

To Draw Borders and The Aesthetic Mind: Reviewing Europe With Almada Negreiros

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 20th century, Almada Negreiros considered that Portugal had to step into Europe urgently, and the only way to achieve it was through cultural performing, asserting the straightness of modern thought. Almada covered several creative trajectories that can profile him as a “polychrome artist”, following Edward T. Hall in The Hidden Dimension (1966, 173). Let us underline the principle of a polychrome Southern European person that shaped the unique (but multiple) direction of Almada’s achievement in his multidisciplinary artistic and thinking roles.

Nowadays, a century after reviewing his writings concerning Europe (from his modernist period), how can we understand his obsession? Let us analyze the article “Portugal in the Map of Europa” published at SW – Sudoeste, the magazine he directed during 1935. On the other hand, it is important to consider how his idea of Europe, how his utopia, survived all those decades in Portugal until the 1970s. And let us add Almada’s compulsive quest for that universal language that existed before writing – the antegraphy developed as an essential thinking. How are those ideas connected with his urge for modernity? Can it be reasoned in a two highways pursuit: the European assumption of Portuguese nationality versus that universal visual writing, which existed since the early age of humanity? Are those anthropological, philosophical and aesthetic/artistic proposals by Almada deeply linked and/or setting forth gaps, even aiming at certain paradoxes?

And regarding his African ancestors, whom he had little mentioned - should they be seen as a link for that universal visual language present in all continents?

Maybe that concept of polychrome artist is a keyword shaping Almada’s solo utopian identity in the anthropological geography of WWW.

KEYWORDS Almada Negreiros, Polychrome artist, European (aesthetic) Utopia, Antegraphy

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Figure 1

1. Europe < human being + collectivity > humanity

By that time, in Europe, Romanticism arose, which was a kind of liberation for everyone, those who had life to be lived with legitimacy, the hour of enchained Prometheus.

(Almada, 1990, p. 45)

How can we figure the borders of European Culture according to the authors that performed the early-twentieth-century avant-garde? By that time, the nucleus of cultural emancipation in Europe had its location in Wien, Berlin, Munich, among other cities, but for the Portuguese elite Paris was the place to be. It was the center of the European Art Map, pointing out the top geographical cosmogony.

In 1940, Almada Negreiros conceived an allegorical *Mappa Mundi*, a mural painted for the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* (Daily News), with headquarters in Lisbon. The painting reviewed the continent's morphology following the iconography of ancient maps. He drew trees, persons, animals; and shaped the coasts and the oceans alongside with the Zodiac characters. Almada modern-ancient cosmogony emphasized visual signs which explored an ultimately archaic knowledge, desiring that its myths and poetry would spread towards the eternity of mankind. It was his privileged way of presenting both time and space, drawing borders subsumed in a peculiar epistemological category.

In 1940, when the world was falling apart, how did Almada face the ideal aesthetic borders? He had been obsessed with mythical convictions since the early period of his career. He highlighted places and countries, merged in the seduction of those European metropolises.

Figure 1. Panel "Mapa-Mundi [Great Planisphere]" at the building of the Daily Newspaper *Diário de Notícias* – Lisbon, 1940

At the beginning of the 20th century, Almada Negreiros was based in Lisbon. Born in the São Tomé e Príncipe Islands, he never travelled back to his homeland, instead looking for new affective locations. He dreamt of an imaginary Paris, built upon the narratives told by the friends who lived there. In 1919, he travelled to Paris, but felt huge disappointment. Nevertheless, he enjoyed his remarkable stay in Madrid, from 1926 to 1932. He cherished Madrid ever after. By then, Portuguese Lisbon Modernity had already settled down, and the impulse of the First *Modernism* had waned. Nonetheless, the modernist aesthetic would remain in Almada's creation, though taking different directions.

As early as 1915, Almada claimed that Portugal was not only the most backward country in Europe but also in the entire world. However, he believed that *Portugal* 'will open its eyes one day - if its blindness is not incurable and then it will shout with me, at my side, the need that Portugal has to be something of a clean thing!' (Almada, 1993 b, p.23) Concerning the extension of Portugal borders, he included the colonial territories. Let us recall that Almada descended from an Angolan woman slave, and that his mother was a *Creole* young woman from São Tomé. He never quite assumed his African heritage,

¹ Although, as I remarked at a Conference held at the National Museum Soares dos Reis, in Porto, in April 2018, we can find several hints and even a clear demonstration of his pride in his race.

maybe because he lived under a fascist regime.¹ He was much more focused in Europe, trying to deal with both the Iberian utopia and the quest for the primitive procedures of Humanity.

In 1915, the *Orpheu* magazine, the prime organ of cosmopolitan Europeanism set in Lisbon, was presented as the magazine that would fix Portugal's atavism regarding the European chronological

² After the episode of the magazines *Centauro* and *Exílio*, in February 1915, Fernando Pessoa intended to publish a magazine called *Europa*, which gave way to *Orpheu*.

time, by means of the action of culture and the arts.² Fernando Pessoa longed for "a cosmopolitan art in time and space" adapted to the time (Pessoa, 1966, P.113), where all countries, for the first

time, intellectually, would all exist within each one. Either in Asia, America, Africa or Oceania, all were Europe and in Europe. (Pessoa, 1966, P.113) After the failure of *Orpheu*, Almada engaged in *Portugal Futurist*, a single-issue magazine, where he published his *Ultimatum Spread to the Portuguese Gener-*

³ Álvaro de Campos is one of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms.

ations of the 20th Century and also the *Ultimatum* by Álvaro de Campos³. Both authors were concerned with Portugal's need for

modernization in Europe, though following specific patterns. Suddenly, with World War I, borders changed, becoming Almada's mental map of desire for a lonesome utopian identity and the quest for a modernized Portugal. During two decades, Almada's ideas proliferated in texts, culminating in an editorial project of his own, the title of which precisely situated the Portuguese geography - as territory -, facing Europe: *Cadernos de SW/ SW Notebooks* (Almada, 1982a). Almada's three notebooks confirmed his genius and intellectual consistency. The artist corroborated his ideological-mythical

⁴ Almada's project, as it had been announced in previous texts, was that of the collectivity of Portugal, acknowledging the need to assume it.

convictions about Nationality, as opposed to the notions of Homeland, Europe and World / Humanity.⁴ From his verve, fictional and mythological figures emerged, and the circularity

of his esoteric thinking heightened, converging on *Prometheus* - the hero reactivated as the symbol for Europe. On the other hand, his "Theory of Opposites" bore the key to his aesthetic paradoxes; and the significance of his doctrine concerning the condition of Humanity, Art and the individual human person became quite explicit. The opposition was located between Portugal and Europe, sometimes highlighting the Iberian relationship.



Figure 2

Almada written presence in SW reinforced his historical-philosophical view, mainly articulating social and political frameworks, anthropological and cultural thinking. These multiple foci were closely linked in a particular geography of their own, being the basis for his further speculative argumentation.

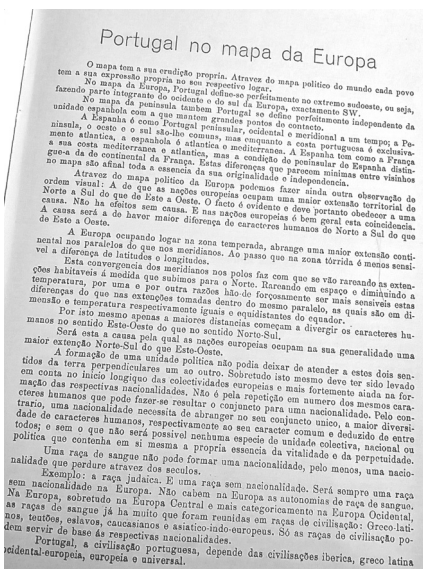
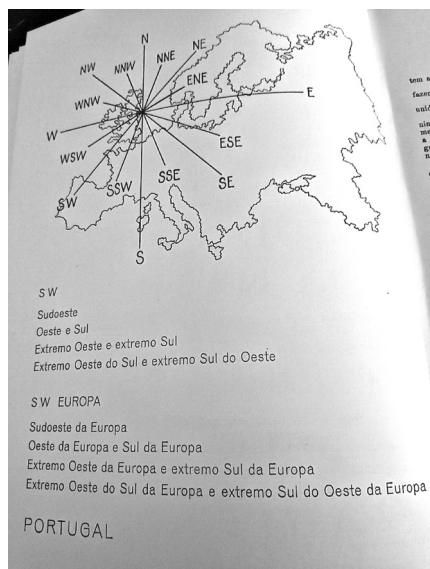


Figure 3

In the diagram (fig. 3, left), the center of Europe is located in the UK, and the lines arrow towards the perimeter of the continent. Portugal is placed in Europe's far South West – as for Spain –, almost escaping from the continent! Almada lived in both South Western European countries. He took the European continent into consideration - firstly as regards each of the individual nationalities, and

Figure 2. Covers of the 3 numbers of the magazine
SW Notebooks – 1935

Figure 3. Double-page images from SW 1 – “Portugal in the
Map of Europe” – copyright: the author.

afterwards as a whole. Each country housed notable protagonists and historical circumstances, which clearly represented the heterogeneity of the European collectivity. Nonetheless, his preference was established from a Mediterranean point of view, considering an idealistic Iberia, but looking at the world. He approached territorial landmarks as a conceptual matter. Almada believed in the power of acts and decisions, in emancipation through faith, arising from European religiousness as a whole. He was convinced that the various nationalities and religions in human individualities had ensured European unity throughout history. Different collectivities and dissimilar persons had occupied assorted geographical positions in Europe. This heterogeneity defined territorial obsessions, and kept European heritage unspoiled.

In Europe, and considering each of its constituent nationalities, each member's individuality towards collectivity was shielded. That condition was a main substance for the universal consciousness of humankind through time. Between these two consciousnesses, the balance of humanity became possible: 'In the political map of Europe, the same process of classification by selectivity in the interpretation of the political whole is repeated. This emancipation forms the various nationalities, and nationalities are the function of the political whole of Europe.' (Almada, 1990, p. 100)

Almada emphasized the individual's condition regarding the universe as part of a composition, following the correct order and scale of human values. Each term - the individual and the collective - should be assumed by each party, allowing for expanding the knowledge of individuals in virtue of the collective. Should this goal be indeed achieved, the encounter with newer collectives would mean an expanded European sense. Almada considered that Portuguese people should assume their wide nationality, first before each one, then before the national community, before Europe and before the world: 'We want the Portuguese community to live up to itself, seen from all sides of the earth. For each Portuguese, inside or outside our land, is the perfect individual of our own community.' (Almada, 1990, p. 54)

Almada believed that art implied creation and enjoyment of the language of each individual artist, while being able to communicate life as a shared goal.⁵ Art had always been Europe's common language, considering their common heritage in the plurality of creations, a main circumstance that would preserve both individual and collective memory and serve as a dynamic impulse: 'Art is above all a universal attitude of the human person.' (Almada, 1965, p. 14) Art seeks unity, encompassing diversity in every display, under a common denominator: the human individual as the whole humanity. On the other hand, supposedly, achieving unity in art 'is not a mystery to some, but it is a secret that is kept in the secret of every artist.' (Almada, 1990, p. 131)

Almada – as an artist and as an author - covered several creative trajectories, always expressing similar convictions, which profiles him as a 'polychrome artist', following Edward T. Hall nomenclature in *The Hidden Dimension* (1966: 173)⁶. That kind of diversity was the main essence of his exceptional activity for more than six decades.

⁵ Almada's perspective approaches the personal notion, when he attributed to Art the need to vitalize; it is related to António Mora [Fernando Pessoa heteronym] in "Art and Nature", *Works in Prose*, p. 233.

⁶ "Polychrome people, possibly because they are so much involved with each other, end to keep several operations going at once, like jugglers. Therefore, the monochrome person often finds it easier to function if he can separate activities in space, whereas the polychrome person tends to collect activities. If, however, these two types are interacting with each other, much of the difficulty they experience can be overcome by the proper structuring of space."

Following Edward T. Hall, the definition of a Southern European polychrome person was based upon a unique (but multiple) direction that we can easily identify in Almada's achievements – attending to his multidisciplinary artistic and thinking roles.

The artist must preserve coherence, producing a work that contemplates the human attitude which art represents (Almada, 1965), namely concerning the ethical position consigned by the act of creation. Ethical responsibility is plural and does not entail any restriction towards creation, based upon the individual unison. The ethical-social consciousness of any artistic intervention should encourage an improving mission, thus recovering the sense of national collectivity and ideological return to the ascending homeland – which could be achieved if Portuguese people kept up with their century, regarding Europe and the World. Art, in his perspective, performed a recovery of national identity, resulting from the presence of the collective in the universal “realm”. Art has a social mission that should not be mistaken for other values and impositions.

Almada clarified the basis of his own performance; he enunciated the relational terms towards the community; he established the virtuous *paideia* as an essential guideline to improve the individual in the *polis*; he removed circles and rhythms - systole and diastole - from the collective projection and its influence on the individual, demanding for a genuine person. The work of art should be generated under a unanimous creative effort ensuing the aesthetic intention and its inner acting. Moreover, art would regain the consciousness of universal dominion as in elder cosmogonies. By the demand of creation as a whole, the ideas of order and number should register the principles of present time, seeing modernity as vivified by the archaic.

Art possessed the genuine sense of the individuated within the collective, thus assuming an aesthetic sense perpetuated by visual communion - the visible and the invisible, holder of the universal meaning, based upon the principle of human continuity –, allowing for an expanded understanding for everyone.

The unity of Europe should be centered on the idea of proximity, in the consciousness of common force, especially in a spiritual ground. The impulse of definition of nationalities stemmed from this spiritual force: ‘The union of Europe is in the bond of all by the same geographical and telluric faith.’ (Almada, 1990, p. 116) The origin of European nationalities was founded on the conviction of a diversity that upraised particular civilizations from the global civilization of Europe. The fragmentary unity should transcend the separation imposed by nationalities, being able to consider each individual national case under the concept of “inner” borders and the classified borders of Europe. The idea of Europe obliged, across territory and time, the maintenance of faith and strength, progressively handed over into self-responsibility. Without a single head of state to keep it together, Europe was united by the diversity of nationalities ruled by the several heads of all its nationalities.

Europe's tragedy, like any personal tragedy, was loss of unity: each nationality thought only about its own goal, disengaging itself from the whole. To preserve the unity of Europe as a whole, people should collaborate without betrayal, without annihilating their peers. The ultimate condition involved collective education reigning over civilized savagery. The secret to achieve it consisted in a joint

effort, and a preconscious awareness of the whole, in order to assert each nationality in Europe (Almada, 1990, p. 109).

Almada regarded avant-garde movements as driving towards a universal language, surpassing time and providing freedom of thought for everyone. The primordial significance of modern art consisted in the improvement of a universal language that went beyond personal languages, spaces or times, in order to generate general understanding among all and acceptance from everyone. Abstractionism responded to these demands, both the collective and the individual, following mythical and utopian projections in Europe.

As for Almada Negreiros' concept of Europe, he considered that modern citizens had been progressively isolated from their personal unity and collectivities. They faced the aggravating traits of a collapsing Humanity. The dialogue between nations might be achieved through culture and art: 'Nations do not concern only the exchange of commodities, but especially that of their special affinities in the common mental and sensuous, which will be the foundation of the social whole.' (Almada, 1965, p. 14)

2. Prometheus - Synthesis of humanity, synthesis of European culture

The mythical figure of Prometheus was doubly evoked by Almada as universal symbol for humankind and as a mythological synthesis of Europe. Prometheus is an ever-retrieved myth in the European history of culture, due to the circumstances he was condemned for. He was the paradigm for human emancipation through knowledge and untamed will. Prometheus was Almada's myth of reference, in the sense of Lévi-Strauss, considered as an increasing transposition of mythological characters, either proceeding from the same culture or from remote ones. Almada studied several versions of the myth, drawing forth a Prometheus adjusted to his thoughts. The poetic remythologization of Prometheus admitted by Almada came from Goethe's *Prometheus (Dramatic Fragment of Youth)*, the historical reference of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and the first literary manifestation by Hesiod, two centuries earlier (Trousson, n/d).

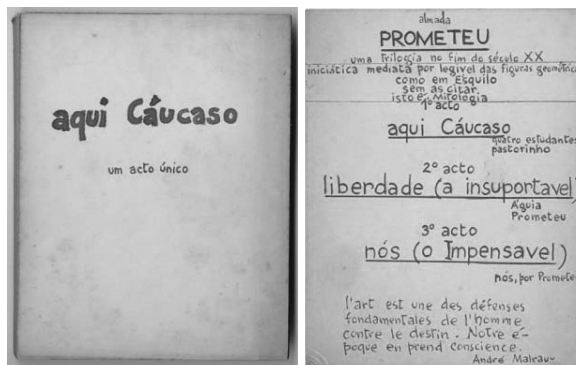


Figure 4

Figure 4. Cover of the play *Here Caucasus*; manuscript of the play *Here Caucasus*; project board for a possible trilogy of Prometheus composed of plays: *Here Caucasus*.

In "Prometheus - Spiritual Essay of Europe" Almada reestablished the narrative of the myth outlined in his later texts, such as "Here Caucasus".⁷ He emphasized the common version, considering that 'If at any time the gods were stolen by Prometheus, it was in his pride of divine as if there were no other natures other than his.' (Almada, 1993b, p. 247)

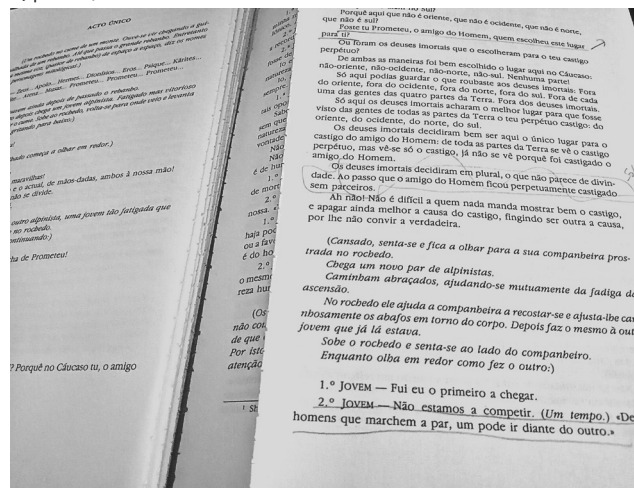
- 7 "Why? Prometheus? Why you here? Why in the Caucasus you, the friend of Man?
Why not beyond in the East?
Why not beyond in the West?
Why not beyond in the North?
Why not beyond in the South?
Why here that is not the East, which is not the West, which is not the North, which is not the South?
Were you Prometheus, the friend of Man, who chose this place for you?
Or was it the immortal gods who chose you for your perpetual punishment?"

Fixing a topography of punishment (rather than its mythical geography), Almada established a kind of atopy - a location for the individual human being, situated nowhere - relative to the divine proxemia: 'Only here could you keep that which thou hast taken from the immortal gods: Out of the east, out of the west, out of the north, out of the south. Out of every one of the peoples of the four parts of the

- 8 And he continued: "Because the idea of Man is not born soon with man, but it is this one who has it later in relation to the different natures of his." Let us note that the four young characters in the play signify the sign of the human quaternary.
earth. Out of the immortal gods.' (Almada, 1993b, p.245)⁸ The circular reference to the determination of the space itself, as belonging, legacy or appropriation - besides the coordinates -, is present in the poem 'Wind Rose', being the first condition for the human in a mythical-autobiographical sense, analogous to the personal character of Prometheus-Almada:

It was not by chance that my blood came from the south
crossed with my blood that came from the north
It was not by chance that my blood came from the east
it crossed my blood that came from the west.
It was no chance that I am now. (Almada, 1984, p. 216)

Figure 5



Prometheus was chained in the rocky mountain of Caucasus, abandoned to any human conception of survival. Almada, through fiction and analogy, decided to locate his birth place in "Wind Rose", the space where the reminiscences of all civilizations and peoples were gathered. Almada-Prometheus

Figure 5. Pages of "Here Caucasus" [1965] - copyright: the author.

was “chained” in Portugal, despite the mental journeys of its national avant-garde. The experience of the mythical, symbolic-psychic time as a polychromatic figure was located in a mythical place out of any contemporary time/space. Symbolically, Almada recognized in Prometheus the example of his own personal case, transposed to the Portuguese “world”: the principle of human condition. According to Prometheus’ achievement, each one had the responsibility to decide his/her destiny on Earth, following the challenge that provoked Zeus’ wrath. Prometheus, according to the latest speculations in dramaturgy, was not a man: ‘It was an idea before the idea. A deity of the Olympus.’ (Almada, 1984, 247) Through his divine condition, Prometheus acted upon the nature of man without interfering, inasmuch as ‘on the contrary he warned the divinity of man’s own powers, which seemed not to pass through the heads of gods. Prometheus is the friend of the humans, for the love of the gods.’ (Almada, 1993a, p. 247)

Some years before publishing his play *Here Caucasus*, Almada joined architect Pardal Monteiro’s project for Lisbon’s “University City”. He conceived, engraved and painted panels for the School of Law, School of Arts and Humanities, and the main building of the University of Lisbon, depicting historic, literary, philosophical, artistic and mythological scenes and characters, such as *Prometheus* (School of Arts and Humanities).

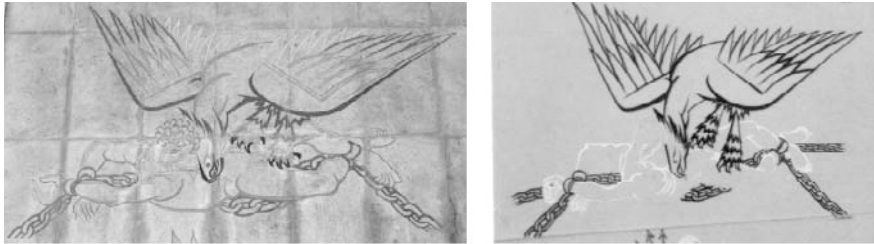


Figure 6

The angle from which Almada faces the figure of the hero calls to mind the terms of Goethe’s Prometheus. He asserted the upmost rebellion, and faced the wrath of the gods: ‘Prometheus: The circle that fills my activity! / Nothing more, nothing less!’ (Almada, 1993a, p. 248)

The reckless wonder of the hero, projected in all geographies of time/space, embodies the true “discovery” of the semi-human by the human, interfering in other Mythology narratives: ‘The sacred fire it is not exclusive to the immortal gods. The sacred is not exclusive to Divinity, and, on the contrary, the sacred is the only one, truly common to the different natures, such as the divine and human.’ (Almada, 1993a, p. 248) The fire is subsumed in order to concatenate meanings within an obsessive image that asserts a life-generating condition, capable of annihilating it. It is a clear display of the

Figure 6. Images of an engraving and a drawing, both representing Prometheus enchained at the School of Arts and Humanities - University of Lisbon, Ana Mehnert Pascoal (2011) “As Figuras Greco-Romanas de Almada Negreiros na Cidade Universitária de Lisboa”. *Boletim de Estudos Clássicos* — 55. Coimbra: Instituto de Estudos Clássicos. URL:<http://hdl.handle.net/10316.2/30359>

dual convention that frequently pervades Almada's work, synthetized in the formula $1 + 1 = 1$, as he explained in *Unique Direction*.

In Gaston Bachelard's theory (1992), the symbolic meaning of fire is especially related to sexual indexes, dynamizing primordial drives and recovering the sense of a promised complex. The symbolism of fire is promulgated in a psychoanalytic way: 'To know and to manufacture are needs that can be characterized in themselves, without necessarily relating them to the will to power. There is in man a real will of intellectuality.' (Bachelard, 1992, p. 26) According to the philosopher, the Prometheus complex was related to Oedipus complex with regard to the intellectual path. So, it is understandable that Prometheus is sometimes associated with the Myth of Creation, and not only in Greek Mythology, for he decided on the irrevocability of the qualities and conditions for the human. 'Prometheus realized a utopia. He attained an unprecedented achievement. Therefore, human power was surprised by the universal at the hands of the gods of the Olympus, and, after the surprise, it is impossible for him to agree.' (Almada, 1982b, p. 130) That was the main interpretation for Prometheus: his act of civilization, the effectiveness of utopia, the individual force that constitutes culture: 'Now this dream of Prometheus is European, and, today it is Europe's dream, at least in the West.' (Almada, 1990, p. 94)

Prometheus' dream did not fade away when tragedy came, nor did it vanish under his impregnable punishment. He knew how to mock at⁹ the situation, for in the final instance both men and God were part of the same chain: they were bound to violence, to illusions of victory, to inevitable defeat. When Prometheus perceived the wars among the gods, he recognized the provocations of the men: he could endure the latter's fate, for there were no exceptions in the Cosmos. His daydreaming is eternal, since it remains in the Universe by knowledge as by number. A secret contained in the tragic and fatalism of the human: 'Not a tragedy that unfolds fatally forever without solution, but the eternal tragedy of Man to conquer the World, the tragic action of this heroic conquest.' (Almada, 1990, p. 94)

Considering the primordial terms of the Human-sacred, Almada underlined the antithetical terms symbolized in the couple Prometheus and Io. Let us face it as a sort of *Coniunctio Oppositorum*, as he wrote in "Heraclitus weeps and Democritus laughs" (Almada, 1950). He established the distinction between what 'would be the half-blood of divine and human and Prometheus', which would separate the divine from the human, and only with this would open the way, against the divinity, if it were necessary...' (Almada, 1950, p. 100). According to the legend, the confrontation between the two - Prometheus and Io - would remain possible for as long as each of them respected their fate, and excluded them from each other. They symbolize the Divine-human bi-presence, the marriage between Heaven and Earth, unified in Number.¹⁰ 'Prometheus confers the universal unity through this finding which he gave to men: the Number.' This is a quotation taken from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Chained*, quoted by Almada: 'I gave [men] the beautiful find of arithmetic.' (Almada, 1982, p. 179) As such, the Number is the supreme knowledge.

Longing to redeem Portuguese from atavism, Almada cried out for the force of Myth and its polychromic understanding. He was able to produce knowledge in art and establish a peculiar thought, as well

⁹ In the literary twentieth century, consider the version of André Gide, *Prométhée Mal Enchaîné*, an exercise in sarcasm, which culminates in a feast in which Prometheus delights in savoring the flesh of those who almost unceasingly devoured his liver.

¹⁰ See Almada Negreiros, "Heraclitus weeps, Democritus laughs".

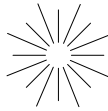
as to use several *viso-verbico-performatic* expressions, strategies and achievements. Capable of a great conceptual agility, he circumvented conventions and stereotypes, countering the tragic in his present, blending chronology and space together. Through his capacity and impulse, he conceived the inclusive binomial, without dissolution of the terms: LIFE-ART. Almada asserted art (in his own life, too) as a worthy, individual case. With exemplary ideas and actions, perhaps Almada wanted to reach the perfect level of individuality he recognized in Goethe: 'the first individual of all individuals in Europe.' (Almada, 1993b, p. 82) He merged together "his" literary and philosophic references, gathering Platonic aesthetics and Neoplatonic revisions, in which he incorporated the aesthetics of number (Pythagoreanism), and concealed the aesthetics of light (aesthetic theophany) and the aesthetics of symbology (structured mythification). Almada verified that each side featured an inclusive circumstance, one capable of performing autonomy, of overcoming dual symbols, of providing access to simple and universal visual signs, which ensured a constant presence of humankind.

The obsession of Almada thought obliged him to wonder largely in circular convictions, almost paradoxes or at least extreme riddles. His ultimate goal concerned the harmonic dialogue between human individuality and collective authority. During his lifetime a fatal disruption was present: an apathetic and mute obedience between the individual and the collective. His mission consisted in alerting each one and the collectivity in order to admit the crisis. The crisis was caused by the failure of collectivity. People no longer were able to encourage or valuing the collective condition for individuality and alienated human personality. The resolution would only be possible for the individual who rushes to fight because 'he does not resign himself to die in life, nor to live in blank.' (Almada, 1993b, p. 100) One cannot be dissolved by the passiveness of others in the collectivity. To each one is destined the effort and the wisdom undertaken, aware of its capacities. The gifted individual is surpassed by the reinvigorated understanding, by the conscious force of its social dimension in the collective. Here is the answer to proceeding one by one: 'The individual of the community fully informed about the individual of nature, is up to you to prepare your new place and arm yourself with your best sense.' (Almada, 1993b, p. 73)

Almada's quest fixed the matrix of humanity on a sacred terrain without borders, while keeping the reason for its location - the geography of his own country in the Map of Europe. He followed the argumentative clues of conciliation strangely implied by Myth. Almada pointed out Prometheus as the European synthesis for humankind. From Homer's personality and the effectiveness of Greek civilization, Almada retrieved the collective (inspiring) source for Europe: 'Civilization is a collective phenomenon. Culture is an individual phenomenon.' (Almada, 1990, p. 77) Homer, founder of civilization, according to Almada, was the poet that respected positive values both in tradition and in 'the individual initiative of the present ones of the same civilization' (Almada, 1990, p. 77). That unity of times and spaces was the condition for strengthening a future civilization.

His quest for a utopian Europe went beyond real borders and countries. Located as a South Western artist and recalling his African roots, Almada spent his lifetime searching for humanity. He was able to reduce his points of view into an essential one, which consists in his ultimate belief in the simple geometrical shapes that have existed since the beginning of humankind. Almada's final abstract-geometrical black and white paintings (1957) can be understood as the ultimate fusion of his research,

and are landmarks for future generations. The paintings accomplished his late conquest, related to the huge seminal mural for the main building of the Gulbenkian Foundation – *Beginning (Começar)*, his premonitory last work.



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