



THE MAGIC OF WEAVING

The exhibition of Teresa Segurado Pavao has many meanings and several stories to tell us. The childhood memory, a fair-haired girl with green eyes walks through the Tropical Garden of Lisbon. She runs by instinct into the denseness of the vegetation. Mangoes and palm trees, coconuts and the abundant foliage enliven her imagination. In that forest paradise she recognizes a mysterious occult life in the fallen leaves crushed under foot and in the patterns of twigs on the dry branches. The memories of this childhood grow even greater like creeping plants climbing to the tops of tall trees. There remain in her mind memories of long bean pods, shadows of gnarled trunks and palm leaves. She gathers all these and spins with clay and natural threads a tale of african intrigue.

Africa,
Through your land roar wild animals
The howls of hunger and ancestral fears;
In your blood run tides,
In your skin are darts and daggers

The womb of continents
You are mother and beginning
Asia is the seed. Europe is the flower,
Others are the essence or the trunk.
You, Africa are the root (1)

And from this womb, this <<fetish>>, springs the magic charm. From this appeared in tumult India and America. Expelled from Africa with powerful force are other lands, continents and sub-continents, now separated by seas revolving all about. Teresa Segurado Pavão gives great importance to the emotion she experienced as that small girl in Eden. She returns to primal Africa through the spiritual life with which she endows the trees in her garden. She calls the inhabitant of the tropical forest Homo Habilis. There he learned how to smile and play. He established ways of communicating and organized himself into matriarchal groups where work was divided between the sexes; the man hunting while the woman devoted herself to the care and upbringing of the offspring. Teresa, sets up her spears giving to them the appearance of tribal man at an initiation ceremony, where he learns of the powers in his body and how to express them through gesture and hand.

<<Homo Habilis was endowed with an elementary protoculture... he seems to represent the intermediate element which led to Homo Erectus who learnt of fire» (2)

A distance of ten million years separates Homo Habilis from Teresa Segurado Pavão. Nevertheless, the precision of her childhood vision has led to her adult perception of that magic scene which is Austral Africa, the cradle of humanity.

<<in his origins, the Man as a social Primate and a hunter, was organized in territorial groups. The Ethologists tend to believe still today we have some atavistic characteristics that can't be eliminated by the educational process. This territorial sense of the group is one of those ancestral characteristics that remain with us>>. (3)

The protective and timeless spears appear to have a mystic intention. They represent veneration belief and the desire for fertility. They also mark and limit a territory. They are points on the route of the return trip to the original womb. Teresa Segurado Pavão makes this womb as a <<fetiche>>.



She separates herself from it but she nevertheless gives it a sacred dominance. Then, there are other objects, always related to the green world. They are domestic and complementary to those mentioned above. The rebirth of time was also consecrated in the new harvest. <<Food had, in fact, its ritual significance in all archaic societies>>. (4)

The manufacturing of objects, whether they were elaborate or simple is related with culture throughout man's development. This handling of natural materials is a parallel and interdependent activity in our biological evolution.

<<In all acts of his conscious behaviour the <<primitive>>, the archaic man only knew how to make those acts which had already been made by others before him. Others who were not yet man. *Everything he did had already been done.* He repeated acts already started by others.>> (5)

It was through this constant repetition over

centuries that progressive cerebral development was created.

There were also daring but small and gradual innovations which led to an increase in natural potential and capacity. What is innate and what is learnt come together in man but at the same time remain apart in man. He is a skilful and thoughtful creator of objects. Both the archaic characteristics of the biped and the more recent acquisitions of a complex and tortuous history are fused together in each individual.

In this context, part of the significance of this exhibition is the relationship between the root and the fruit. The tree and the fruit also figure in the story of man's creation in the Book of Genesis.

She gives a primordial importance to the sap of the trees as being the eternal life stream in which man always existed. She attempts to divine the mystery of man's urgent need for salvation. These concepts so essential to the survival of the species are given to us allegoric form. Salvation lies in the soil, the philosophic stone in the tree. This is a new quest for life, energy and a richness of spirit. Which itself is a new secret of wisdom unsurpassed by the old alchemist's principle, <<what lies below is equal to that which is above>>. Through this weaving and her spells we can see an open clearing. And the sunlight in the clearing illuminates Emerald Tablet of Hermes, <<Above all things are heavenly, below are earthly things; for man and woman the work is not yet over>> (6)

These considerations are open to a recent interpretation which is <<the New Criticism. This started as the study of a theme from which other themes evolved. This new approach came with the force of an explosion especially in our universities, which provoked an unprecedented interest in imagery, symbols and myths which are of course inextricably related>> (7)

It would therefore seem to be useful and pertinent to reflect on the Portuguese cultural identity by considering their origins for which we must search back into the past. This is necessary because there is a disturbed and widespread mutation taking place. This can be seen in the profound collective alienations which are due to a chaotic and depersonalized cultural colonialization,

Common and universal are the links between primitive man and man today. The first flight from their territory by the Portuguese was to Africa where the Iberians, the first known inhabitants of the peninsula, probably had their origins. From 1415 on the Portuguese journeyed to just this side of the Atlas mountains where they buried their weapons and constructed oasis forts lost in the sands of the desert. But the voyaging continued by sea, outlasting that which would finally test him to the limits of his endurance, the death and war which we suffered remain in the blood of both African and Portuguese. Ways of being and thinking which give rise to a similarity that shows itself in the pattern of our lives displayed in these artefacts. The foreigner is not of this place. And that is the spell.

<<The new thinking in anthropology demonstrates that myth, fantasy and utopian aspirations are indispensable to man's life and perhaps to that of animals as well. Einstein has already stated, <<a body is not independent from the system to which he belongs>>. It is on this that he based his theory of Relativity. (8)

This African magic presence in Teresa Segurado Pavão must be seen in the light of the



myth which is not only related with the concepts which come from cultural anthropology but also with those from the physical sciences. We cannot forget that leading scientists are today our new prophets and that classic rationalization and logical and syllogistic interpretations of reality have been changed into another and new conception of space and the physical constitution of matter.

The gift of ubiquity which was considered as a divine quality or an extrasensory phenomenon of some privileged individuals has become a physical property of light or more precisely of the photon. This was demonstrated by the French physicist Bernard Costa d'Espagnat. The ubiquity and reversibility of time are scientific discoveries which are subversive in that they move in the same directions as ancient and esoteric wisdom. The artist, not being cognizant of this information conceives, gives life to and expresses himself by unknown processes. He creates an approximation of the archetype which Jung envisioned. These would seem to correspond to some of the work presented here. The womb is the internal sun. The centre of life and ovoid sphere which perpetuates the species. This dialogue of ubiquity, with the reversibility of time at a distance of millions of years, is as much a part of *habilis* as man today.

The perplexity and singular use of neolithic materials such as clay and thread leads us to yet another puzzle. It was with these materials that the nomad pause, built his house and dressed himself. No better homage can be paid by a museum to the nobility of these simple materials which in our sophisticated and technologically industrialized society, have become so despised. Here in this museum we consider it a privilege, as we deal with threads, with weaving and with clothing as well as all that surrounds them.

I consider it of great importance to refer to the friendly help given by Fernando de Azevedo. He has absorbed and interpreted the magic felt in these objects and arranged them so magnificently. He conceived and organized the space in this museum in a ritual form. The cadence of his presentation has an ascending rhythm. His lively imagination has discerned the language of the mythical elements and it is to him that credit must go for the excellent title of this exhibition.

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