“I entered into a bookshop. I counted all the books to read and the years I have left to live. They are not enough. I do not last not even for half the bookshop. There must be certainly other ways to save a person, otherwise I am lost. However, the people who entered into the bookshop were all very well dressed as people who need to save their selves.”

Almada Negreiros, beginning of “A Invenção do Dia Claro” (1922)

Since the beginning of the XIX century, at least, that cultural and, particularly, literary production seems to be inseparable from the appearance of more or less cohesive groups, which are constituted and present themselves as collective renovators around a set of esthetic, philosophical and even political options which they publically stand for, sometimes by way of Manifest. Setting out the most famous examples, this was the case for the movements we now call Romanticism, Realism and Futurism. The consequence of this, in cultural history terms, is the common and comprehensible tendency to face the past through the optical of generations: in the Portuguese case, we speak of the first romantic generation (Alexandre Herculano, Almeida Garrett), of the 70’s generation (Antero de Quental, Eça de Queirós), of the Orpheu generation or of the Presença generation, for example. But another consequence of this strictly diachronic vision of the culture is that of forgetting that this grouping of authors by movements which are successive and separate in time and in the cultural space is more schematic and utilitarian than real, and that it can hardly give us the exact picture of a certain period.

In fact, it is important to first note that the movements, in general, do not strictly coincide with the life of its protagonists, which means that there are always coincidences of time and spaces which this grouping tends to hide. To quote two cases: Herculano, for instance, was not only contemporaneous to the Casino
Conferences (which he has fatherly stand for), but has also exchanged correspondence with Oliveira Martins (in a fruitful and unfortunately not so well known dialogue); and if Eça died too soon, his friend Ramalho Ortigão still saw the implementing of the Republic (1910) and even the beginning of the Futurism (he died on the exact same year of the publication of *Orpheu*). This means that the cultural periods are not tight, a certain period is a set of crossings between several generations. Also, this diachronic vision, by generations, helps to turn “invisible”, or at least less visible, those authors who escape the logic of the detached groups, or whose connection to a more precise esthetic is more difficult: which is not only the case of the authors between two chronologically different generations, such as for example Camilo or Julio Dinis, but also of certain authors who, due to being contemporary to more than one “movement”, move in a different individual space and whose posthumous destiny (in some occasions, even contemporaneous) is to be placed within a margin more or less undefined or secondary: the most outstanding example is the place of Manuel Teixeira Gomes in literary histories (whose long life – 1860/1941 – made him contemporaneous of the 70’s Generation, of the Symbolists, of *Orpheu* and even of *Presença* and Neo-Realism, without ever being truly integrated within any of these movements).

In view of this, and in a small effort of imagination, I ask the reader to follow the steps of Almada and together with him, enter into a bookshop in Chiado, in any day of the late 1922. As this exercise is purely virtual, the reader can assume that the Portuguese Literature collection of such bookshop is very complete and includes, apart from the inevitable “classics” (Herculano, Garrett) and the “consecrated authors” who have passed away some years ago (Antero, Eça, Cesário Verde, António Nobre), all works published in the last 7/8 years (in the inevitable section named “New Releases”). In this last bookcase, and apart from the myriad of successful authors which, then, as now, the wind shall take (among them, the reader shall acknowledge, perhaps, the names of Brito Camacho – *Nas horas calmas*, (In the quiet hours 1) 1920 – or Júlio Dantas, this last author certainly for reasons of other nature than his literary merit2), it

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1 This book, as well as most of the following ones, are not translated in English. The English titles are mine, and merely indicative.

2 Júlio Dantas was the target for Almada Negreiros in his well known and funny “Manifesto Anti-Dantas”. Anyway, apart from these authors, it must be said that the biggest literary success of that time was, however, “A Catedral” (The Cathedral), the first novel of a future trilogy from an author totally forgotten nowadays, Manuel Ribeiro, a trilogy whose success was as sounding as volatile, as noted.
is possible that the reader will find, as for prose, and in common random selection, *O Jardim das Tormentas,* (The Garden of Storms) by Aquilino Ribeiro (1913), *A Confissão de Lúcio,* (Lucio’s confession) by Mário Sá-Carneiro (1914), *A Arte de ser Português,* (The Art of being Portuguese) by Teixeira de Pascoaes (1914), the *Últimas Farpas* (The last splinters) by Ramalho Ortigão (still 1914), *Hûmus* by Raul Brandão (1917), *A Engomadeira,* (The Ironing girl) by Almada Negreiros (1917), *A Via Sinuosa* (The sinuous way) (1918), *Terras do Demo* (Land of the Demo) (1919), *Filhas de Babilônia* (Daughters of Babylon) (1920) and *A Estrada de Santiago* (The Route of Santiago) (1922 – compendium where it first appears “O Malhadinhas”), all by Aquilino; as for poetry, some lost edition of *Orpheu* magazine (1915)\(^3\), *Antinous* and *35 Sonnets,* by Fernando Pessoa (1918, in English), *o Livro de Mágoas,* (the Book of Sorrows) by Florbela Espanca (1920), the *Poesias Dispersas,* by Guerra Junqueiro (also from 1920), *Cantos Indecisos* (Undecided Songs) by Teixeira de Pascoaes (1921), *English Poems I e II,* by Fernando Pessoa (also from 1921\(^4\)). Although it is possible that the reader shall not be as perplex as Almada (or does not exactly seeks for salvation), there is a wide choice, as one can see. If the reader is demanding but has his own habits, probably he will only choose Ramalho, Junqueiro, Brandão and Pascoaes, at that time already well known names (although some still very contested, such as Pascoaes). If by any event the reader is one of the curious Lisbon citizens, who, in a recent conference given by Almada, started by attacking and ended with a standing ovation to the speaker, then he might decide to rethink the judging which was generalized by press since some time of “those crazy people from Futurism” by leafing throughout some of their small author editions. But if the reader is not only curious but also has an open mind and uses to think by himself (as it is certainly the case, even because the distance allows you to do so) it is possible that he simply decides to see what those young and talented authors who the press has been talking about, for good or for bad, have been doing. And he may conclude, obviously, that not all of them are doing the same thing.

\(^3\) Which shall be less likely, due to its small edition, which was easily sold out due to the polemics it raised. Regarding the “Portugal Futurista” (1917) this shall certainly be impossible to find, as it was apprehended on the exact same day of edition, for being scandalous.

\(^4\) The poems in English were, as we know, the only books Pessoa has ever published during his life besides the *Mensagem,* later on.
May the reader forgive me for this long introduction to a text which intends to speak essentially about Aquilino Ribeiro. However, this introduction seemed necessary to me in order to explain an obvious point but which we tend to forget: that Aquilino is absolutely contemporaneous with the *Orpheu* generation. First, from the strictly generational point of view, and in this case the diachronic perspective is very useful: actually being born in 1885, Aquilino is only three years older than Fernando Pessoa (b. 1888) and eight years older than Almada Negreiros (b. 1893). These small differences of age are almost lost when we analyze their artistic career, mainly in the beginning (which coincides, roughly, to the implementation of the Republic). The boundary may be placed on 1908, the year when Pessoa, on a “sudden impulse”, started to write in Portuguese (as he further explains), the exact same year on which Aquilino initiates a number of small contributions to a well known revue, *A Ilustração Portuguesa* (from Paris, where he was exiled due to his anarchism and to being close to the regicides\(^5\)). From this point on, their cultural journeys are almost coincident: in fact, on the same year of 1913 on which Aquilino publishes his first book (*O Jardim das Tormentas*), Almada Negreiros performs his first individual exhibition\(^6\). One year before (1912) Pessoa had published his first texts regarding the “new Portuguese poetry” in *Águia* magazine. And one year later (1914) the work from Mário Sá-Carneiro named “*A Confissão de Lúcio*” is published. In strictly chronologically terms, it is possible to say that the following years are those of public statement and consolidation for all these young writers: when the first edition of *Orpheu* magazine is issued, on 1915, Aquilino had just returned from Paris, just in time for the polemics it already raised (which, however, he seems to ignore). The cultural agitation that follows seems as intense as the political agitation in the country at that time: mentioning only the more relevant facts, 1917 is the year of *Portugal Futurista* (the revue which includes the “Ultimatum” by Almada Negreiros and that of Álvaro de Campos – published in offprint) and also of

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\(^5\) The exile last from 1908 to 1914 and on both 1912 and 1913 coincides with the exile of Mário Sá-Carneiro, although for well different reasons. Curiously or not, the first texts which Aquilino sends from Paris concerned painting and art, namely the work from Portuguese artists residing in Paris, but also mentioning the impressionists (Matisse, Gauguin) and even the new Italian painters close to futurism. One of the most interesting texts, even by being in some way symmetric to the texts by Pessoa further mentioned, is the chronic entitled “*A arte portuguesa*” (The Portuguese Art), whereby he refers the urgent need of cultural modernization of the country, in all areas. *Páginas do Exílio* (1927-1930), Lisbon, Vega, 1988, pp. 73-79.

\(^6\) Of drawings. 1913 is also the year of the second edition of “*Cartas sem moral nenhuma*” (Letters without moral) by Teixeira Gomes (whose first edition is dated 1903).
A Engomadeira, also by Almada; in 1918 Aquilino publishes his second book, A Vía Sinuosa, followed by As Terras do Demo and Filhas de Babilônia in the two following years. And if Pessoa, although publishing some small books in English, seems to choose, at that point, to have a more discrete position, which would become characteristic of him, and Almada now goes to Paris, one can find him, a year and a half later, in the summer of 1921, in another of his public interventions in Lisbon, a conference lectured in the Naval League, named A Invenção do Dia Claro, (The Invention of the bright day) whose opening lines are quoted above. And in the exact following year, Aquilino publishes what shall become his most famous work, the novel O Malhadinhas. For the time being, we can leave this subject at this point. In fact, in 1922 some of the great Portuguese literature works of the 20th century had already been published, mainly by young authors appearing in the first decade of the new Republic.

However, and despite the age and the literary careers being almost the same, this joint vision of the cultural production of these young authors of the time is rarely presented: the Orpheu Generation is mentioned (and even gradually seems to exclusively occupy the cultural scene of the first Republic) and Aquilino Ribeiro is mentioned (whose posthumous destiny seems to be the inversely proportional) as autonomous cultural entities, different “drawers” of the cultural and literary history of the Portuguese 20th century. It is not difficult to understand the reasons. The most immediate certainly relate to the fact that such “drawers” seem to already exist then, i.e., these reasons relate to the nearly inexistence of direct mutual references (which is odd, if we consider the dimension of the cultural Lisbon of that time). In fact, and as an example, although nowadays we know through his correspondence that Pessoa considered Aquilino to be a “great prosaist”, the truth is he never mentioned him in

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7 In a way, as an answer to the pessimism shown by Carlos Malheiro Dias in 1912, in the most important newspaper of that time, the República, regarding the stagnation of the Portuguese literature of these days. Malheiro Dias, a respected intellectual at the time by all different quadrants, was the author of the preamble of Aquilino’s first book, O Jardim das Tormentas, which he salutes as follows: The Portuguese literature has from now on one more admirable artist, who enters the dynasty of the great writers.

8 The most interesting exception is Óscar Lopes’ excellent text regarding this matter, “Um lugar de nome Aquilino”, Uma arte da música e outros ensaios, Porto, Oficina Musical, 1986, pp. 47-65.

9 Pessoa says, in a letter dated 1923 to a Spanish poet, Adriano del Valle, who had requested him books of Portuguese authors: “I also intended to send you two books by Aquilino Ribeiro, “Jardim das Tormentas” and “Filhas de Babilônia”, but, as you have mentioned Aquilino, I could not tell exactly whether you already had these books or not. Do you have them? If you don’t, I will send them to you, as they are of
public (neither for the good or for the bad); and if Aquilino mentions the Futurists on some occasions it is always in generic terms and giving as reference international names, namely in painting, and never those from the Portuguese group of Orpheu.

In fact, if all these young writers are biographically coincident in time and space (and it is even almost impossible that they did not physically meet within the small world of Chiado), the fact is that they belong to esthetical, literary, political and even social parallel universes, apparently with little or none contact between them.

Regarding esthetic and literary options, this seems evident, even due to the fact that the protagonists, mainly in the beginning, do make sure they set out, sometimes loudly, their respective fields, waiving the flags of their different heros, Marinetti and Anatole France. It is curious to see that, symptomatically, Aquilino’s "divine Anatole" is the first of a large list of authors to whom Álvaro de Campos “point his weapons” on his “Ultimatum”10 (which may not be random). As to Aquilino, Almada’s “divine Marinetti” (and we shall note that the formulation is precisely symmetric) would cause him the exact same smile which makes him, in 1927, give the tittle “Consecration of madness” to a chronic sent from his second exile in Paris to the “O Século” newspaper, on which he acknowledges the social and mainly commercial consecration of the futurist art (in a, on many aspects, very interesting text, which shows us how, preliminarily refusing its principles, he totally understood them)11.

Separate fields, then, which inevitably translate into literary productions, apparently in opposite sites: between A Engomadeira and Terras do Demo it seems to be no relation other than their publication date (and, at least as per the authors’ opinion, such relation would not make any sense, certainly).

In fact, besides the esthetic and literary options, other more general aspects seem to strongly separate both fields. One of the most evident and recognized of said

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10 We can read in the beginning: Mandado de despejo aos mandarins da Europa! Fora. Fora tu, Anatole-France, Epicuro de farmacopeia-homeopática, ténia-Jaurès do Ancien-Régime, salada de Renan-Flaubert em louça do século dezassete, falsificada! (…). (Eviction warrant to the mandarins of Europe! Off. Off to you, Anatole-France, Epicurus of the Pharmacopoeia-homoeopathic, tapeworm-Jaurès of the Ancient Regime, salad of Renan-Flaubert in seventeenth century china, fake! (…))

aspects refers to the different political views, which, in an era of great political tension, defined more or less taut areas of irreducible antagonisms, even between those who were not active militants (which was definitely not Aquilino’s case, very much on the contrary). Although today we can understand that the aristocratic and even proclaimed monarchist political positions of the members of *Orpheu* had an undeniable esthetic component, not only due to the direct influence of the “divine Marinetti”, but also for what it represented as a statement of the Futurism movement, as a “rebel” vanguard against the republican and bourgeois main stream, the true is that during those years of political instability and conflict, such esthetic side could not easily be understood and much less accepted by those standing in the internally conflictual opposite barricade. In *A Engomadeira*, where the wealthy, fat and republican bourgeois (Mr. Barbosa) is one of the “fool’s party”, it is quite notorious all this agitated world of political conflict of the first years of the Republic, namely in the overuse to which the stigma of “talassa” (monarchist) could lead to (and which results, among other, on the initial dismissal of the protagonist), as well as of “germanophile” (and the protagonist’s partner avoids being accused of this only by intervention of Mr. Barbosa). “Crazy”, “germanophile” and “talassa” (or vice-versa?), the futurists could only be seen by the republican and liberal cultural tradition, generally pragmatic and not keen on averies (conservative, if one whishes) with at least, suspicion. And Aquilino was definitely part of that political family, although the anarchist radicalism of his first years in Lisbon can be considered, in a way, as parallel (although in reverse) to the esthetic radicalisms of the young futurists. Anyway, both areas were well delimited, also politically. The world where the young Aquilino moved was not the same world where the young protagonists of the *Orpheu* generation moved.

And it was not the same world also from a social point of view, a less visible component, perhaps, but a definitely very determinant one. In fact, their biographies also help to delimit another boundary which clearly separates their worlds and which can be drawn trough the binominal urban/rural: the futurists are mainly upper middle

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12 We quote what Pessoa said, in 1912, on the pages of *A Águia*: “If being a monarchist is to be a traitor to the national soul, then being coreligionist of Mr. Afonso Costa, of Mr. Brito Camacho or of Mr. António José de Almeida [three great republican leaders], as well as of several awful people, syndicalist, socialist and other things like these, represents parallel and equivalent betrayal”. In fact, the political component of the polemics raised around *Orpheu* is undeniable. For further detailed description of such facts, see Nuno Júdice, *A era do Orpheu*, Lisboa, Teorema, 1986.
class Lisbon citizens, born and raised in Lisbon, within educated families with economic ease\textsuperscript{13}, Aquilino is the peasant boy, born in the deep countryside (in Carregal - Sernancelhe), son of a priest and himself an ex-seminarian, which came to Lisbon (like so many others, at that time) and in a way became “civilized” without ever blending in. The titles of two of the mentioned works by Almada and Aquilino (published with a gap of months) are elucidative of such gap: in fact, between the *A Engomadeira* (The Ironing Girl) and *Terras do Demo*\textsuperscript{14} (Land of the Demo) is not only a whole set of well distinctive esthetic, literary and even political options. But in forefront, and although hidden by the visibility of the previous options, it is also the precise drawing of the two worlds that coexisted in Portugal in the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century - the urban and bourgeois world of Lisbon and the rural world of the small villages lost in the deep Portuguese countryside, worlds that clearly correspond to the different and even radically opposite universes from where this two authors came from.

Regardless of the differences of manners or styles, it is undeniable, then, that both Almada and Aquilino speak of what they know, of the worlds which are biographically theirs and even taking as a reference their own biographic experience. If the surface is radically different, their deepest gesture does not differ much. In fact, it is very interesting the way Almada himself describes his project of *A Engomadeira*, in the small dedicatory-letter to his friend José Pacheco (and in the middle of a provocative and playful futurist jargon): “*Reli-a, e se bem que a aceleração das imagens seja por vezes atropelada, isto é, mais espontaneamente impressionista do que premeditadamente, não desvia contuda a minha intenção de expressão metal-sintética Engomadeira, em todos os seus 12 capítulos onde intersecçãoi evidentes aspectos da desorganização e descarácter lisboetas*” (I have re-read it and although the acceleration of the image is sometimes ran over, i.e., more spontaneously impressionist than willfully, it does not however divert my intention of metal-synthetic Ironing-girl expression, in all its 12 chapters where I have intersected some clear aspects...)

\textsuperscript{13} The fact that Pessoa spent part of his childhood and adolescence in South Africa does not go against what was said – besides his premature return, his family and family culture integrate perfectly in this group portrait. Regardless of their specificities, the remaining members of the group also integrate perfectly, including the Brazilian Ronald de Carvalho. As it is known, the publishing of *Orpheu* would be impossible without the financial support given by Mário Sá-Carneiro’s father. And it was the cutting of such support, connected to his suicide, the only reason why the third issue, already fully written, was not published.

\textsuperscript{14} Or between the *A Confissão de Lúcio* and *Jardim das Tormentas*. 
aspects of Lisbon’s disorganization and discharacter) (underlined by me). And in fact, although at the time this may not have been easy to understand, this statement corresponds well to the bottom question of A Engomadeira, a true small portrait of the everyday life in Lisbon in the beginning of World War I (issue to which Almada shall return later on, in a more traditional way, in his novel Nome de Guerra). In fact, it shall be noted that the Portuguese futurists (mainly Pessoa and Almada) have allways tried to conciliate the provocative and cosmopolitan side of their movement with a close look on the Portuguese reality (better saying the Lisbon reality) which surrounded them – this also being, in a certain way, the project of Pessoa in O livro do desassossego. The project of renewal of the Portuguese literature, common to the futurists and to Aquilino, certainly has very different esthetic assumptions. But the question is also that the urban and gray world of a clerk in Rua dos Douradores (a street in downtown of Lisbon) is not, nor it obviously can be, the rural and solar world of Malhadinhas.

In view of this, maybe something truly interesting and new could recall to the reader who, with the due political and esthetic distance, walked in the said bookshop in Chiado, on that day of late 1922, with the intention of acknowledging what the young writers everyone speaks of are doing: in fact, each one of them, in their own way, is writing about what they know and what they see. And in the joint reading of such intersectional portraits, the intelligent reader shall certainly find the most complete image of Portugal in the beginning of the 20th century.

The rest of the story, namely the one that follows the implementation of the Estado Novo (Salazar’s political regime) and, in a way, marks the end of this creative ebullition, is probably of the reader’s knowledge. Or, in other words, and to finish with Almada, once more, now in the epilogue sentence of one of his “Frisos” (published in Orpheu): “A estampa do pires é igual” (The print on the saucer is the same).