

INTRODUCTION: DIMENSIONS OF MODERNITY IN ANTONIO PEDRO, A MAN OF MANY (P)ARTS

António Pedro da Costa (1909-1966), best known as António Pedro or just Pedro, stands out as a multifaceted artist and public intellectual during the dictatorship period, more specifically between the 1930s and 1960s. His commitment to the experimental dimensions of modernity, together with his predisposition to think outside the box, is perhaps unmatched by any other leading intellectual of his generation. He was involved in a truly astonishing range of activities: he was a poet and prose writer, a painter, a sculptor, a theatre director, a publisher, an art critic, an essayist, a broadcaster, a playwright, and a translator, to mention only the most significant of all. He founded the first modern art gallery in Lisbon, *UP* (1932), one important magazine, *Variante* (1942-1943), and, last not but not least, a theatre company, the Teatro Experimental do Porto. As its director, between 1953 and 1961, he revolutionised the Portuguese stage, despite the growing constraints of censorship in the 1950s.

Yet, this iconoclastic artist is still not as well-known or studied as he ought to be, given the significance of his cultural interventions in the context of Portugal, his links with other Lusophone countries, and his involvement with European modernity. The extent of his international profile was relatively unusual for a Portuguese intellectual in the first half of the 20th century. He lived in Paris in 1934-1935, where he participated in avant-garde movements, met leading artists, and exhibited some of his *15 poèmes au hasard* in the *Salon Surindépendants* (1935). Alongside Kandinsky, Delaunay, Picabia, Duchamp e Miró and many others, he signed the *Manifeste Dimensioniste* (1936). He subsequently spent another extended period abroad, in 1944-1945, in wartime London. The way in which he discharged his day job as a broadcaster for the BBC had a considerable impact back in Portugal, as convincingly documented by Nelson Vieira's article in the present volume. Pedro's stay in the capital of the free world also enabled him to part in the activities of the *Surrealist Group of London*, and he exhibited some of his paintings in *Arcade Gallery*, alongside the likes of Arp, Chirico, Max Ernest, Miró, Klee, Giacometti and Picasso. After his return to Portugal, he is credited for helping to introduce Surrealism in the late 1940s, yet another feather in his cap.

His connections to the wider Portuguese-speaking world also deserve further attention. He was born in Praia, Cabo Verde, which he visited again as a young man in 1928-1929 in what would be, in today's world, more or less the equivalent of a gap year. His stay inspired a collection of poetry entitled *Diário*, published in Praia in 1929. It consists of fourteen short poems, into which he seeks to weave local colour and impressionistic sensations. Subsequently, as an established painter,

he then spent a spell in Brazil in 1940-1941, and met some of the giants of Brazilian modernism, such as Oswald de Andrade and the painter Tarsila do Amaral, as well as Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Jorge Amado, among others. These contacts were followed by two invitations to show his paintings in Brazilian soil, firstly in 1941, in the Museu Nacional de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro and, secondly in 1942, in the São Paulo Exposição Industrial. Brazilian modernism was probably one of the catalysts for his 1942 literary masterpiece, *Apenas uma narrativa*. Its preface certainly alludes to Mário de Andrade, and it is tempting to see in the creativity of Andrade's celebrated *Macunaima* (1928) as a springboard for *Apenas uma narrativa*.

António Pedro's cultural and socio-political impact can thus be seen to stretch across national boundaries and encompass unusually diverse fields. The purpose of the present collection of essays is to examine his exceptionally wide-ranging contribution to Portuguese cultural life over a period of more than three decades. Accordingly, the seven articles included here attempt to consider a selection of representative activities and artistic works. We have chosen to present the articles under the broad headings of: firstly, painting and writing (both poetry and fiction); and secondly, radio broadcasting and theatre (both as an innovative theoretical thinker and as a practising playwright and stage director). Several of the articles included here provide illuminating connections between Pedro's writings and his paintings, fittingly underscoring the extent to which he thrived on the creative synergies generated by overlapping artistic practices and interests.

The first two contributions focus primarily on the visual arts. José-Augusto França, who has been one of Pedro's greatest champion from the 1960s onwards and has written extensively on this intellectual and artistic phenomenon, provides a lucid and detailed overview of Pedro's most iconic paintings. The latter's subversive works, together with the exhibitions he was involved in organizing, indicate that he was far from willing to toe the party line of a repressive regime. For instance, his 1940 exhibition, co-organised with António Dacosta and Palmela Boden, offered an alternative artistic statement, by way of reaction to the official Exposição do Mundo Português. The article by Michelle da Silva then deals with a particular thematic *leitmotif* running through Pedro's paintings: his representations of the female body. Her article also considers thematic points of contact between some of these paintings and the portrayal of women in his 1942 visionary novella *Apenas uma narrativa*. As such, her piece dovetails neatly with the next two articles which also document Pedro's ongoing dialogue with the visual arts, but take as their primary focus literature, centring as they do, on poetry and prose fiction respectively.

The first, by Isabel Ponce de Leão, offers an analysis of Pedro's depiction of the abject and the monstrous, as it explores the intertextual connections between an unpublished poem written in

French, entitled “Annuaire Confidentiel” (which belongs to the estate of the Belgian surrealist E. L. T. Mesens but is undated), and an early painting, 'Le Crachat embelli' (1934). Bruno Silva Rodrigues' article then tackles Pedro's memorable 1942 novella, *Apenas uma narrativa*, by drawing on the Freudian concept of the uncanny. As each of the novella's ten short chapters begins with an illustration and a caption by the author himself, who also uses ekphrasis, this prompts further interrogation of how text and image interact and mutual inflect each other. In keeping with our effort to draw attention to some lesser-known material, we have reproduced here the cover of the first edition, which features a particularly arresting illustration.

The next three articles chart the consolidation of Pedro's role as a public intellectual in the realm of journalism and theatre. Firstly, a carefully researched article by Nelson Ribeiro considers his influential political interventions in 1944-5, as he became one of the voices of resistance as a BBC broadcaster, in the Portuguese section, with his weekly programme 'Crónica de Segunda-Feira'. Last but not least, our final two articles examine Pedro's significant contribution to 20th-century Portuguese theatre, following his return from Britain. Teresa André's piece analyses his pedagogical thinking, disseminated in the first instance through a series of newspaper articles in 1949, and culminating in a full book-length treatise on theatre in 1962. She argues that Pedro's in-depth reflection about the need to modernise the Portuguese stage was moreover instrumental in encouraging amateur dramatic productions, by providing accessible, detailed, practical guidance, which had been sorely missing up to that point. Following on from this important survey, Inês Alves Mendes offers a fascinating case-study of Pedro's theatrical practice. She examines the revisionist strategies deployed in his rewriting of the Antigone myth for the stage in 1953, including his engagement with Pirandello and Brecht, whose works were censored during the dictatorship period.

Given the multifaceted talents of Pedro, it would be completely impossible, within the limited scope of a single volume, to do justice to his vast legacy, let alone explore comprehensively the ramifications of his unquestionable wider significance within Portuguese and European modernity, not to mention his Cape Verdean and Brazilian connections. Nonetheless, we hope that this dedicated issue of *P. Portuguese Cultural Studies* will, firstly, help to prompt further study of this forward-thinking artist and his redrawing of symbolic boundaries, and, secondly, further enhance his reputation as a sophisticated, dynamic and influential cultural agent during the dictatorship period.

Last but not least, we wish to record our gratitude to José-Augusto França for granting us copyright permission.

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