clearly inspired by Marinetti, Almada Negreiros unashamedly and rather euphorically celebrates the Great War as “the great experience” heralding “civilization” in Europe. One of its noble tasks has to do with the formation of females worthy of the nation’s males. The advice to mismatched women in *Livro do desassossego* cannot but come back to mind. Almada’s war as a “great experience” was also supposed to educate “a mulher portuguesa na sua verdadeira missão de fêmea para fazer homens” [the Portuguese woman in her true female mission of making men]. Pessoa, in turn, in Álvaro de Campos’s *Ultimatum*, angrily sends an eviction note to all the “Mandarins” who had been destroying Europe for quite some time. The Great War was the peak of European failure: “Falencia geral de tudo por causa de todos | Falencia geral de todos por causa de tudo | (...) Falencia de tudo por causa de todos | Falencia de todos por causa de tudo” [General failure of everything because of all! | General failure of all because of everything ! (...) Failure of everything because of all | Failure of all because of everything]. No wonder Pessoa/Campos loudly shouted MERDA to shake Europe from the war that was interrupting it. For he knew then, as we know now, that, sadly, “ninguém combate pela Liberdade ou pelo Direito! Todos combatem por medo dos outros!” [no body fights for Freedom or Justice! They all fight out of fear of the others!] (PESSOA, 1982: 513; PESSOA, 2001: 78).²²

Regardless of other stances of Pessoa and his other heteronyms on the Great War, including the poet’s alleged sympathy for Germany, *Ultimatum* by Álvaro de Campos is clearly a pacifist document. As is his “Ode marcial” [Martial Ode], whose lyrical subject, like a repentant Wandering Jew (Ashavero), assumes the guilt and remorse of a ruthless soldier for the insane devastation and suffering provoked by all his senseless wars (PESSOA, 1981: 350). Even Alberto Caeiro anathematizes the war as a philosophical error in “A guerra, que aflige com os seus esquadrões o Mundo” (1917), from “Poemas inconjunctos” [Inconjunct Poems] (PESSOA, 1981: 176).

A guerra, que aflige com os seus esquadrões o Mundo,
É o tipo perfeito do erro da filosofia.

A guerra, como tudo humano, quer alterar.

²² For Almada’s quote, see *Portugal Futurista*, p. 38. For a reading of Pessoa/Campos’s *Ultimatum* as the total erasure of culture and civilization for a radically new beginning of *poiesis*, see RAMALHO SANTOS (2003a: 132-136).

Mas a guerra, mais do que tudo, quer alterar e alterar muito
E alterar depressa.

Mas a guerra inflige a morte.
E a morte é o desprezo do Universo por nós.
Tendo por consequência a morte, a guerra prova que é falsa.
Sendo falsa, prova que é falso todo o querer-alterar.

Deixemos o universo exterior e os outros homens onde a Natureza os pôs.
Tudo é orgulho e inconsciência.
Tudo é querer mexer-se, fazer coisas, deixar rasto.
Para o coração e o comandante dos esquadrões
Regressa aos bocados o universo exterior.

A química directa da Natureza
Não deixa lugar vago para o pensamento.

A humanidade é uma revolta de escravos.
A humanidade é um governo usurpado pelo povo.
Existe porque usurpou, mas erra porque usurpar é não ter direito.

Deixai existir o mundo exterior e a humanidade natural!
Paz a todas as coisas pré-humanas, mesmo no homem,
Paz à essência inteiramente exterior do Universo!

[The war afflicting the world with its squadrons
Is the perfect example of philosophy's mistake.

War, like everything human, wants to change.
But more than anything else, war wants to change much
And change fast.

But war inflicts death.
And death is the Universe's contempt for us.
Death being its outcome, the war proves it's false.
Being false, it proves false wanting to change anything.

Let's leave the external universe and the other men where Nature left them.
Everything is pride and consciencelessness.
Everybody wants to get going, do things, leave a trace.
To the heart and the squadrons' commander
The external universe returns in bits and pieces.

The direct chemistry of Nature
Leaves no empty space for thought.

Humanity is a slave rebellion.
Humanity is a government usurped by the people.
It exists because it usurped, but it errs because usurping is not to be right.

Let the external world and natural humanity exist!
 Peace to all pre-human things, even those of man,
 Peace to the entirely external essence of the Universe!]

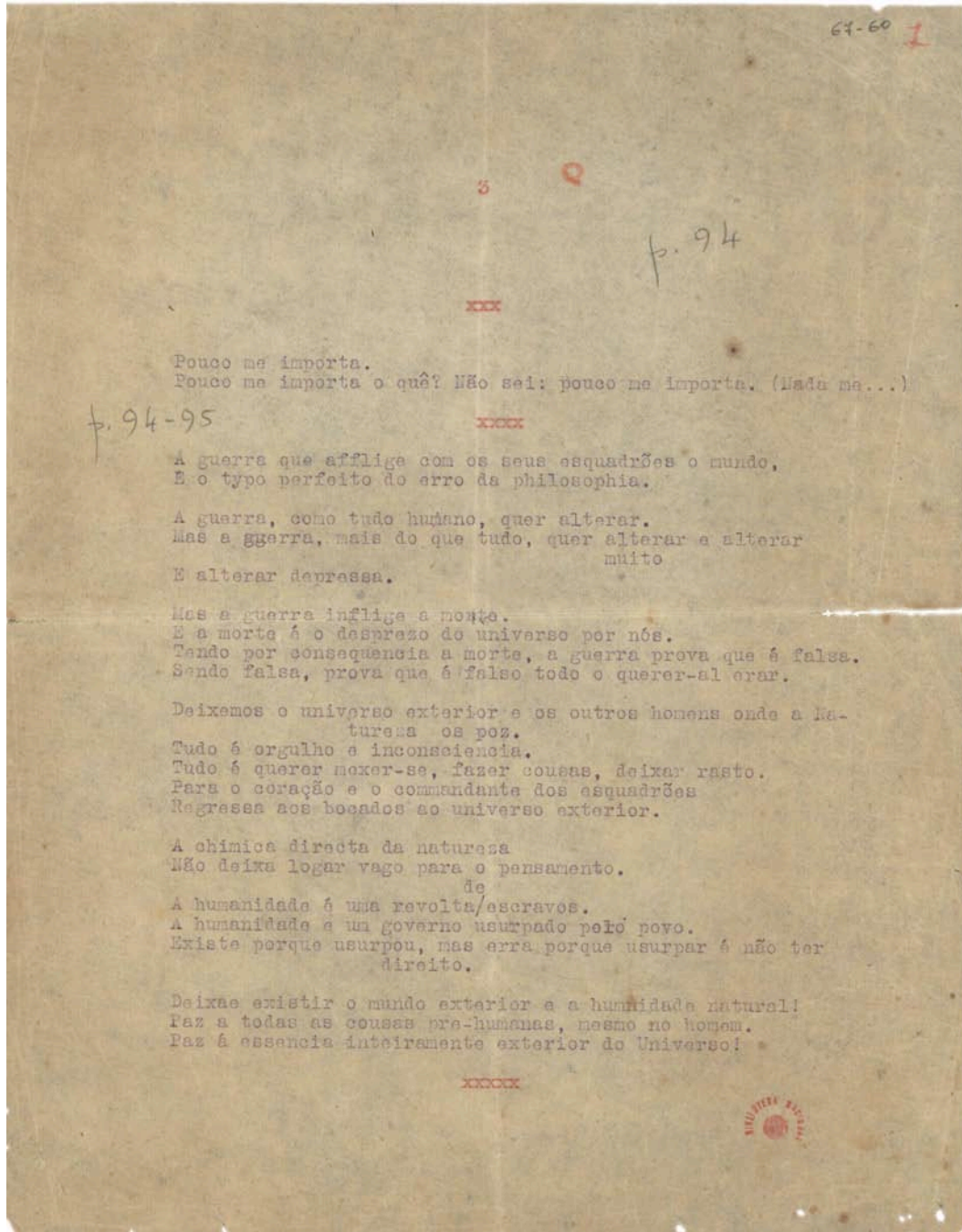


Fig. 6. BNP/E3, 67-60^r, poem attributed to Alberto Caieiro.

Almost ten years later, the wreckages of war were still haunting orthonymous Pessoa: in 1926, the little review *Contemporânea* published “O menino de sua mãe.” The poem has, of course, echoes of “Le dormeur du val” and, just like Rimbaud’s, by contrasting the serenity of things with the brutality of needlessly untimely death, it is a powerful and moving denunciation of the violence and cruelty of war (PESSOA, 1981: 80).²³

O menino de sua mãe
No plaino abandonado
Que a morna brisa aquece,
De balas traspassado
— Duas, de lado a lado —,
Jaz morto, e arrefece.

His mother’s little boy
on the forsaken plain
warmed by the warm breeze,
pierced by bullets
-- two, side by side --
he lies dead and grows cold.

Raia-lhe a farda o sangue.
De braços estendidos,
Alvo, louro, exangue,
Fita com olhar langue
E cego os céus perdidos.

Blood brightens his uniform.
Arms outstretched
pale, fair, bloodless,
he stares languidly
and blind at the lost skies.

Tão jovem! que jovem era!
(Agora que idade tem?)
Filho único, a mãe lhe dera
Um nome e o manteve:
“O menino da sua mãe”.

So young! How young he was!
(How old is he now?)
An only son, his mother gave him
a name and he kept it:
“His mother’s little boy.”

Caiu-lhe da algibeira
A cigarreira breve.
Dera-lha a mãe. Está inteira
E boa a cigarreira.
Ele é que já não serve.

Fell from his pocket
his brief cigarette case.
His mother’s gift. Whole
and good the cigarette case.
It is he who’s no longer of any use.

De outra algibeira, alada
Ponta a roçar o solo,
A brancura embainhada
De um lenço... Deu-lho a criada
Velha que o trouxe ao colo.

From another pocket, winged
tip brushing the earth,
the hemmed whiteness
of a handkerchief ... A gift from the old maid
who had cuddled him on her lap.

Lá longe, em casa, há a prece:
“Que volte cedo, e bem!”
(Malhas que o Império tece!)
Jaz morto, e apodrece,
O menino da sua mãe.

Far away, at home, the prayer:
“May he come back soon and well!”
(Meshes woven by the Empire!)
Lying dead and rotting
his mother’s little boy.]

²³ For an excellent account of Pessoa’s complex and contradictory attitudes towards the Great War, see MONTEIRO (2000; chapter 10).

The sad, tragic waste displayed in “O menino de sua mãe” gains in being juxtaposed with the trampled boy’s buried toy train in “Ode Marcial.” *Orpheu*, the little magazine, was apparently untouched by the Great War, but the *Orpheu* people were not. Pessoa, in particular, in more than one persona – as António Sousa Ribeiro has explained – was clearly affected by what he called “the German war” (see “Modernist Temporalities,” in this issue, and RIBEIRO, 2005: 201-209).

Indeed, there are also numerous references to war throughout *Livro do desassossego*, though none of them apparently pointing explicitly to the Great War. Actually, the term “war” is almost always used as a metaphor in *The Book*. For example, in a very late sketch, dated by the author 17/1/1932, the reader learns that “[t]oda a vida é guerra, e a batalha é, pois, a síntese da vida” [All life is war, and the battle is, therefore, the synthesis of life] (518). Or when the *The Book*’s aestheticist writer, in a sketch of the *Orpheu* period, condemns the “impudor” [immodesty] of energetic action and productive effort, of which war is the perfect example (252-253). The same aestheticist ethos (or is it a *pacifist* ethos? or both?) presides over another fragment of the same period, already cited: “não nos interessam as grandes convulsões, como a Guerra e as crises dos países” [we have no interest in great turmoils, like [the] War and crises affecting countries] (198). I am tempted to leave “the War,” displace the “great” from modifying “turmoils” and make it modify capitalized “War” instead, and surmise that the Great War, raging outside, is what is nurturing the poet’s imagining. With the ravagings of WWI in mind, the poet submits that war, whatever the particular actual war may be, will only yield devastation or obscene victories: “Toda a vitória é uma grosseria” [Victory is always gross] (122).

To conclude: there is a different ethos in *The Book* other than the political feistiness of Margaret Anderson’s *Little Review*. The 1932 sketch quoted above is clearly a text by Bernardo Soares, the assistant bookkeeper who actually *keeps two books* at one and the same time: the ledger, or book of accounts, of Vasques’ firm, on the one hand, and his own creative writing, on the other. The latter, also identified in another sketch of the same period as its author’s “livro de impressões sem nexos” [book of senseless impressions] (380), I consider extremely important for our understanding of the theory of Pessoa’s poetic practice. I once called it Pessoa’s “book of ruminations” (cf. RAMALHO SANTOS, 2003b: 9-21; 2004: II, 829-843). Although, as *The Book* claims, the two books live on the same street, they have very different concerns: while the ledger registers the ruthless victories of war-like commerce, the “livro casual e meditado” [casual and meditated book] (432) wonders about the role of feeling and art in a merciless world demanding victory and success, no matter how obscene the action needed to accomplish them. The episode that inspires the assistant bookkeeper’s meditation is the business exchange conducted by “patrão Vasques” that led a man to ruin. And what can art do?, the implicit question lurks. Nothing, it seems: “A arte serve de fuga para a

sensibilidade que a acção teve de esquecer. A arte é a Gata Borracheira, que ficou em casa porque teve que ser” [Art works as escape for the feeling action had to ignore. Art is the Cinderella that stayed home because she had to” (518). No doubt the devastations of war had a remarkable impact on Pessoa’s imaginary. It helped him – theoretically, poetically – to distinguish acting and feeling, life and art, then to confuse them to a certain extent, but never to fuse them. Perhaps the two books do not live on the same street, after all. Or perhaps only occasionally. It would be interesting to know how the Portuguese modernist poet would respond to Margaret Henderson’s and Jane Heap’s modernist experiments with art in articulation with explicit, serious (and dangerous) personal/political commitments.

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