

JOÃO PEDRO DE ANDRADE

(Ponte de Sor, 13/03/1902 – Lisbon, 13/02/1974)

João Pedro da Conceição took his mother's surname, Freire de Andrade, and adopted the literary name of João Pedro de Andrade. He was a playwright, essayist, translator and literary critic of cinema and theatre.

After arriving in the capital with his family, João Pedro de Andrade began working for the newspaper *O Século* when still very young. He completed night school in accountancy at the Lisbon Business Institute and after terminating his studies, took up a position as bookkeeper for a company in Santiago do Cacém, where he would reside from the age of 21 to 43. In this profession, he reached the position of head of accounting at the company Amoníaco Português (Almeida 2004). In spite of his job, João Pedro de Andrade continued his work as a writer. His connection to literature and theatre would be long lasting, and throughout his life he preserved an intimate relationship with the Portuguese arts, as a critic and essayist, and through his own creations, most notably for the theatre.

João Pedro Andrade's affinity with literature began with poetry. He published his first poem *Beatrice* in *Trova Popular* in 1921, and his first and only book of poems *Castelos...* in 1923 (Lisbon, Minerva Lisbonense). In 1926 he published the tale «Torturados» in the *Domingo Ilustrado*, and his production of short stories would continue until 1964, terminating with «A vida e morte de Anastácio Godinho», published by *Ecos da Forja* (Almeida 2004: 15-16). His vocation as a playwright was evident from the age of 23, when he submitted the play *Noite negra* (in 3 acts, now mislaid) to «Crítica de inéditos», part of the theatre supplement of the *Diário de Notícias*. At the same time, he wrote *O lobo e o homem*, later revised. *Os que hão-de vir* of 1951 was to be the last of João Pedro de Andrade's creations in the field of dramaturgy. He left around 18 plays, although many of them remain unpublished and few have ever been performed.

With a singular dedication to the theatre, João Pedro de Andrade composed *A ave branca* (1927), *Continuação da comédia* (1931), *A glória dos Césares*, *Eva e sua filha* (ambas de 1933), *Adolescente* (1935), *A outra face da vida* (1934) and *Cegos* (1937), the latter having been performed by Araújo Pereira's students at the National Conservatory. It was only in 1939 that he first managed to publish one of his plays, *Continuação da comédia*, when it appeared in the literary review *presença-folha de arte e de crítica*, founded and directed by João Gaspar Simões, Branquinho da Fonseca and José Régio, having received the enthusiastic support of the latter. According to Luiz Francisco Rebello, his debut as a published playwright corresponded with « the first sign of the presence of Pirandello in Portuguese (written) theatre» (Rebello 1999: 6), and it is of note that the year the play was written coincided with the Italian author's visit to Lisbon in 1931.

In 1941 *Transviados* (1934) and *Uma só vez na vida* (1937) were published, accompanied by a «critical study» written by José Régio. At variance with the neorealist movement, he compared the playwright to the ideas of *Presencismo*, proclaiming the importance of « originality» and « authenticity» as opposed to art as a vehicle for political programmes. In his critique of the plays, the poet praises the author's respect for human

complexity and suggests « that what seduces João Pedro de Andrade is stirring up problems, inviting reflection or even dreams, presenting aspects of the human landscape, meditating on it and even allowing himself to dream about it – rather than imposing judgement, clutching hold of a theory, inflicting a single solution» (Régio 1941: 271).

The « human landscape» which Régio spoke of is framed within the aesthetic lines of naturalism, which the author continued to explore in *Maré alta* (1947), *Barro humano* (1948), *O diabo e o frade* (1950) and in the play *A aventura dum grande actor* (1950), inspired on a novella by Serge Basset about the actor Frederic Lemaître, written by João Villaret. However, it was in *Continuação da comédia* that for the first time there was evidence of « the incursion of fantasy into the theatre of João Pedro de Andrade» (Rebello 1999: 7), marking his entry into modernism, a line he would develop in other one act plays: *Quatro ventos* (1945), *O saudoso extinto* (1947), *A inimiga dos homens* and *Os que hão-de vir* (both of 1951). Maria Helena Serôdio recognised in the author « an openness to a certain experimentalism, without relinquishing any of the defining logic of his writing: the attentive observation of the human, criticism of social hypocrisy, a reflection on whether affection and understanding is possible in amorous relationships» (Serôdio 2004: 102).

Besides the plays mentioned above, João Pedro de Andrade would also see the publication of *O saudoso extinto* (cultural review *Ver e Crer*, 1945, later included in the collection *Teatro Estúdio do Salitre 50 anos* published in 1996 by SPA - D. Quixote to celebrate half a century since the founding of this experimental group). This was joined by *Cegos*, *A inimiga dos homens* (preceded by his novella *Hora secreta*; both books published by Imbondeiro in 1963) and *O diabo e o frade* (awarded first prize in the Sá da Bandeira theatre contest, also in 1963, and printed in the same year by Minerva). After his death, the publication of *Obras completas* by the publisher Acontecimento would comprise four volumes of Theatre: vol. I – *Maré alta/Quatro ventos*; vol. II – *Continuação da comédia/Barro humano*; vol. III – *A inimiga dos homens/Eva e sua filha*; vol. IV – *O lobo e o homem/A glória dos Césares* (of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2002 respectively). The playwright would leave two manuscripts incomplete: two scenes from *Vida transitória* (1957) and a farce *Um país glorioso* (1963).

Interference from the censors was largely why the work of this playwright was not more widely performed in the playhouses. It is known, for example, that *Transviados* and *O lobo e o homem* drew the interest of Robles Monteiro, who planned to stage the plays at Teatro Nacional D. Maria II in 1946 and 1947, had they not been banned (Almeida 2004: 19). Moreover, João Pedro de Andrade could have been overlooked as a playwright where it not for the determination of groups who were not guided by purely commercial motives, and who persisted in opening the way for new theatre creation and insisted on exhibiting national playwrights. This was the case of Teatro-Estúdio do Salitre, directed by Gino Saviotti, Luiz Francisco Rebello and Vasco Mendonça Alves, who brought before the public 31 plays by Portuguese authors, many of them unpublished, and whose success demonstrated that «the existence of another theatre was possible, besides what was being performed on the established stages» (Rebello 1996: 24). *O saudoso extinto* was the second «essentialist» play produced by Estúdio do Salitre, in 1947, whilst *Maré alta*, which should have been presented as the sixth «essentialist» theatrical performance was banned by the censors, «frightened by the daring of staging a scene involving the sharing of a woman, agreed upon by two men,

who live with her on a desert island » (Rebello 1999: 6). Companheiros do Pátio das Comédias, a group composed of Costa Ferreira, Jorge de Sena, Tomás Ribas, António Pedro, among others, also managed to provide a venue for one of Andrade's plays, presenting *Continuação da comédia* in 1948, a version of which was produced for the national television station, RTP, and screened in 1957, as well as a radio version by Eduardo Jacques, transmitted by the National Broadcaster in 1973. At the Sociedade Guilherme Cossoul, *O saudoso extinto* returned in 1950, directed by Fernando Gusmão. In 1951 the author himself directed *A inimiga dos homens*, produced for television (RTP) later, in 1988, by Jaime Campos. Finally, there is mention of two other productions of the author's plays: one at Teatro d'Ensaio, which performed *Continuação da Comédia* in 1960; and another at Teatro d'O Semeador de Portalegre, which staged *Maré alta* in 2003.

As a translator, João Pedro de Andrade rendered a considerable body of work into Portuguese, by authors such as Albert Camus, André Gide, Marcel Aymé, Gustave Flaubert, Claude Roy, Honoré de Balzac, among others. In his job as theatre critic, Andrade left an important testimony on Lisbon's theatre, particularly during the 1940's and '50s in articles he wrote for various periodicals – *O Diabo* (1939-1940), *Seara Nova* (1940-1950), *Diário de Lisboa* (1946-1947), *Diário Popular* (1954-1958) and *O Comércio do Porto* (1951-1962). In his reviews of plays and scripts, delivered with precision and impartiality, besides raising questions about the stagnation of the theatrical panorama of the period, «the author demonstrates knowledge of the various languages that traverse the stage, taking care to address not just the text and the staging, but also the theatre performance within the context of the times and the work of the company or artists involved» (Seródio 2004: 18). Miguel Real counts 270 critical reviews, of which around a third were dedicated to published or performed plays, and makes special mention of some of his essays on theatre – «Meio século de dramaturgia nos palcos portugueses», «Alguns momentos da dramaturgia» and «Teatro para o público» –, published in the periodical *O Comércio do Porto* and included in the second of three volumes of *Estrada Larga*, organised by Costa Barreto (Real 2004: 113).

In the field of literary studies, he wrote the important book *Raul Brandão: A obra e o homem* (1963), in which João Pedro de Andrade provides an extensive and profound understanding of the complexity of the work and personality of the creator of *Húmus*.

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