

Ágnes Judit Szilágyi

## *Revista Atlântida (1915-1920): From the Luso-Brazilian Rapprochement to the New Lusitânia*

### Abstract

The journal *Atlântida*, as a kind of mouthpiece of the Portuguese and Brazilian official line, is a very interesting object of historical analysis, reflecting certain cultural and political aspects of the two new republics in the turbulent years of the First World War and immediately following period as well as manifesting the wish for an intensification of transatlantic amity — a wish that extended beyond the life of the journal. This way of thinking made use of the Luso-Brazilian rapprochement as a strategy toward resolving the ongoing sense of crisis in Portugal by working toward an expanded awareness of a new kind of Latin brotherhood.

*Keywords:* First World War and immediately following period; Luso-Brazilian rapprochement; Revista Atlântida; João de Barros; João do Rio.

I

Once, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there lived two literati. They were close friends, were born in the same year of 1881, and went by the same first name: João. The Portuguese was João de Barros,<sup>1</sup> and the Brazilian who was first known as João do Rio,<sup>2</sup> in his hometown of Rio de Janeiro and later on became famous under this name. Their personal contact began in the winter of 1908-1909 when João do Rio was visiting Europe. They met in literary company and immediately took to one another, each recognizing a future ally in a special project; namely, the launching of a Luso-Brazilian journal called *Atlântida* (*Atlantis*).

The title indicates a very definite intellectual stance. That fabulous continent, sunk in the Atlantic, is synonymous with a lost golden age of peace and beauty based on a highly developed civilization. The founders and editors of *Atlântida* intended to rediscover and rebuild a virtual cultural-Atlantis between Portugal and Brazil. Despite the two nations' common language, cultural traditions and historical bonds, as of the mid-nineteenth century relations between these Portuguese-speaking countries – both on the level the two states and on that of

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<sup>1</sup> João de Barros (1881-1960) poet, writer and theorist of republican pedagogy. On his life, see FERNANDES, Rogério: *João de Barros—Educador Republicano*. Livros Horizonte, LDA, Lisbon, n.d.

<sup>2</sup> His real name was Paulo Barreto (1881-1921), writer, eminent journalist, playwright and extravagant figure of the Carioca *belle-époque*, being considered one of Rio de Janeiro's great dandies. On his life, see MAGALHÃES Júnior, Raimundo: *A vida vertiginosa de João do Rio*. Civilização Brasília: INL, Rio de Janeiro, 1978; and RODRIGUES, João Carlos: *João do Rio: uma Biografia*. Topbooks, Rio de Janeiro, 1996.

the two peoples - were rather chilly as illustrated by the following cultural-anthropological observation:

*‘When life is going well, it is common to hear Brazilians say: “God is Brazilian.” However, when misfortune reigns, they say: “God is Portuguese.” The latter saying, with all its negative overtones, is indicative of the unfavorable impression many Brazilians have of the Portuguese, particularly the immigrant. [...]*

*As the years passed, these Portuguese immigrants found themselves the object of ridicule, particularly as Brazil became more nationalistic, with many of her radical elements rejecting the cultural link between the old kingdom of Portugal and the newly-declared albeit flashy and presumptuous “Empire” of Brazil. This revolt against the tradition of Portugal is widespread in newspapers, journals, literary criticism, and histories of literature that started to emerge in the 1870s.<sup>3</sup>*

Thus the primary aim of the *Atlântida* was to encourage and popularize the rapprochement of the two Portuguese-speaking countries. The joint undertaking — financed in Lisbon by Pedro Bordalo Pinheiro<sup>4</sup> — was relatively successful, extending from November 1915 to March 1920, a period in which forty-eight issues were published.<sup>5</sup> The journal’s more than four-year existence as well as its high production quality were doubtless due to the backing of Portuguese and Brazilian political circles. Not only did the spirit of the articles conform with official political positions (e.g. favoring Portuguese participation in the war) but among the journal’s contributors were also high government officials. And even though the collaborators belonged to divergent circles of public life, the oppositional standpoint was absent from the monthly. Its ideological content was dominated by republicanism and a special combination of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, and it glossed over such delicate questions as the dictatorship of Sidónio Pias, the Portuguese monarchist revolt of 1919, and the manifestations of Lusophobia in Brazil.

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<sup>3</sup> VIEIRA, Nelson H.: *The Luso-Brazilian Joke*, *Western Folklore* 39:1 (1980) 53 and 52.

<sup>4</sup> Nephew of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, a famous cartoonist. See CORREIA, Rita: *Atlântida: Mensário Artístico, Literário e Social para Portugal e Brasil (1915-1920)*, Newsletter, 28 February 2008; Hemeroteca Municipal de Lisboa; 10 May 2008 <[http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/Arquivo\\_Newsletter/41/Newsletter41.htm](http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/Arquivo_Newsletter/41/Newsletter41.htm)>

<sup>5</sup> For a list of other akin but fugitive journals of the period, see CONCEIÇÃO, Cecília Dias de Carvalho Henriques da: *A revista Atlântida: documento socio-cultural e literário de uma época: um abraço mental entre Portugal e Brasil*. Master’s thesis, Universidade Nova, Lisbon, 1997. 13-17. and see also the chapter *As revistas luso-brasileiras*. IN: SARAIVA, Arnaldo: *Modernismo brasileiro e Modernismo português: subsídios para o seu estudo e para a história das suas relações*. UNICAMP, Campinas, 2004, 89-138.

First World War as well as manifesting the wish for an intensification of transatlantic amity — a wish that extended beyond the life of the journal and was visible in Salazar's Portugal, in its propaganda and foreign policy as well as being evident in expectations of the formation of a neutral '*Latin bloc*' in the early 1940s<sup>6</sup>; and in Brazil, starting in the 1930s, with Gilberto Freyre's Luso-tropical theory, or later in the 1950s with the concept of the '*Third*' (Luso-) America as summarized by Nestor Luis dos Santos Lima.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the cosmopolitanism of authors in *Atlântida* substantially enlarged the joint project. As João do Rio declared in a 1914 lecture in Buenos Aires, he was above all Brazilian but simultaneously South American, and he believed strongly in South America's marvelous future.<sup>8</sup> This was in accord with the notion that the Atlantis project not only serve Luso-Brazilian rapprochement but that it be the medium of '*o grande abraço mental enter a Europa e a America*'<sup>9</sup> — meaning a big mental embrace of both Europe and America.

## II

From the point of view of its artistic content *Atlântida* was, well, quite *one-sided*. Though its motto was *aberta a todos* — open to all — the modernists were, in essence, not to be found among its authors. The journal's poetry and prose was imbued with neo-romanticism and *saudosismo* — longing for the past<sup>10</sup> — as could also be witnessed in the conservatism of its art illustrations.

On the Brazilian side, the years of *Atlântida*'s existence are marked by a kind of literary vacuum. (The general specialized works sometimes politely skip over this period.)<sup>11</sup> Although in the 1910s in São Paulo some of the painters already embraced Modernism, the symbolic inauguration of Brazilian Modernism was the opening of São Paulo's *Semana de Arte Moderna* in the week of 11-18 February 1922. By this time the *Atlântida* had been '*suspended*' (actually terminated) for almost two years, and its Brazilian editor João do Rio had died eight months before.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On the problems related to the '*Latin bloc*', see also SZILÁGYI, Ágnes Judit: *Salazars Reichsgedanke und die portugiesische-brasilianische Annäherung 1940-1941*, Lusorama (Frankfurt am Main), 73-74 (May 2008) 184-191.

<sup>7</sup> SANTOS LIMA, Nestor Luis dos: *La Tercera América: tentativa de individualización de la América Luso-Brasileña*, Revista de Historia de América (Mexico) 43 (1957), 51-106.

<sup>8</sup> '*Sou brasileiro. Mas, depois de ser brasileiro, sou sul-americano, crente no ideal do maravilhoso futuro da América Ibérica...*' João do Rio, quoted in MAGALHÃES Júnior, 1978: 228.

<sup>9</sup> RIO, João do: O sonho de Atlântida, *Atlântida*, 1 (November 1915) 15.

<sup>10</sup> See CONCEIÇÃO, (1997): 28, 30, 34-36.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, SMITH, Verity (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature*. Fitzroy, London; Dearborn, Chicago, 1997. and the chapters in it: chapter by ZILBERMAN, Regina: *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Prose and Poetry, which ends with the 1890s*, and the subsequent chapter by LOBO, Luiza: *20<sup>th</sup>-Century Prose and Poetry, which begins with the Modernism of 1920s*.

<sup>12</sup> BATCHELOR, C. Malcom: *João do Rio: O Esboço de um Retrato e Espelhos de Ilusão*, Hispania, 68 (1985), 700.

*'The year [1922] between the premature deaths of two Cariocas, João do Rio and Lima Baretto, a new era began, that of Brazil's Modernismo ... The new era washed over the old port capital at Rio de Janeiro from beyond the Serra do Mar. It was an age born in São Paulo.'*<sup>13</sup>

But during the period of *Atlântida's* publication the modernist wave departing from Europe had not yet reached the Brazilian coast.

The connection between Portuguese Modernism and the *Atlântida* was completely different. And it raises not only aesthetic but historical questions, too, for Portuguese modernists joined their theory of art with political ambitions. From 1910 to 1926, Portugal saw a 'brief and abortive experiment in parliamentary democracy' and 'the key year of 1915' not only saw the establishment of *Atlântida* but was the year 'when the „honeymoon" era of the Republic ended.'<sup>14</sup> The extremely bad economic situation, the adverse budget, and the illegal actions of opposing political forces all gave rise to internal instability and a hopeless situation in Portugal. Internationally, Portugal was occupied in defending her colonial possessions, fighting the Germans in Angola and Mozambique. Later on the Portuguese government sent troops to Belgium as well giving up its previous neutral position. The reason for this was grounded in the fear of loosening of the traditional Anglo-Portuguese alliance.

*'Churchill always maintained and disseminated the view that Spain was more important to Britain strategically and militarily than Portugal and her possessions. He was convinced, as was most military and naval opinion, that it would now [in the 1910s] be impossible for Britain to be on good terms with both nations at the same time and that therefore Britain's choice had better be Spain, who could then be allowed or even encouraged to absorb her neighbor. The Foreign Office was annoyed by his insistence on "the absurd nightmare that rapprochement with Portugal implies friction with Spain"; but the issue was never properly joined until early in 1916, when the cabinet overruled the objections of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Robertson, to Portugal's entry into the war because of the consequences in Spain. By that time British toleration of Spanish attitudes towards Portugal, which essentially consisted of waiting for or actually fomenting counter-revolution, had gravely damaged the republic.'*<sup>15</sup>

On the whole, the First Portuguese Republic remained merely a legal framework, lacking legitimacy, and it was never really consolidated. All this was accurately perceived by intellectuals of the epoch, yet the modernists on the one

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<sup>13</sup> NEEDELL, Jeffrey D.: *A Tropical Belle Époque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. 233.

<sup>14</sup> WHEELER, Douglas L.: Review: [untitled], *Luso-Brazilian Review* 11:1 (1974), 124.

<sup>15</sup> VINCENT-SMITH, J. D.: *The Portuguese Republic and Britain, 1910-1914*, *Journal of Contemporary History* 10:4 (1975), 711.

hand and the editors and authors of *Atlântida* on the other had radically different ideas of how to get out of this impasse. An important group of the modernists, among them Fernando Pessoa and contributors to the journal *Orpheu*<sup>16</sup>, established an elitist, anti-liberal and anti-democratic program for inevitable social and economic modernization. They were advocating the formation of a government, or even better the emergence of a strong leader, someone who could unify all of the nation's forces, and they felt that this project should be supported by modern art.

It was about this time that Fernando Pessoa formulated his devastating criticism about the current political situation: *'To be revolutionary would be to serve the enemy. To be liberal would be to hate the homeland. Modern democracy is an orgy of the traitorous.'*<sup>17</sup> Still, João de Barros defended the notion of democracy, and — as a state official and organizer of the new educational policy — helped to operate the republican machinery.<sup>18</sup> As a mouthpiece for republican pedagogy, he could obviously not agree with Pessoa's bombastic and elitist statements, such as, *'There is a smaller difference between a worker and a monkey than between a worker and a truly cultured man.'*<sup>19</sup>

The spiritual Atlantis concept — Barros's suggestion for bettering Portugal's fortunes — did not offer a radical program for turning everything upside-down. Instead it sought modest and functional benefits: first of all, Brazil's support in the international arena; extension of Portuguese economic possibilities; and on the one hand creating a larger market for the intellectual products of Lusophone culture and searching for new inspiration on the other, believing that the Brazilian *'is the American nation, where the Portuguese culture obtains a more accelerated and vivid rhythm.'*<sup>20</sup>

The *Atlântida* was published by old-fashioned<sup>21</sup> (pre-modernist) but professional literati, mostly mainstream academic figures who did not want to overthrow the prevailing literary (and political) structures; quite the contrary, in

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<sup>16</sup> *Orpheu* had first been published in March 1915 shortly before *Atlântida*'s first issue appeared. It only had three issues, all published still in the same year. See SARAIVA (2004): 94.

<sup>17</sup> *'Ser revolucionário é servir o inimigo. Ser liberal é odiar a pátria. A democracia moderna é uma orgia de traidores.'* As quoted in VILLAVERDE CABRAL, Manuel: *The Aesthetics of Nationalism: Modernism and Authoritarianism in Early Twentieth-Century Portugal*, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 26:1 (1989), 29.

<sup>18</sup> In 1910, right after proclamation of the republic in Portugal, João de Barros was appointed director-general of public education in the Ministry of the Interior (*Director-General da Instrução Pública do Ministério da Interior*). In 1913 the republican regime created the new, independent Ministry of Education, and subsequently Barros held several high posts in it. For a few months (23 November 1914-14 February 1915) he was foreign minister in the government of José Domingues dos Santos. See FERNANDES, n.d.: passim.

<sup>19</sup> *'...entre um operário e um macaco há menos diferença que entre um operário e um homem realmente culto.'* As quoted in VILLAVERDE CABRAL (1989): 29.

<sup>20</sup> *'...nação americana onde a cultura portuguesa obteve um ritmo mais acelerado e vivaz.'* See GRAÇA ARANHA, José Pereira de: *A Nação*, *Atlântida*, 37 (April 1919) 10.

<sup>21</sup> According to Arnaldo Saraiva, they were simply mediocre: *'o espaço reservado a colaboradores mediócras também foi sempre excessivo.'* See SARAIVA (2004): 129.

fact: they wished to consolidate these structures. They along with the modernists thought it necessary to inject new rhythms into Portuguese culture; but instead of searching for enemies against which to redefine their culture and their nation, they sought friends overseas who would reflect the traditional Portuguese nationalism. In perusing the content of the *Atlântida*, three basic ideas emerge: the Luso-Brazilian confraternity being based on shared Latin origins; a kinship existing between the Portuguese and the Brazilian mentality; and the wish for closer relations between the two countries based on mutual understanding and respect. All of these are upheld and transmitted by the two countries' common language and civilization (above all, through the elements of Catholicism and folklore) and by means of the shared ethnic base and a common racial heritage (*raça*). João do Rio, speaking from the Brazilian standpoint, felt: '*There is a race and it is ours: the Portuguese. There is a past that links us with Greek legends and Phoenician voyages: the Portuguese. There is a life that is shared by the two peoples, as branches of a single trunk: Portugal!*'<sup>22</sup> In this ideal confraternity, Portugal was the firstborn, to whom the younger brother owed a great deal. And it was precisely this *analytic nationalism* that the Portuguese modernists wanted to deconstruct fiercely, and which gave rise in 1915 to Almada Negreiros's attack on a leading mainstream writer: '*If Dantas is Portuguese, I want to be a Spaniard.*'<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that in this virtual Atlantis, dominated by the academics, there was no place — in either an aesthetic or political-ideological sense — for the Portuguese modernists (who didn't desire a place there anyhow).

### III

The craving for a mental Atlantis was not a prime modernist idea, but in a certain way it did indeed seem to be '*modern*'; that is, a new answer for old problems. The political reality at the turn of the century was that the distance (and not only geographically) between Portugal and Brazil, in spite of the common cultural-historical heritage, was immense. The former Portuguese colony had gained its independence from the mother country in 1822, and the hostility between the two nations was maintained subsequently for several decades. In addition, there was the worsening economic-financial situation in both countries. While first the Portuguese monarchy and then the First Republic was trying to deal with the chaotic internal crisis and threatened colonies, the Brazilian Republic (proclaimed in 1889, but hardly consolidated) was trying to implement a strongly

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<sup>22</sup> '*Há uma raça que é a nossa: a portuguesa. Há um passado que nos liga às lendas gregas e aos périplos fenícios: o português. Há uma vida que é comum aos dois povos, ramos do mesmo tronco: - Portugal!*' See TEIXEIRA, Luis – BARROS, João de: *Homenagem a João do Rio*, Revista Ocidente 39 (1950), 9.

<sup>23</sup> '*Se o Dantas é português eu quero ser hespanhol!*' From the *Manifesto anti-Dantas e por Extenso* against Júlio Dantas (1876-1962), in which Almada Negreiros vigorously attacked not only the academic poet and playwright Júlio Dantas but all 'those gentleman who have earned Portugal the reputation of Europe's and the world's most backward country.' See VILLAVERDE CABRAL (1989): 25.

nationalist economic-recovery program. After the financial crisis of 1900 and the industrial-commercial crisis in 1905-1906, in Brazil foreign economic interests became 'Public Enemy Number 1.' The climate of opinion was not as hostile toward the most important investors (British, French, and North-American) and the most populous immigrant group (Italians) as it was toward those sons of kindred Portugal.

*'In a closer examination of commerce and industry, it can be seen that the Portuguese were disproportionately important in comparison to their numbers and were highly significant in these leading sectors. As a community, the Portuguese were unusually self-conscious and were reasonably well organized with important voluntary associations, much like the Italians and Japanese. But where the Portuguese differed from all other Brazilian-bound immigrants was in their unusual demographic makeup and their extraordinary length of time in migration.'*<sup>24</sup>

The strong Portuguese communities, mainly in the cities (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Pelotas, Recife, Belém, Manaus, Porto Alegre, Santos and Salvador) were a thorn in the side of Brazilian nationalists. The breaking off of the diplomatic relations between Brazil and Portugal in May 1894 only added fuel to the fire and increased the Lusophobia.<sup>25</sup> (A year later, in May 1895, mutual diplomatic representation was reestablished, first at the level of minister-plenipotentiary and then, in 1913, attaining embassy status.) In 1922 Portuguese president António José de Almeida paid an official visit to Brazil and the two governments contracted first bilateral agreement<sup>26</sup> namely the mutual legal protection of copyright, and negotiated on dual citizenship connected with compulsory military service, regulation of immigration and the issuing of work permits. These were some causes that *Atlântida* had long advocated, as well. In comparison with the previously cold relations between the two states this agreement seemed to be a huge achievement, but compared to the ambitions of the direction and upholders of *Atlântida*, or virtual Atlantis, this seemed to be a moderate success.

Certainly, intellectuals are always one step ahead of the pragmatism of everyday politics. Not much later *Atlântida* ceased to exist as an advocate of a culturally based analytic nationalism and raised the stakes in propagating the voluntary institutional unification of the two republics,<sup>27</sup> taking their basic concept

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<sup>24</sup> KLEIN, Herbert S.: *The Social and Economic Integration of Portuguese Immigrants in Brazil in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23 (1991), 337.

<sup>25</sup> This was owing to the 1893 naval revolt in Rio de Janeiro, when Brazilian government troops scuttled Portuguese boats lying at anchor in Guanabara Bay; they had been harboring one of the monarchist leaders of the revolt, Admiral Saldanha da Gama (1846-1895) and his associates.

<sup>26</sup> Concerning the bilateral agreements see CERVO, Amado Luis - MAGALHÃES, José Calvet de: *Depois das Caravelas—As relações entre Portugal e o Brasil 1808-2000*. Instituto Camões, Lisbon, 2000, 203-204.

<sup>27</sup> The form of government is especially important in this context, and the timing of the publication

to its logical conclusion. The editors put the notion of a Luso-Brazilian Confederacy into play in 1917 when several articles on the topic were published in *Atlântida*—and the idea returns again and again throughout the life of the journal.<sup>28</sup> The first of these articles, in June 1917, - which can be taken as the political program of the journal too - is an interview by João de Barros with Dr. Bettencourt Rodrigues,<sup>29</sup> the committed unionist, physician, writer and respected public figure of the Portuguese community in São Paulo who says:

*'Look, there is an idea that your journal should propagate and defend, a crucial idea to the future of Brazil and our own—the necessity of creating and organizing the Luso-Brazilian Confederacy.'*<sup>30</sup>

In the opinion of supporters, were this plan to be realized, the Portuguese and Brazilian United Republics (*Repúblicas Unidas de Portugal e Brasil*) would bring mutual economic benefits. Yet the Confederacy would have had even more important political and moral advantages: create a great power in world politics, and would make Brazil a partly European country while at the same time realizing the dream of Portuguese nationalists by (re-)creating the new and enlarged Lusitânia.

Both a part of the Portuguese intellectual-political elite (which seemed to so easily relinquish the overseas colony in 1822) and a part of the Brazilian elite (which had originally yearned for independence) cherished illusions of a „nostalgic” empire. *Atlântida* reflected this illusion, a seemingly modern idea, but one which would soon be exposed as a basically outdated if not ruinous concept.

The journal *Atlântida*, as a kind of mouthpiece of the Portuguese and Brazilian official line, reflecting certain cultural and political aspects of the two new republics in the turbulent years of the First World War and immediately following period as well as manifesting the wish for an intensification of transatlantic amity — a wish that extended beyond the life of the journal. This way of thinking made use of the Luso-Brazilian rapprochement as a strategy toward resolving the ongoing sense of crisis in Portugal by working toward an expanded awareness of a new kind of Latin brotherhood.

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of *Atlântida*'s first issue (15 November 1915) is significant, the date of the Brazilian national day commemorating the proclamation of the republic. See CONCEIÇÃO, 1997: 20.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, GRAÇA ARANHA (1919): 10-11. More in SZILÁGYI, Ágnes Judit: *A alteração do programa da revista Atlântida na primavera de 1919*. IN: FISCHER, Ferenc - LILÓN, Domingo (ed.): *Iberoamericana Quinqueeclesiensis 9*, PTE Centro Iberoamericano, Pécs, 2011. 365-370.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. António Maria de Bettencourt Rodrigues (1854-1933), Portuguese ambassador to France, and Portuguese foreign minister from 1926 to 1928.

<sup>30</sup> *'Olhe, há uma ideia que a sua revista devia expor e defender, ideia que muito interessa o futuro do Brasil, e o nosso: - a necessidade de criar e organizar a confederação luso-brasileira.'* See *Uma ideia a defender — A Confederação Luso-Brasileira — Será possível uma nova e grande Lusitânia?* *Atlântida*, 20 (April 1917), 659.