

In praise of Ophelia: an interpretation of Pessoa's only love

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Keywords

Fernando Pessoa, Ophelia Queiroz, Álvaro de Campos.

Abstract

Based on a presentation by Alexandrino E. Severino at the First International Symposium on Fernando Pessoa in 1977, this essay (written by Severino in conjunction with Hubert Jennings) was prepared for publication in the volume of symposium proceedings, eventually entitled *The Man Who Never Was*. Because permission to quote from Ophelia's letters to Fernando (all of them unpublished at the time) was ultimately denied, this essay was not published then or, for that matter, later. The evidence, drawn from Ophelia's side of the correspondence, attests to Ophelia's honest and honorable behavior during the two phases of her love affair with the poet.

Palavras-chave

Fernando Pessoa, Ophelia Queiroz, Álvaro de Campos.

Resumo

Este ensaio, baseado numa comunicação de Alexandrino E. Severino por ocasião do Primeiro Simpósio Internacional de Fernando Pessoa em 1977 (redigido conjuntamente com Hubert Jennings) estava programado para publicação na Actas do Simpósio intituladas *The Man Who Never Was*. Por falta de permissão para citar passagens das cartas de Ophélia a Fernando (todas inéditas na altura), este ensaio não foi então publicado nem subsequentemente. A correspondência de Ophélia testemunha o seu comportamento honesto e honrado durante as duas fases do seu relacionamento amoroso com o poeta.

* This unpublished essay was edited by George Monteiro, who wrote the Editorial Foreword. The construction of the bibliography to resort to the shorter citation in the body of the paper was done editorially.

[An account of the “First International Symposium on Fernando Pessoa,” held at Brown University on October 7-8, 1977, was published in *Pessoa Plural – A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies* (n.º 3, Spring 2013, pp. 113-40). It was noted therein that in *The Man Who Never Was: Essays on Fernando Pessoa*, a volume of the conference proceedings, we were unable to include “In Praise of Ophelia: An Interpretation of Pessoa’s Only Love,” a paper co-authored by Alexandrino E. Severino of Vanderbilt University and Hubert D. Jennings from the Republic of South Africa. Having been given access to Ophelia’s letters to Pessoa with the consent of the Pessoa family executors to use them, the authors in good conscience wrote their paper, which Severino presented at the Symposium. Later, however, when the proceedings were about to be sent to the printer in Lisbon, the editor of this introduction was advised that Ophelia Queiroz was not amenable to permitting the quotation of her letters to Pessoa in any form. Reluctantly, I acquiesced and the paper was dropped from the book. In 1977, when this defense of Ophelia was presented, there wasn’t much known about the Fernando-Ophelia correspondence. Still in the future were, first, the publication of Pessoa’s half of the correspondence in 1978, and then, later, in 1996, Ophelia’s portion in this exchange. Not until well into this century (2008, to be exact) were the two sides of the total exchange joined and interleaved by date into a single volume – something I and others, I am sure, had done on our own for our own purposes some years earlier. But in 1977, Severino and Jennings were bringing us news about this relationship, the only documented case of love and sentiment known to have been experienced by Fernando Pessoa. That these two scholars judged that Ophelia was deserving of praise and not condemnation, based on her side of the correspondence, was ground-breaking news. In fact, their sympathetic view of Ophelia is hardly questioned. Their work, apart from its historical value, deserves a proper place in the world of Pessoa scholarship. It should also be noted, moreover, that many of the English translations of excerpts from the letters, done by Severino for the publication of the piece, continue to be the only such versions in print. This is especially noteworthy since not one of the books presenting the Pessoa-Ophelia correspondence – not those of Pessoa’s letters alone or Ophelia’s, or for that matter the volume combining the two sides of the correspondence – has appeared in an English-language translation.

One final matter. Before reading their joint paper at the Symposium, Severino introduced the absent co-author to the audience with remarks about Jennings, remarks that he wished to have appear along with their paper in the Proceedings. “Hubert D. Jennings was born in London in 1896. He served in World War I and after graduating from the University of Wales he went to South Africa where he was Assistant Headmaster at the Durban High School for twelve years (1923-1935). Thereafter, he was successively principal at the high schools at Stanger, Greytown and Dundee. Having been asked to write the history of the

Durban High School, Hubert Jennings came upon Fernando Pessoa's poetry – Pessoa had attended the school during its glorious years, 1898-1904. 'That Long Patience which is Genius' is the title of the chapter dedicated to Pessoa in the *The D.H.S. Story, 1866-1966*, an inspiring, beautifully written tribute to the poet-alumnus. So fascinated was Hubert Jennings with the poetry of Fernando Pessoa that he decided, at age seventy-three, to go to Portugal and learn Portuguese. Out of the year-and-a-half spent in Lisbon, among Pessoa's unpublished papers, came several lectures, articles, and a book-length study which unfortunately has still to find a less profit oriented publisher, since Fernando Pessoa has not as yet attained the recognition he desired – and deserves – in the English speaking world. The paper that follows is a direct result of our many conversations concerning Pessoa's work, which took place in Lisbon in the summer of 1968. We felt then, as we do now, that the story of the love between Ophelia and Fernando needed to be retold in a more sympathetic and hopefully accurate light." – G.M.]

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Among the vast number of papers left by Fernando Pessoa are two packets of letters still in their envelopes. One carries the following inscription: "O. Q. Depositado 23-4-1920."¹ The letters are turning yellow; the ink is becoming faded. All are written in the same delicate and spidery feminine hand. They are the letters of Ophelia Queiroz, or as the poet always called her, Ophelia. She was the only woman he loved, and as far as we know, the only one that loved him.

It was on October 8, 1919, that he first noticed Ophelia. She was employed as a typist at the commercial firm where Pessoa drifted in from time to time to translate the business correspondence with France and England. The event seems to have been of some importance to Ophelia, for a year later she mentions the exact date in one of her letters. Perhaps because she was "small, with rounded figure and melting eyes" (Simões, 1951: II, 160), as João Gaspar Simões describes her, she had for Fernando Pessoa something of the fragility of a child; and Fernando Pessoa, "always shy and embarrassed in the presence of women" (Simões, 1951: II, 159), as the same writer tells us, was very fond of children. It may have been a passing smile, a sudden, amused gleam in the eyes momentarily diverted from their work at the typewriter. We can imagine the poet, surprised, muttering a brief "good morning" and making a hasty exit through the door, and perhaps the smile grew a little broader on the face of Ophelia.

Ophelia was well aware that the Senhor Pessoa was not the ordinary

¹ "O. Q. Deposited April 23, 1920". Pessoa's grouping of Ophelia's letters into two distinct packets, the first bearing the April 23 date, seems to corroborate João Gaspar Simões' assertion that the cooling of the poet's ardor was caused by the arrival of his mother from South Africa on March 30, 1920 (Simões, 1951: II, 173-75).

commercial correspondent. He had been one of the crazy group that launched the review, *Orpheu*, which had caused no little scandal among the conservative readers (and writers) of Lisbon four years before and which was followed by others equally disturbing, including one called *Portugal Futurista*, which had been suppressed by the police. She knew, too, that he held a privileged position in the firm, keeping his own hours and treated with respect by her employers, who, like many Portuguese businessmen, esteemed literature, even if they knew little of it themselves.

Fernando Pessoa, with his drooping Jewish features, the legacy of an ancestor who had been burned at the stake two centuries before, and his jerky manner of walking, as though, according to his brother, he had an invisible hook in his coat collar from which he was suspended like a marionette – everything about him was odd, haunted, neglected. A year older at the age of thirty-one than Hamlet was when he met his Ophelia, he must have seemed quite old to the young girl of twenty; but, old, balding, with shabby but neat clothes, fingers stained with chain-smoking and breath often redolent of brandy, there must have been something in him that appealed to the young girl. For she, and only she in all his life, found some means to break down the barrier of reserve – the abject terror even – with which Pessoa, convinced of his own ugliness, regarded all women.

The only evidence of the relationship for the first three months rests upon a dozen or so scraps of paper containing messages of such incredible futility that it would do wrong to a great, aloof and objective poet to reproduce them. That is, it should be added, when they can be deciphered. Pessoa's writing is not at any time easy to read, but these little messages had been so altered and over-written, sometimes with red ink, that we can only guess what they contain. Evidently, the two had invented a game of passing little secret messages to one another in the course, probably, of handing over the envelopes of business transactions for typing or correction. Ophelia had become his *Bébé*, the endearing term used affectionately by Portuguese lovers, and she, no doubt, responded with similar affectionate diminutives. Later, Ophelia was to have difficulty in reminding Fernando that she was not just a child; she was a woman as well.

A little verse in Ophelia's handwriting and dated November 27, 1919, will be sufficient to give an idea of the charming and fatuous interchange of notes between the two:

Bébé não é má	E diga com fé
É boa até	Mau quem seria?!
Bem diga lá A!	Eu sei quem é. ²

² "Bébé isn't bad | She is good even | Now you tell me | And tell me truly | Who is the bad one | Ah! I know who it is." This poem as well as all the excerpts from Ophelia's letters used in this paper are as yet unpublished [in 1977].

It is easy to see that the arch phrase, the upturned glance, the ready blush, the fluttering eyelids – the little battery of tricks that every woman, consciously or unconsciously, uses when her interest is aroused – would fall with more deadly effect upon a man like Pessoa than upon most others. For fourteen years he had lived in monkish seclusion, moving from lodging to lodging in Lisbon, carrying with him the large trunk containing his writings. His only recreation was in the cafés, then exclusively men’s clubs, where the talk to him was as necessary and stimulating as the brandy – and he was not sparing of the latter. There men dreamed of taking Portugal by the neck and kicking it into the place they thought it deserved in the world of thought and letters. Among these men he was recognized as a leader, and some were beginning to call him “Master.” There, in the cafés, Pessoa talked with his friends for hours. Only when the talk turned to women would he get up and move abruptly away. Not only was it because there was something naturally chaste – or, puritanical, if you like – in his disposition, but because it was a world he knew nothing about.

Now he, too, knew what it was to have a woman smile upon him; and to feel the slam of the heart when the door-latch clicked and he sensed, without looking up from his work, that something warm and feminine had entered the room – and into his life.

It is the sad story of Pessoa that he could not enjoy warmth and friendship and love without feeling that he was getting too far from his true self and that “movement,” that is, “creation” could take place best in the “shadow.”

It was this difficult person that Ophelia chose to love. Perhaps she had no choice. Perhaps those mysterious Masters of his destiny, which Pessoa speaks of in his final letter to her, which had decreed they should part, had just as inexorably brought the poet into her life. But love him she did as the 150 letters which she wrote to him between February and December amply testify. Ophelia’s letters were written in simple prose. The poet, with his head in the stars, we can always forgive because of the magic words he rains down upon us. But the poet must sometimes crawl upon the ground like the rest of us, and, like Baudelaire’s *Albatross*, appear pitifully awkward. Ophelia knew this secondary pedestrian Pessoa very well. She saw plainly, as her letters show, that he was hopelessly improvident, pathologically self-centered, chronically hypochondriac, jealous and peevish at times, drunken very often. Yet never does her tone of tenderness vary until near the end when she could bear his neglect and disdain no more. But they never forgot one another and years afterwards exchanged letters full of calm affection.

Only enough will be quoted from the letters to vindicate Ophelia’s side of the question, which is sometimes forgotten. The style of the letters is homely – banal even. The syntax may be weak at times, the spelling variable; but no one can doubt that this is the generous outpouring of a simple and sincere person, and not

simply to be dismissed as the gush of an “adorable *menina* but as trivial as she is adorable” (Simões, 1951: II, 167).³

The first of the long letters written by Ophelia to Fernando is dated February 28, 1920. Since the couple saw one another every day, there would normally have been no need for a written communication. But Ophelia had a problem upon her mind and thought it best to set it out in black and white. It is the woman’s ancient problem: which to choose of two men. She makes no secret of being in love with Fernando, but the young man whom she calls the *rapaz* has offered her marriage, and Fernando – who can tell whether his “transports” will last? Therefore, she wants a written answer from Fernando so that she may know where she stands. Ophelia had been honest with Fernando and had evidently told him about the “rapaz” before. Now she writes to him:

Meu adorado Fernandinho:

É meia noite, vou-me deitar, mas creia que sempre pensando no meu amorzinho [...] Estou triste e aborrecida como deve calcular pois acabei há pouco de falar com o rapaz e ouvir sempre a mesma coisa que me faz muito pensar no meu Fernandinho, no amor que lhe tenho e se será bastante e sincero o amor que diz dedicar-me, que mereça o sacrificio que estou fazendo. Estou desprezando um rapaz que me adora, que me faria feliz e que eu sei muito bem as ideias dele para mim, sei o que tencionará da minha pessoa. [...] Já alguma vez me disse as suas ideias, o que pensa fazer de mim? Não, não sei nada, sei apenas que o amo e nada mais [...] Não me tenho eu entregado inteiramente ao meu Fernandinho? Que recompensa me dará?

Vou-lhe ser franca; receio muitíssimas vezes que esses seus transportes de amor sejam de pouca duração [...] e me despreze depois de eu lhe provar que o meu amor é sincero. E, diga-me, meu amorzinho, não me acha com razão de pensar o que penso? Terei eu de si a recompensa que desejo? Receio que não terei, visto nunca me ter falado nela, e se eu tivesse a plena certeza que nunca a teria, juro-lhe, meu Fernandinho, que preferia afastar-me de si para sempre, embora com grande sacrificio, do que pensar que nunca *serei sua* [...] Se o Fernandinho nunca pensou em construir família, e se nem pensa, peço-lhe, por tudo, pelas *felicidades de sua mana* que mo diga por escrito...⁴

³ In a footnote on p. 177 the author adds that he had not read Ophelia’s letters. Had he done so, his judgment upon her as here and on the previous page might have been less severe.

⁴ “My beloved Fernandinho: It’s midnight, I’m going to bed, but believe me I am always thinking of my little darling [...] I am sad and bothered as you can imagine, for I’ve just finished talking to the fellow and I have heard again the same things, which make me think even more of my little Fernando, of the love I have for him, and whether the love he says he has for me is sincere and sufficient to justify the sacrifice I’m making. I am rejecting a fellow who adores me and would make me happy and whose ideas toward me I know very well; I know what he intends to do with me. [...] Have you ever at any time told me of your intentions, of what your thoughts are concerning me? No, I know nothing; I just know that I love you, that’s all [...] Haven’t I given myself entirely to my little Fernando? What shall be my reward? I want to be frank; I am very much concerned that your ardor will last but a short time [...] and that later you will reject me, once I have shown that my love is true. Tell me, my little darling, don’t you think I’m justified in thinking the way I do? Will I ever receive from you the reward I desire? I’m afraid I won’t, since you never mentioned it; if I were absolutely sure that I wouldn’t, I swear, my little Fernando, I would rather go away from you forever, even if at a

She ends by hoping that he will not be annoyed if he should be thinking the same as she was. “Oxalá o magoe porque eu depois lhe saberia pedir perdão,”⁵ she says humbly.

Pessoa was indeed very angry when he received this, as we know from one of the few letters that Ophelia has permitted to be published. His reply is dated March 1, 1920, two days after Ophelia wrote her letter. He attacks from the beginning. It was not the “rapaz” she was despising. It was he – Fernando. Her letter was a series of “razões” – attempts to put herself in the right. And demanding “a written reply” was the final straw. He begins sharply:

Para me mostrar o seu desprezo, ou, pelo menos, a sua indiferença real, não era preciso o disfarce transparente de um discurso tão comprido, nem da serie de “razões” tão pouco sinceras como convincentes, que me escreveu. Bastava dizer-mo. Assim entendo da mesma maneira, mas dói-me mais.⁶

All this, of course, is most unjust. There is no sign in Ophelia’s letter of any “desprezo” or indifference for him and least of all any wish to hurt him. Fernando Pessoa, like many other people in a rage, is accusing the other person of the very things he is demonstrating himself.

He adds, a little later, with far more justice: “Quem ama verdadeiramente não escreve cartas que parecem requerimentos de advogado.”⁷ Then he goes on with increasing bitterness, and not a little self-pity:

Por que não é franca para comigo? Que empenho tem em fazer sofrer quem não lhe fez mal – nem a si, nem a ninguém – a quem tem por peso e dor bastante a própria vida isolada e triste, e não precisa de que lha venham acrescentar criando-lhe esperanças falsas, mostrando-lhe afeições fingidas, e isto sem que se perceba com que interesse, mesmo de divertimento ou com que proveito, mesmo de troca.

Reconheço que tudo isto é cómico, e que a parte mais cómica disto tudo sou eu. Eu próprio acharia graça, se a não amasse tanto, e se tivesse tempo para pensar em outra coisa que não fosse no sofrimento que tem prazer em causar-me sem que eu, a não ser por amá-la, o tenho merecido; e creio bem que amá-la não é razão bastante para o merecer. Emfim...

Aí fica o “documento escrito” que me pede. Reconhece a minha assinatura o tabelião Eugénio Silva.⁸

great sacrifice, than face the prospect of never being yours [...] If you have never contemplated having a family, nor ever intended to have one, I beg you, on behalf of everything you cherish, for the sake of your sister’s happiness. Tell me in writing...”

⁵ “I hope I have offended you, for then I would know how to beg your forgiveness.”

⁶ “In order to demonstrate your contempt, or, at least, your actual indifference, it won’t be necessary for you to write this transparent farce of a long speech full of ‘reasons’ which are as little sincere as they are convincing. Better to just tell me. In this way, I understood just as well but it hurts more.” First published in *Presença*, July, 1936. Also in Carlos Queiroz (1936: 37).

⁷ “Whoever loves truly does not write letters like lawyers’ demands.” In *Presença*, July, 1936.

⁸ “Why aren’t you frank with me? Why do you take such pain in hurting someone who has never done you any harm – neither you nor anyone else – whose sad and lonely life is sufficient burden

Ophelia had asked Fernando a plain question, but he did not want to return a plain answer. She wanted to know whether she was to remain his *bébé*, his *bonequinha*, or whether she was to have what every woman regards as the fulfillment of her life. One can well imagine that he was furious with her for holding the “rapaz” like a pistol to his head, but this does not seem reason enough for the flood of studied sarcasm poured out upon Ophelia’s head. For the moment, he has become Hamlet jeering at her and, through her, at all womankind.

[...] you jig, you amble and you lisp, and nickname
God’s creatures, and make your wantonness your
ignorance. Go to, I’ll no more on’t; it hath made me mad.
I say we’ll have no more marriages [...]

(III, 1, 144-147)

[...] Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for
wise men know well enough what monsters you make
of them. To a nunnery; go; and quickly, too [...]

(III, 1, 138-140)

“Go, go to your rapaz!” is what Fernando would have added. Curiously enough, they seem to have seen Shakespeare’s play together only a short time previously, for in a postscript to a letter dated March 22, Ophelia recalls, “Fez hoje 3 meses houve a cena de representação de Hamlet.”⁹

It is unlikely that Ophelia understood the reasons for Fernando’s outburst any more than her namesake in the play did Hamlet’s. But she had her own simple explanation for it: he was jealous. In a postcard dated March 5, she makes it plain that she wishes only to be married to Fernando.

Mas lá virá um tempo, não é verdade, meu amor? em que nós estaremos *também muito juntinhos de noite* sem termos receio de ninguém [...] Havemos de ser muito felizes e muito muito amiguinhos, o pior é o meu Fernandinho ser tão ciumento, [...]¹⁰

But a penciled note with the letter dated March 6 shows that Fernando was not in

and pain and does not need anyone to add to it by rendering false hopes and showing pretended affection, I know not to what end, even if it were for fun, nor to what profit, even if it were in mockery. I realize that all this is comical, and that I am the most comical part of it. I, too, would find it very funny, were it not for the love I have for you, or if I had the time to think of anything else except the pain you seem to take pleasure in giving me, a pain I do not deserve, unless I’m guilty of loving you too much. Anyway... There you have the ‘written document’ you want. The notary public Eugenio Silva will attest my signature.” See Queiroz (1936: 37).

⁹ “Three months ago today there was the presentation of the play Hamlet.”

¹⁰ “But there will be a time, won’t there, my love, when *we too will be very close at night*, afraid of no one [...] We’ll be very happy and very friendly to each other, the problem is that my little Fernando is so jealous, [...]”

the least “amiguinho” but still in a high state of dudgeon:

Fernandinho:

Porque está tão mal disposto? Fiz eu alguma coisa que o desgostasse? Entristece-me vê-lo assim. Infelizmente está perto a hora de me ir embora sem que ainda hoje o beijasse, e amanhã é Domingo! Que saudades!¹¹

On the 10th, Ophelia wrote briefly to say that the “rapaz que se interessa por mim”¹² was coming that evening to receive her reply. The letter ends with Ophelia’s first tentative use of the familiar “tu.”

Beaucoup de baisers da sempre sua,
Ophelia Queiroz (Bébé Teu)

Perdoe-me sim?¹³

The curious thing about this letter and the one on the following day is that they are not in Ophelia’s writing but in Fernando’s. Did he tear the two letters up in a fit of jealousy and then later, repenting, copy them out from memory? We shall never know, but among the letters are two envelopes which contain torn up fragments.

The letter of the 11th contains nothing more momentous than a brief note to say that she had waited in vain for Fernando to hear the decision of the “casa.” Apparently the firm was considering dispensing with Ophelia’s services, as indeed they did at the end of the month. Perhaps the directors found the love affair, of which they must have been aware, too distracting.

Sr. Crosse. Estive bastante tempo à sua espera para saber a resolução da casa e para me despedir de si, mas como já não posso esperar mais vou-me embora aborrecida por não saber nada nem ve-lo.¹⁴

With it was a penciled note arranging a meeting where perhaps she told Fernando that the “rapaz” was finally dismissed, for we hear no more of him until the month of May when he makes a sudden, brief reappearance for the purpose of revenging himself upon her, as she herself puts it. The letters describing this will be mentioned later.

¹¹ “Fernandinho: Why are you in such a bad mood? Did I do something wrong? It saddens me to see you like this. Unfortunately, it’s almost time to go and I haven’t kissed you today and tomorrow is Sunday! I miss you!”

¹² “The fellow who’s interested in me...”

¹³ “Many kisses from forever yours, Ophelia Queiroz. (Your Baby). Forgive me?”

¹⁴ “Mr. Crosse: I have been waiting for you for quite a while, to hear of the firm’s decision and to say good-bye, but since I can’t wait any longer, I’m leaving, somewhat upset because I didn’t see you nor hear anything.”

Fernando continued, however, *mal disposto* in both health and mood. For in a letter dated the 13th, Ophelia, hearing that he was sick, pours out a wealth of “carinhos e meiguices” that make nonsense of his letter of March 28 where he complains that she had no sympathy for his constant ill health.

A week later, some real or fancied slight by Fernando drove her into a paroxysm of grief:

20. 3. 920 – 11 1/2 da noite.

Meu sempre querido Fernandinho.

Juro-te, meu amor, dou-te a minha sincera palavra de honra, que é banhada de lágrimas, que acabo de, ajoelhada diante da imagem do Senhor dos Paços, pedir-lhe, que me não deixes de amar, que gastes sempre de mim, e que nunca me esqueças, pois que não imaginas, querido amor, a dor que me causou a tua grande indiferença por mim, que manifestaste hoje bem claramente. Como tu me afastavas, como te mostravas tão frio para com o teu Bébézinho! Juro-te por tudo, que durante todo o dia me não tenho podido conformar, que se possa deixar de gostar duma pessoa que se mostra querer tanto! Eu pelo menos não posso. Não comi nada nem vontade tenho, a única vontade que tenho é de chorar (não falando da grande vontade de estar junto de ti!) e crê que já me doem os olhos de o fazer, pois não me posso convencer que tu me possas esquecer, que deixas de gostar de tua “bonequinha”. Mas não, meu filho, pode lá ser tu esqueceres-me?! deixares de me amar?!¹⁵

Two days later, Fernando wrote to her the second of the dozen or so published letters under his hand. No doubt he was moved by the letter given above. No longer does she threaten to withdraw herself (*afastar-se*) as she did in her letter less than a month ago, but is now terrified that it will be Fernando that will withdraw himself. Fernando does not attempt to explain his seeming indifference to her, which had caused such an abject surrender. He simply says that he had a great deal to tell her, and will try to do so in the course of the short walk from the office in the Rua do Arsenal to her sister’s home. The rest of the letter is cheerful, jubilant almost, for he hopes soon to win a prize of £1000 in a puzzle competition organized by an English journal.

Ah! se isso acontecesse, Ophelia, e fôsse num dos concursos grandes (mil libras, e não

¹⁵ “March 20, 1920 – 11:30 P.M. My always beloved Fernandinho: I swear, my love, I give you my true word of honor, that I have just finished kneeling before the statue of Our Lord of the Stations of the Cross, full of tears, to pray that you always love me, that you never forget me, and like me always; you can’t imagine, dear love, how painful was your great indifference toward me, as you showed it today so very clearly. How you rejected me, how cold you were toward your ‘little baby’! I swear by everything I hold dear that all day long I haven’t been able to accept that it is possible to stop loving a person one professed to love so much! I can’t accept it. I haven’t eaten anything, nor do I feel like eating, the only thing I want to do is cry (except for the desire to be with you!); believe me, my eyes hurt from crying, I can’t convince myself that you may forget me, that you may stop loving your ‘little doll’. No, my little darling! You couldn’t have forgotten me?! You couldn’t have stopped loving me?!”

trezentas só, que não adiantava nada)! Tu compreendes?¹⁶

And, therefore, when she next makes her vows, she must pray for Sr. Crosse, who had now been placed twelfth out of twenty thousand contestants. A. A. Crosse was the charadist among the heteronyms, and Ophelia was well aware of his existence, as of the others, and for the next few weeks she closely followed his fortunes.

That same evening, she kneeled before the image of the Nosso Senhor dos Paços in her bedroom with a feeling of exaltation and hope. She writes:

Vês como o Senhor dos Paços é meu amigo?! [...] e a propósito do Senhor dos Paços deixa estar que eu pedirei pelo Senhor Crosse, queria fazer uma promessa grande mas não sei o que ha de ser. [...] Mas olha, meu amor, já não foi o concurso? Nesse caso já devia ter pedido, mas emfim eu pedirei visto que se trata da *nossa felicidade*...¹⁷

On March 25th, she writes again:

[...] antes de fazer óó ainda vou pedir por o Sr. Crosse, por o Sr. Fernando Pessoa, pelo Sr. Álvaro de Campos não peço porque ele é maluco.¹⁸

On the 26th:

Olha, eu e minha irmã vamos fazer umas preces para o Sr. Crosse, conheces?¹⁹

On the 27th:

Coitadinho do Sr. Crosse não tinha nada no apartado! Mas ele que tenha a paciência de esperar (porque o melhor está pra vir).²⁰

For some time Ophelia continued to cherish the illusion that through Mr. Crosse's cleverness and her prayers her marriage to Fernando and the *casinha* of which she speaks in later letters might at any time drop like a gift from heaven.

¹⁶ "Ah, if that should happen ... (Ophelia) and if it happened in one of those bigger contests (a thousand pounds, not just three hundred, which wouldn't make any difference)! Do you understand?" (Queiroz, 1936: 39).

¹⁷ "See how Our Lord is my friend?! [...] Speaking of Our Lord, you may be sure I will pray on behalf of Mr. Crosse; I would like to make a big promise, but I don't know what it might be. [...] But look, my love, didn't the contest happen by now? In that case, I should have prayed already, but, anyway, I will still pray, since it has to do with our happiness..."

¹⁸ "[...] before going to sleep I'm still going to pray for Mr. Crosse, for Mr. Pessoa, for Mr. Álvaro de Campos I shall not, he is crazy."

¹⁹ "Look, my sister and I, we're going to say some prayers on behalf of Mr. Crosse; do you know him?"

²⁰ "Poor Mr. Crosse! There was nothing in the mailbox! Let him be patient and wait (the best is yet to come)."

On April 1st, she writes regretting that since her employment at the same firm as Fernando had now terminated, she could no longer look in the letter box to see if there was a letter for “Sr. Crosse.”

Ora que fúria não se saber decisão nenhuma do Sr. Crosse, eu naturalmente, ou amanhã ou por toda esta semana, vou começar uma prece nova ao Sr. Crosse para ele coitadinho ganhar, vamos a ver se serão baldados todos meus pedidos, talvez não sejam, tenhamos ao menos esperança. Ah, Sr, Crosse! Sr. Crosse!²¹

By the 14th, however, her faith in Sr. Crosse was flagging, and it appears that Fernando had had to ask her to show more interest in him.

Hoje mesmo vou começar com a prece ao Sr. Crosse e fazer-lhe uma promessa... e depois não digas que me não interessa pelo *Mr. Crosse*.²²

After that, we hear no more of Sr. Crosse, but Ophelia never loses her faith in the idea that the next year will see them married and in a house of their own. By what miracle they would be able to achieve this, we do not know, for Fernando earned barely enough to keep himself, as Ophelia must have known. But never does she suggest that he might drop his literary activities and look for more lucrative employment.

Ophelia continued to pour out her daily letters in a string of affectionate diminutives. There is no doubt that Fernando Pessoa, with his intensely secretive nature, would have liked to have kept the love between himself and Ophelia completely their own thing, and a secret not only from his own family, but from all the world beside. In this he very nearly succeeded, but late in May events took a turn which brought him into contact with Ophelia’s family. This was brought about by the unexpected return to the scene of the former pretender to her hand, Eduardo, or as she had simply referred to him in her first letters, the *rapaz*. She tells the story in two excited and rather incoherent letters written on May 26th and 27th.

In the first she writes:

Cheguei agora da Mademoiselle aborrecida, arrelhada e nervosa por o que se deu esta tarde.
[...]

Hoje quando passaste para cima estava eu a perguntar a uma senhora de frente se ela *via* o *impertinente* do rapaz que tinha cá estado na rua um bocado antes. Tu foste para baixo e ela como o não visse disse-me que não, eu saio e qual não é o meu espanto quando o vejo atrás de mim e aflita que tu em te despedindo do Montalvor vinhas ter comigo e ele via muito

²¹ “What a bother not to have heard anything regarding Mr. Crosse; naturally, I, tomorrow or anytime this week, will start a new prayer for Mr. Crosse, in order that he may win; let’s see if all these prayers will have been in vain; maybe they won’t be, let’s at least be hopeful. Ah, Mr. Crosse! Mr. Crosse!”

²² “Today for sure I shall begin the prayer for Mr. Crosse, and I’m going to make a promise for him... then don’t say I don’t care for Mr. Crosse.”

bem que eu não tenho medo que me veja contigo [...]. Sabes então o que eu fiz? Fui a S. Bento e, como ele me tivesse passado à frente, voltei eu atrás que foi quando me viste voltar (estavas tu falando ainda com o Montalvor) e meti-me numa escada, ele volta logo e como não me viu vir calculou que não tinha tempo de ter entrado em casa e foi espreitar à escada onde eu estava, eu abro a porta e sempre lhe dou uma descompostura que não imaginas. Ele assim com um ar de troça não sei para que se escondeu, acho esquisito... eu meto pela Rua Fresca para ir a casa, quando te vi descendo a rua, fiz-te sinal que ia para cima mas não sei se percebeste ou por onde foste, o que sei é que fui depois por S. Bento abaixo não te vi nem na Esperança. Fui à Calçada M[arquês] d' Abrantes e também não te vi, depois fui para a Mademoiselle mais nervosa, mais nervosa que não imaginas toda eu tremia. O que tu deves ter pensado! Depois tens um génio que pensa logo coisas muito esquisitas, e eu por saber isso ainda mais me ralo. Eu amanhã gostava de te falar. Se te não fizesse transtorno à tua vida irias esperar-me ao comboio que sai de Belem às 6 que deve chegar às 6.25 podia ser que eu fosse, o mais certo é ir nele e sair no Cais do Sodré.²³

The following night Ophelia takes up the pen again and reels off the sequel in the same racy terms.

Venho escrever-te aflitissima, pois que acaba de desencadear-se a tempestade que tanto receava.

Meu pai sabe tudo ja. O rapaz depois do que se passou ontem foi hoje a meu pai contar-lhe tudo e acrescentar-lhe cobras e lagartos. Claro meu pai foi logo a casa ter com minha mãe dizer o pecado, minha mãe disse-lhe que de nada sabia. Ele disse ao meu pai que eras lá do escritório, que foi por isso que eu acabei, que já te namorava no mesmo tempo do que ele e que ainda ontem que tinha ido contigo para a Mademoiselle que bem te viu estares a falar com um sujeito. Enfim podes calcular como meu pai não ficou e disse à minha mãe que se tinha de ver isso muito bem e que não queria te falasse na rua se acaso é verdade o que ele diz de eu ter namoro. Minha mãe disse que não sabia nada disso, que lavava as suas mãos.

²³ "I came from Mademoiselle very upset, anxious, and nervous because of what happened this afternoon. [...] Today, when you walked up, I was asking the neighbor across the street whether she had seen the *impertinent* fellow who had been here on the street a short time before. You walked back down and, since she had told me she hadn't seen him, I went out, but to my surprise, there he was behind me. I was quite worried because I thought you, having said good-bye to Montalvor, were coming toward me; he could plainly see that I am not afraid that he would see us together [...]. Do you know what I did then? I went to S. Bento and when he walked past me, I came back; that's when you saw me coming (you were still talking to Montalvor); I then went into a stairway; he came back and when he didn't see me, he figured I wouldn't have had time to go home, so he looked into the stairway. That's when I opened the door and gave him a piece of my mind, you should have seen it. He sneered and hid himself, I don't know why, it's strange... I then went up Fresca Street to go home, that's when I saw you coming; I made a sign, to let you know I was going up, but I don't know whether you understood, or where you went; I only know I went down S. Bento and didn't see you, nor did I see you at Esperança. I went to Calçada M. d'Abrantes, but I didn't see you there either; then I went to Mademoiselle and I was very nervous, so nervous you can't imagine. I trembled all over... What you must have thought? Then you have such a jealous nature, you're always ready to believe all kinds of funny things. That's why I worry even more. I would like to talk to you tomorrow. If it wouldn't interfere too much with your life, I would like you to wait for me at the train which leaves Belem at 6 and should arrive at 6:25; it could be that I am on it, I'm almost sure I will be, and I'll get off at the Caes do Sodré."

Meu pai disse que havia de falar comigo. Bem meu pai saiu, e passado um pouco vem o rapaz bater à minha porta perguntar por minha mãe, que lhe desejava falar, depois começou com um discurso que não imaginas, dizendo que já sabia que eu tinha namoro e quem era, deu os teus sinais – tal qual, disse à minha mãe, que mal sabia eu que ele estava ao facto de tudo, que até sabia também que tu tinhas-te vindo embora do escritório onde eu estava, enfim disse muita coisa a minha mãe, minha mãe exaltou-se com ele, porque ele jurou à minha mãe pela alma do pai que se havia de vingar, que lhe chamasse malandro que ele não se importava, que até aqui não era, mas de futuro não se importava de sê-lo, disse também que até aqui tinha nele um amigo mas que de ontem em diante que tinha nele um inimigo, capaz de tudo, minha mãe zangou-se muito, chamou-lhe patife, que não tinha nada que se vingar de mim nem de me ameaçar, que não era amor, era maus instintos, enfim foi uma coisa que não imaginas, e por felicidade eu não estava em casa. Meu pai perguntou à minha mãe onde era o escritorio e a Mademoiselle porque me queria ir espreitar. Minha mãe muito ralada coitadita sem saber o que havia de fazer, não sabia se seria bom eu sair do escritório e ficar em casa e foi ter com minha irmã para ver o que ela achava melhor [...] Quando eu cheguei hoje à minha irmã eram 7h. não sabia ainda nada e minha irmã e que me contou tudo e disse-me o melhor que eu tenho a fazer era escrever-te contando-te tal qual se tinha passado e que por um tempo não falaremos na rua nem um bocadinho sequer, que era para ele não ter que pegar, se o meu pai me apanha alguma vez contigo eu passo alguma vergonha porque me ralha e quando não o passe na rua, ajusto contas em casa; [...] e então diz-me minha irmã que eu te fizesse ver tudo isto e que combinássemos de nos vermos de janela, porque assim meu pai não tem razão de dizer nada e que nos escrevessemos por um tempo até dever passar esta crise. Eu acho que ela tem razão. Não concordas Nininho meu? [...]

Agora estou esperando que o meu pai venha falar comigo. Minha irmã aconselhou-me a que não negasse porque era pior porque ele ficava mais satisfeito eu não negar, que lhe dissesse que lá ele dizer que eu já te namorava que é uma pura mentira, nem ideias tenho para ti, e depois até de já estar em Belém que te encontrei um dia e tu como simpatizavas comigo declaraste-te e eu não desgostava de ti, e não tinha compromisso algum visto estar tudo acabado com o Eduardo, que aceitei, mas como só vindo de tão pouco tempo que não disse nada em casa, só hontem é que tinha dito à mana perguntando-lhe porém e ela que respondeu que se gostava de ti que tinha feito bem. [...]

Nem jantei, também não ceei, e agora que estava mais gorda um bocadito, tenho a certeza que vou emagrecer. Eu parecia que adivinhava com tão maus pressentimentos, tão maus sonhos, e por dois dias muito aborrecida. E o que estará para suceder Deus só sabe! E tudo por eu te amar, como se fosse um crime eu amar-te!²⁴

²⁴ "I'm writing you in a most afflicted state, for the storm I so much dreaded has just broken out. My father knows everything. After what happened yesterday, the fellow went to him and told him the whole story and added a few tales of his own. Of course, my father immediately went home to talk to my mother, to tell her the sin; she said she knew nothing. He told my father you worked at the office and that you were the reason why I had broken up with him. He said I was seeing you at the same time I was seeing him and that he saw us together yesterday on the way to the Mademoiselle; you had been talking to another man. Anyway, you can imagine how my father reacted; he told my mother he would have to look into the matter; he didn't want me to be seeing you on the street, if it is true we are seeing each other. My mother said she didn't know anything about it; she was washing her hands of the whole affair. My father said he was going to talk to me. Well, my father went out, and a short time later the fellow came, knocked at the door asking for my mother and then started a long-winded speech, you can't even imagine; he said he knew all about you and me, he knew who you were and described you – exactly – he told my mother I had no idea

Women still form a kind of closed society as they did in the days of the ancient Greeks when they even seem to have had a secret language known only to themselves. One can admire the mother who, not too certain about what has been going on, immediately rallies to her daughter's side, when the "rapaz" exposes the mean motive of his visit and swears "by the soul of his father" to revenge himself upon Ophelia for having turned him down. How one would like to have been there when the mother "exalted herself" and gave him the tongue-lashing that he deserved.

The father seemed to know even less about what was going on in his family than most fathers. He did not know where the office was where his daughter worked. He wanted to know where the "Mademoiselle" was. We, too, would like to know but can guess it was a well-known women's shop or *pâtisserie*, where Fernando and Ophelia used to meet. He seems to have readily believed that Ophelia had a lover, and we cannot admire him for wanting to spy on his daughter. But Ophelia seems less than ingenuous in her manifestly untrue story that it was only recently that she had broken with the "rapaz" and only the day

he knew, but he did, he even knew you had quit the firm where I worked; well, he said all kinds of things; my mother got very angry, because he swore by the soul of his father that he would seek revenge, she could call him a rascal, he didn't care, he hadn't been one until now, but from now on he didn't care; up to now he had been a friend, but from now on he was going to be an enemy, capable of all kinds of things; my mother became very angry and told him he was a scoundrel; she said he had nothing to revenge himself for, he had no business threatening me, what he felt for me wasn't love, just bad instincts; anyway, you can't imagine all that went on, I'm glad I wasn't home. My father asked my mother where the firm was, he wanted to go spy on me. My poor mother was so worried, she didn't know what to do, she didn't know whether I ought to quit work and stay at home; finally she went to talk to my sister, to seek her advice [...] It was seven o'clock when I arrived at my sister's today. I knew nothing about what had been going on; she was the one who told me, and advised me to write and tell you everything exactly as it happened; she thought we shouldn't see each other on the street for a while, in order that my father will not have cause to say anything, because if he should see us together, I might be very embarrassed; he could scold me and, even if he doesn't do it right there on the street, he could do it later at home; [...] my sister says that I should let you see all this, and that we should make arrangements to see each other from the window; this way, my father will have no cause to complain; she says too that we should write to each other for a while until the crisis blows over. I think she is right. Don't you agree, Nininho? [...] Now, I'm waiting for my father to come and talk to me. My sister advised me not to deny anything, because that would be worse; he would be happier if I didn't deny it; as far as my seeing you while going with the fellow, I should say that that's an absolute lie; I didn't have any ideas at all toward you, it wasn't until I was already in Belem that I saw you one day, and since you liked me, you proposed and I accepted because I didn't dislike you and I wasn't going with anybody, since I had stopped seeing Eduardo; since all this had happened very recently, I didn't mention it at home, it was only yesterday that I mentioned it to my sister and she said that if I liked you, I had acted properly. [...] I didn't have any lunch nor any dinner – now that I was beginning to put on a little weight – I'm sure I'm going to lose it all again. I seemed to have anticipated all this, what with my forebodings, very bad dreams, and worries, for the past two days. What is to come, God only knows! All because I love you, as if it were a crime to love you!"

before that she had sought her sister's advice on the subject.

It was this sample of feminine guile, no doubt, that excited the admiration of the sardonic Álvaro de Campos, for in a letter dated May 28th, which is undoubtedly a reply to that of Ophelia of the day before, Fernando concludes with the words which in any other sense would be fatuous:

Limpa as lágrimas, Bêbé meu! Tens hoje do teu lado o meu velho amigo Álvaro de Campos, que em geral tem sido só contra ti. Alegra-te! Só vale a pena o que se consegue com esforço!²⁵

In the rest of the letter, Fernando shows an unusually determined attitude. He says, in effect, that the situation Ophelia has described does not alarm him. If "they," i.e., the family, tried to hinder him (*estorvam*), he would not mind; he would remove the obstacles. The only thing that mattered was he and she. The rest had no importance.

Whatever Fernando Pessoa may have meant by his reference to Álvaro de Campos, Ophelia was not deceived into thinking that he had now become her friend. She knew that Campos represented something that was quite inimical to her – something detached, cynical and amused that watched her, as it were, from behind Fernando's shoulder. On June 12th, she writes:

Então o Álvaro de Campos gosta muito muito do Bébézinho? Ai não gosta não, Nininho. Se ele gostasse não era tão mau e tão injusto como já tem sido. Lá que o Ibis gosta muito, isso não duvido, eu pelo menos desejo-o imenso, agora o Álvaro de Campos não, olha Nininho, eu não gosto dele, é mau [...]

Gosto sim Nininho muito de ti (isto é da tua disposição, porque de ti gosto sempre) na última vez que nós falamos vinhas muito meiguinho, e não trazias o mau do teu amigo.²⁶

In this same letter Ophelia recognizes another potential enemy as she chides him gently for drinking too much brandy.

Tens bebido muita aguardente? Não bebas, não, Nininho. Eu não me importava nada, mesmo, que tu bebesses, logo que gostas, se te não fizesse mal à saúde, mas faz-te muito muito mal, portanto evita o mais possível de a beberes, sim, meu amor? Não te estragues, ve la, Nininho, olha que depois, se hás de durar 20 anos, duras só 10 e eu quero que o meu

²⁵ "Wipe away your tears, Baby mine! Today you have my old friend Álvaro de Campos by your side; generally, he has been against you. Be cheerful! For something to be really worthwhile, it has to be attained through much effort!" (Queiroz, 1936: 41).

²⁶ "You mean, Álvaro de Campos, likes your Baby a lot? Oh, no, he doesn't, he does not, Nininho. If he did, he wouldn't be as mean and unjust as he has been. That Ibis should like me, that I don't doubt it, at least, I wish it very much; but, Álvaro de Campos, I can't believe it; listen, Nininho, I don't like him, he is bad. [...] I love you though, Nininho (that is – I love your disposition because you I love always), the last time we talked you were so loving, you didn't bring your wicked friend."

querido filhinho dure muitos muitos anos. No entanto, tu é que ficas viúvo e ainda bem. Prefiro morrer primeiro. Há uma coisa que dizem que é certa, que é na noite de casamento o que apagar primeiro a luz é quem morre primeiro, de maneira que é interessante os que sabem nenhum quer ser o primeiro, mas não me importa, porque quero ser a primeira a morrer.²⁷

Who can read these words and not feel a wave of sympathy for the writer? Her advice went unheeded. Fernando Pessoa died fifteen years after – of cirrhosis of the liver. Ophelia died more than half a century after writing these charming words, so idiomatically expressed.

The elimination, the rout, we might call it, of the *rapaz*, Eduardo, may represent a highwater mark in the relations between Ophelia and Fernando Pessoa. In no other of the dozen letters written to her by Fernando, which she has released for publication, is such calm happiness expressed. He now has full confidence in her. He not only loves her (*amar*), but likes her (*gostar*) in the lasting sense of friendship. The affectionate tide of diminutives goes on unabated from Ophelia's pen. Throughout the months of June and July, there was a letter from her virtually every day; but in the month of August the number dwindles to 12; in October, five; in November, four; and in December, one. The recession was slow, sometimes imperceptible, but the end inevitable.

Already on June 30, 1920, she was writing:

Não comi nem como, pois nada me apetece, porque além de estar doente, a disposição que tu me deixaste assim o permite, e tu deves bem calcular o quanto me magoam as tuas palavras, e creio mesmo que é por saberes que o fazes, leva-me até crer que esteja aborrecido comigo, enfim que não seja eu o teu ideal, e como te não dou nenhum, oh, mas nenhum, motivo porque possas pegar para acabares com tudo queiras fazer-me desgostar para ser eu a primeira a aborrecer-me. Serves-te de um argumento de que te *não devias servir*, pois além de para ele não ter defeza, digo unica – e simplesmente se te troquei pelo rapaz foi de certo por gostar muito mais de ti, do contrário não o faria com a naturalidade com que o fiz, mas não quer isto dizer Nininho que deixes de fazer de mim os juízos que quiseses, porque, Fernando, quem não tem sorte e nasceu infeliz, há de sê-lo sempre *sempre*, e mesmo de ter esperanças *irrealizaveis talvez*. [...] Ai Nininho da minha vida fico tão triste nos momentos que me obrigas a pensar isto! [...] Pois se eu tenho dois dias alegres, tenho em seguida seis ou oito de tristeza.²⁸

²⁷ "Have you been drinking a lot of brandy? Please don't drink, Nininho. I wouldn't care if you did, as long as you like it, if it didn't ruin your health, but it is very bad for it, so please try as much as you can to avoid drinking, all right, my love? Please don't ruin yourself, because, afterwards, instead of lasting 20 more years, you last only ten and I want my little darling (son) to live for a long time. Meanwhile, you'd be the one who is widowed and that's fine. I'd prefer to be first to die. There's something they say is true and that is that on the wedding night the first one to turn out the light will be the first to die; it's funny, those who know this try not to be the first, but I wouldn't care, I want to die before you do."

²⁸ "I didn't eat and I don't want to eat, I have no appetite; besides being sick, you left me in such a mood that I can't feel any other way, you know very well how your words hurt me; sometimes I

On a postcard dated October 8, 1920, Ophelia recalls that it was exactly a year ago that they spoke to one another for the first time, but the recollection brings with it mixed feelings, for she is haunted by unpropitious dreams, and even her personal appearance has worsened – she has a sty on her eye!

É bem apoquentada que te venho escrever, pois que infelizmente mais uma vez verifiquei o quanto é certa a significação dos sonhos que tenho tido. Mar, gato e ouro, lágrimas, traição e fezes e ainda esta noite tornei a sonhar com mar e gatos, não te disse nada para não me tornar maçadora. [...]

Faz hoje um ano, querido amor, que nos falamos pela primeira vez, e bem longe estava de te chegar a desejar para meu marido como desejo! *O major desejo* que actualmente tenho! Faz hoje um ano e oxalá que quando fizer os dois sejamos *inteiramente* um do outro,

Além que o meu amorzinho diz que casando não será feliz; mas não, Nininho, tu enganaste, tenho a certeza, verás como serás feliz, eu saberei tornar-te feliz.

Sabes que o meu terçoelho tenta aumentar? Vou deitar-me, dez e tal mas não tenho disposição de estar levantada. Gosto era de te falar agora.²⁹

This inauspicious letter was followed by another the next day which seemed to bode little good for the smooth running of the affair:

Porque não apareceste hoje de manhã?

Esta semana apenas te falei quarta e sexta feira, e para ti já é bastante, fartaste-te bem depressa de mim, porque não apareceste ao menos à 1 ou às 6h. Sempre a mesma pergunta.³⁰

feel that that's why you do it; it all leads me to think you're getting tired of me; anyway, maybe I'm not your ideal, and since I don't give you any cause, oh, no cause at all, to end everything, you then try to displease me, so that I will be the first to be annoyed. You're using an argument *you shouldn't use*, for besides having no defense against it, I can only say that the reason why I exchanged you for the fellow was because I loved you much more, otherwise, I wouldn't have done it as naturally as I did; this doesn't mean, Nininho, that you are going to stop making whatever bad judgments you want to make of me, because, Fernando, whoever is unlucky and unhappily born, shall always, *always* be so, and with expectations *perhaps unfulfilled*. [...] Oh, Nininho, love of my life, I get so sad during those moments when you compel me to think like this! [...] For every two happy days, six or eight sad ones are sure to follow."

²⁹ "I'm very worried as I write because I have once again realized how true are the meanings of the dreams I have been having. The sea, a cat and gold, tears, betrayal and feces; just last night I dreamed once again of cats and the sea; I didn't tell you, because I didn't want to bother you. [...] It was a year ago today, dear love, that we spoke to one another for the first time, and I was very far from wishing you for a husband as I do! *The greatest wish* I have right now! It was a year ago today, and I hope that when the second one comes, we'll belong completely to each other. My little darling says he won't be happy if he marries; no, Nininho, you are wrong, I am sure I'll know how to make you happy. Do you know that my sty is getting bigger? I'm going to bed, it's a little after ten, but I don't feel like being up, I'd like to talk to you right now."

³⁰ "Why didn't you come this morning? This week I've only talked to you on Wednesday and on Friday; it's enough for you; you soon got tired of me; why didn't you come at least at one or at six? Always the same question."

Ophelia seems to have been a rather demanding young woman and Fernando hardly the most ardent of lovers.

Ophelia became more and more worried with Fernando's seemingly reluctant appearances. On the 14th, she wrote another letter chiding him for his continued absences.

Há três dias que me não apareces, sem eu saber a que atribuir tal ausência, nem ao menos já que não apareces, podias escrever dizendo qualquer coisa para eu ficar descansada, de certo tens à Baixa.³¹

(More in this vein in a very confused way, as Ophelia always wrote when her mind was disturbed.)

Tanto te faz que eu espere como não, a diferença é igual. Depois, claro, dizes que eu sou amiga de ralhar [...] Antigamente eras mais atencioso para mim, mais carinhoso, mudaste imenso!³²

It was, however, his absence on Sundays, the one free day of the week, that most aroused her wrath and brought this outburst:

Quando me não vias um dia me dizias sempre que tinhas muitas saudades, que te tinha custado estar sem me ver, e isso sucedia sempre com os Domingos, às segundas feiras vinhas sempre cheio de meiguices e pieguices dizendo ter muitas saudades, até fizeste o tal verso ("Por amanhã ser Domingo"). Eram outros tempos bem mais felizes para mim, [...] ³³

In reply, Fernando Pessoa wrote the well-known letter dated October 15, 1920 – the day after receiving the letter above.

Tens mais que milhares – tens milhões – de razões para estares zangada, irritada, ofendida comigo. Mas a culpa mal tem sido minha; tem sido daquele destino que acaba de me condenar o cérebro, não direi definitivamente, mas, pelo menos, a um estado que exige um tratamento cuidado, como não sei se poderei ter.

Tenciono (sem aplicar agora o celebre decreto de 11 de Maio) ir para uma casa de saúde para o mês que vem, para ver se encontro ali um certo tratamento que me permita resistir à onda negra que me está caindo sobre o espirito. Não sei o resultado do tratamento – isto é,

³¹ "I haven't seen you for three days, and I don't know to what I should attribute such absence; if you can't come, you could at least write, saying something, so that I won't worry, I'm sure you have been to the Baixa (down town)."

³² "You don't care whether I wait or not, it's all the same to you. Then, of course, you say I like to scold you [...] You used to be much nicer to me in the old days, much more loving, you've changed immensely!"

³³ "Whenever you didn't see me for one day, you'd say you had missed me very much, that it was very difficult to go without seeing me; this always happened on Sundays; then on Mondays you'd come full of sweetness and tenderness, saying how much you had missed me; you even wrote a poem ('Since tomorrow is Sunday'). Those were different, much happier days for me, [...]"

não antevejo bem qual possa ser. [...]

Não te preocupes.

Afinal o que foi? Trocaram-me pelo Álvaro de Campos.³⁴

Why did Fernando Pessoa write this letter? First, he imparts to Ophelia the grave news that he intends to be treated at a mental home during the following month and then at the end lightly, almost jocularly, remarks, “Don’t worry. All that has happened is that I have been turned into Álvaro de Campos.”

First, we must note that there is no evidence anywhere that Fernando ever did have the treatment he mentioned. None of Ophelia’s subsequent letters are addressed anywhere except to his usual box number, nor does she make any mention of his receiving treatment or express any sympathy – as she did fulsomely when he had a sore throat in March. His friends and, still more, his enemies are bound to have remembered such an event. And, finally, the phrasing of his letter is not that of one whose reason is failing. It is as clear and incisive as always.

Why, then, did he write the letter? Was he trying to end the relationship, but lacked the courage, as Ophelia later said, to tell her in plain words, and so concocted this story as the best means of putting her off – so that, in her words, she would be the first to *aborrecer-se*?

It seems more likely that Fernando Pessoa was indeed deeply disturbed in his mind, and perhaps even wished that he could take advantage of the famous decree of May 11 and enter a mental institution, at the state’s expense, and escape from it all. Or turn himself completely into Álvaro de Campos and not give a hoot! There is no doubt that when he wrote the letter of October 15th, he wanted Ophelia to release him from his predicament.

This, in effect, was what Ophelia did within six weeks of receiving this letter. But, in between, there is a curious flare-up of the old sentiments, a brief return to the former idyll. We find Fernando more involved than ever, even going to look at the house they were going to occupy the following year. Ophelia’s enthusiasm is touching. After a silence of nearly two weeks, she wrote:

É com bastantes saudades tuas que te venho escrever, pedindo-te, queridinho, que não faltes amanhã às 6 e tal, antes de 6½, porque amanhã tenho um bocado mais de pressa, mas não sairei antes das 6.20.

Não faltes, não, meu filhinho querido?

³⁴ “There are more than thousands – there are millions – of reasons for you to be angry, irritated, offended with me. But I’m hardly to blame; the blame lies with that destiny which has just condemned my brain, I won’t say definitely, but, at least, to a state which requires the kind of delicate treatment I know not whether I can obtain. I intend (without invoking for now the famous decree of May 11) to enter a mental institution next month, to see whether I may find there a certain treatment which will enable me to resist the dark wave which is falling over my spirit. I don’t know what the result will be, that is, I can’t quite foretell what it might be [...] Don’t worry. Anyway, what happened? I have been turned into Álvaro de Campos!” (Queiroz, 1936: 42).

Ando tão desejosa de ti! Tenho-te falado e visto tão pouco! Não tens saudades de mim? Naturalmente tens outra! Fizeste as pazes com a mulher loira? Já não pensas em mim! Mas amanhã vais pensar e vais buscar-me às 6.20 ao escritório, isto é, esperas-me e vimos os dois para casa (para a nossa!!). Tomara já poder dizer a sério: *vamos para a nossa casinha!* Não será por todo o ano que vem? Tenho esperanças que o ano começará comigo solteira mas não acabará sem eu ter juntado no meu nome, o teu. Não tens o mesmo desejo, Nininho?³⁵

The letter that follows, dated October 29, shows that the meeting was ecstatic. It was not Álvaro de Campos that dominated the occasion, but the amiable “Ibis.”

Não calculas como gostei de tua companhia hoje! Ela é-me sempre querida e o meu maior desejo era passar o mais tempo possível junto de ti, mas há dias, Nininho, em que estás mais bem disposto e são nesses dias que a tua companhia me põe na melhor das disposições.

Hoje foi um desses. Ai, querido amor da minha vida, quem pudesse comer-te com beijos! Que saudades tenho deste manjar! [...]

O meu Nininho, quando tiver com a sua Íbis conversas do género da de hoje, nunca julgue que maça, não, não pense nisso, pelo contrário, não calculas mesmo quanto gosto destas conversas, interessam-me, visto que te dizem respeito e que te interessam...

Eu peço tanto por ti que é impossível que não seja ouvida.³⁶

But within a month it was all over and Ophelia was writing to Fernando a cold, bleak letter of farewell.

Fernando,

Há já quatro dias que me não aparece e nem ao menos se digna escrever-me. Sempre a mesma forma de proceder.

Vejo que não faço nada de si, porque compreendo perfeitamente que é para me aborrecer que assim procede, e que me terá mesmo chamado parva algumas vezes.

Como o Fernando não tem motivos para acabar, procede então da forma que procede. Pois

³⁵ “I’m missing you very much as I write to ask you, my darling, to be sure to meet me tomorrow after six, before 6:30, because tomorrow I am a bit more in the hurry than usual, but I won’t leave before 6:20. Don’t fail, will you, my little darling? I long for you so much! I have hardly talked or seen you! Don’t you miss me? Maybe you have someone else? Did you make your peace with the blond girl? Don’t you think of me anymore? Tomorrow you will, and you are going to fetch me at 6:30 at the office, that is, wait for me, and then we will come home, the two of us (to our house!). I wish I could say truly: *Let’s go to our own little house!* Do you think it will be during the coming year? I’m hoping the new year will find me single, but will not be over before I join your name to mine. Don’t you have the same wish, Nininho? [...]”

³⁶ “You can’t imagine how much I enjoyed your company today! Your presence is always dear to me; my greatest wish would be for me to spend as much time as I can with you, but there are days, Nininho, when you are in better spirits and those are the days when your company puts me in the best of moods. Today was such a day. Oh, dear love of my life, how I wish I could eat you up with kisses! How I long for that repast! [...] Whenever my Nininho wants to have with his Ibis talks such as the one we had today, don’t ever think you bore me, don’t even think it, quite the contrary, you can’t imagine how much I enjoy this sort of discussion, it interests me, since it has to do with you and interests you... I pray for you so much, that it’s impossible I won’t be heard.”

bem, eu assim não estou resolvida a continuar.
 Não sou o seu ideal, compreendo-o claramente, unicamente o que lastimo é que so quase ao fim dum ano o Sr. tenha compreendido. Porque se gostasse de mim não procedia como procede, pois que não tem coragem.
 Os feitios contrafazem-se. O essencial é gostar-se.
 Está a sua vontade feita. Deseja-lhe felicidades.
 Ophelia³⁷

Fernando Pessoa's reply to this is well-known, having been published in several accounts of his life; but the manner in which he set out to write has not before been made known. Among the poet's papers is a draft of the letter which he eventually sent to Ophelia.³⁸

It is curious to note in Fernando Pessoa that, even in this moment of great emotional stress, the artist came before the man and also that his first impulse was to turn to English. First he typed two sonnets of very indifferent merit in English. Then he scrawled around them on the back of the page phrases, most in Portuguese but some in English, some of which can be recognized as identical with those in the published letter. Many of the phrases, as is always the case when Pessoa was writing rapidly, cannot be deciphered. The typewritten part of this curious document reads as follows:

E a gente é tão absurda que eu, que acho esta solução não só a melhor, como até a única, tenho pena. O nosso amor estava já doente, que não podíamos desejar senão a morte.³⁹

□

I have wished so oft this mockery might end
 Of love between us! And it's ended now
 Yet I cannot even to myself pretend
 That the wished thing achieved gives joy enow.

Every going is a parting too.
 Our happiest day doth make us one day older.
 To get stars we must have darkness also.
 The fresher hour is likewise the colder.

I dare not hesitate not to accept

³⁷ "Fernando: I haven't seen you for the last four days and you don't even have the decency to write. Always the same way of acting. I realize I can't change you and I know perfectly well you act this way in order to annoy me; I know you have even called me stupid on more than one occasion. Since you have no cause to end it all, you behave the way you do. Well then, if that's the way it is, I am not willing to go on this way. I am not your ideal, I know that perfectly, my only regret is that it has taken you almost a year to find that out. Because if you liked me, you wouldn't behave the way you do, you are not courageous. People may have different personalities. The important thing is that they like each other. I have granted your wish. I wish you happiness. Ophelia"

³⁸ Also published in *Presença* (July, 1936) and Queiroz (1936: 42-43).

³⁹ "And we are so absurd that I who feel this to be not only the best, but the only solution feel grieved. Our love was already so ill, we couldn't wish anything else but its death."

Thy separating letter, yet I wish
 With some vague jealousy I scarce reject
 That things were fitted for a different stretch.

Farewell! Yet do I smile at this or not?
 My feeling now is lost in thought.

28/XI/1920

□

Assim faria toda a gente. Não o façamos nos. As coisas que *toda* a gente faz são *sempre* ordinárias.⁴⁰

□

I cannot well deceive me that there was
 In my love nobleness, even though ill.
 Now that the tunnel through which I did pass
 Yields to the glaring day I can instill
 Into my thought a wonder how I could
 Suppose that way to be a place of staying;
 Thus being a fool in the way all men should,
 Yet not the complete fool to take no naying (!!!)

The exclamation marks in brackets in the last verse (“Yet not the complete fool to take no naying (!!!)”) are Fernando Pessoa’s own comment on this execrable line. Among the words scribbled around the typing there is one in Portuguese, which appears in a slightly different form in the finished letter, “Dá-me licença que conserve as suas cartas?”⁴¹

On the back, Fernando Pessoa wrote a draft for the letter. On the left hand side, only the beginning of the second paragraph stands out clearly and reads: “A sua carta é injusta.”⁴² On the right hand side, it begins almost as in the published letter: “Agradeço a sua carta. Ela causou-me pena e alivio ao mesmo tempo. Pena porque estas cousas fazem sempre pena, alivio porque, na verdade, [...]”⁴³ – and then dwindles into a morass of squiggles and alterations. At the end of the paragraph can be read: “Não me nega a Ophelia outro tanto, não é verdade?”⁴⁴ The second paragraph begins: “Nem a Ophelia ou eu tem culpa d’isto. Só o Destino tem culpa?”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ “That’s the way everybody would act. Let’s not do that ourselves. The things that other people do are always commonplace.”

⁴¹ “Will you allow me to keep your letters?”

⁴² “Your letter is unjust.”

⁴³ “Thank you for your letter. It brought me sadness and relief at the same time. Sadness, because these things are always sad; relief, because, truthfully...”

⁴⁴ “You won’t deny me the same, will you?”

⁴⁵ “Nor Ophelia nor I are at fault. Only Destiny is to blame?”

E a gente é tão absurda que eu, que acho esta sobução não
 só a melhor, como até a unica, tenho pena. O nosso amor
 estava já tão doente, que não podiamos desejar-lhe senão
 a morte.

I have wished so oft this mockery might end
 Of love between us! And it's ended now
 Yet I cannot ~~not~~ even to myself pretend
 That the wished thing achieved gives joy enow.

Every going is a parting too.
 Our happiest day ~~marks us~~ ^{dot's} ~~marks~~ us one day older.
~~xxxxxxx~~
 To get stars we must have darkness also,
 The fresher hour is ~~like~~ likewise the colder.

I dare not hesitate not to accept
 Thy separating letter, yet I wish
 With some vague jealousy I scarce reject
 That things were fitted for a different stretch.
 Farewell! Yet do I smile at this or not?
 My feeling now is lost in thought.

28/XI/1920.

Assim faria toda a gente. Não o fazemos nós. As cou-
 sas que toda a gente faz são sempre ordinarias.

I cannot well deceive me that there was
 In my love nobleness, even though ill.
 Now that the tunnel through which I did pass
 Yields to the glaring day, I can instil
 Into my thought a wonder how I could
 Suppose that way to be a place of staying;
 Thus being a fool in the way all men should,
 Yet not the complete fool to take no naying (!!!)

Fig. 1. BNP/E3, 114³-86^v.

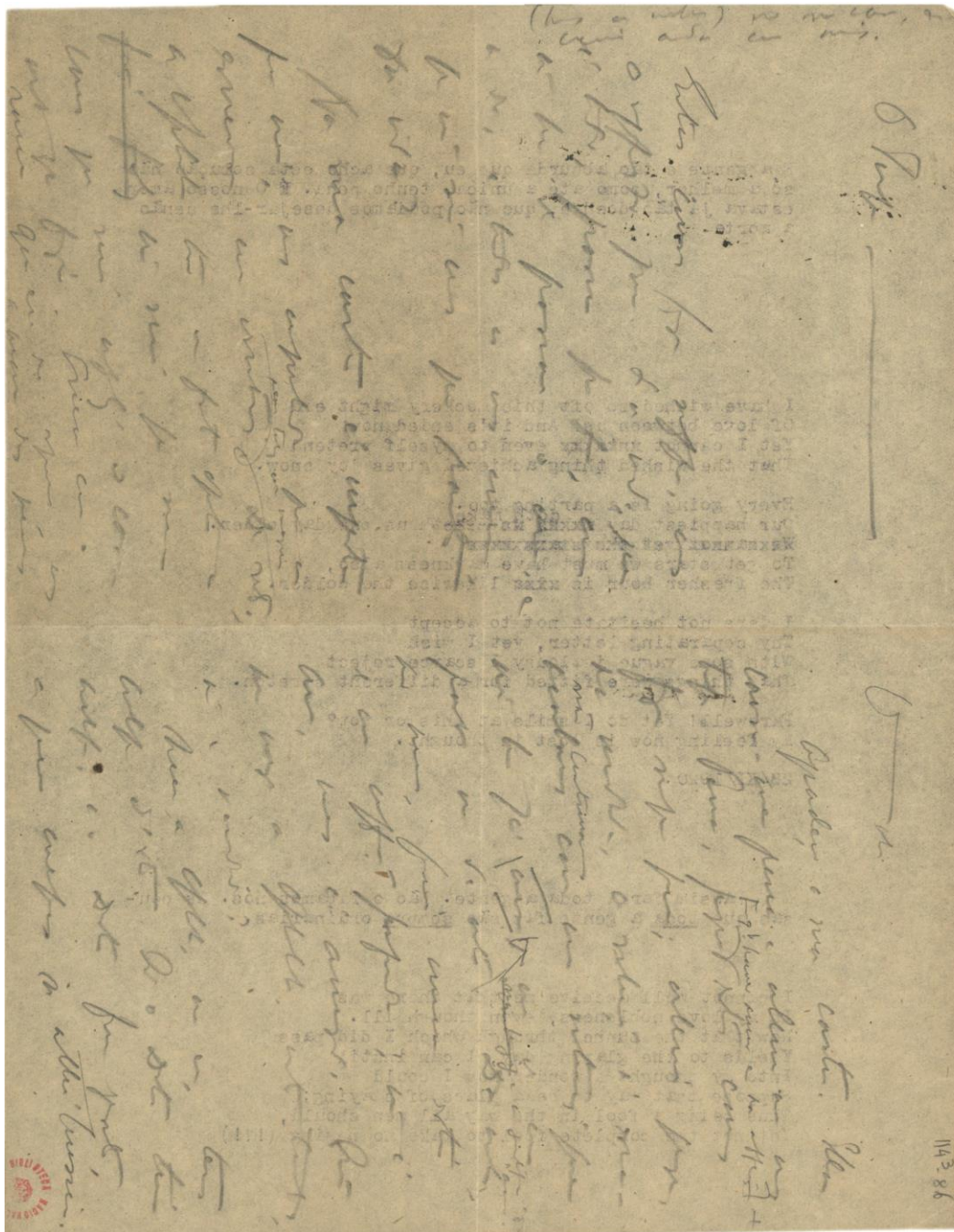


Fig. 2. BNP/E3, 1143-86r.

Further than this we dare not go in the attempt to interpret this strange psychological document. Enough, however, can be gathered from it to give us some hint as to what was in Fernando Pessoa's mind. He wrote several drafts plainly with the intention of (1) not causing any more hurt to Ophelia and (2) making it plain that he did not want the relationship on any account to continue. Nor did he want it to be forgotten and so, remembering perhaps Friar Laurence's advice to Romeo, he decided to couch the letter in terms of "Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy."

Estas cousas fazem sofrer, mas o sofrimento passa. Se a vida, que é tudo, passa por fim, como não há de passar o amor e a dor, e todas as mais coisas, que não são mais que partes da vida?⁴⁶

The simple wish in the draft, “Dá-me licença que conserve as suas cartas?” becomes expanded into a corollary to the thought expressed before on the passage of time.

Eu preferia não lhe devolver nada, e conservar as suas cartinhas como memória viva de um passado morto, como todas os passados, como alguma coisa de comovedor numa vida como a minha, em que o progresso dos anos é par do progresso na infelicidade e na desilusão.⁴⁷

He asks her, as he did in the draft, not to do as the common people do, not to harbour rancour or turn away her face when they passed in the street.

And finally, the simple idea that it was not his fault or hers but the decision of Destiny, captures his imagination and Destiny becomes magnified into the shadowy but gigantic figure standing over him and forbidding him the departure from their inexorable Law of which he had lately been guilty.

O meu destino pertence a outra Lei, de cuja existência a Ophelinha nem sabe, e está subordinada cada vez mais à obediência a Mestres que não permitem nem perdoam.⁴⁸

Ophelia was not impressed by this lofty conclusion, for on December 1st she wrote a final letter – the last in the bundle, at all events.

Fernando:

É ainda da impressão dolorosa em que me deixou a leitura de sua carta que lhe envio estas palavras.⁴⁹

After some sharp but rather conventional reproaches, she adds:

Pelo que respeita às minhas cartas podera guarda-las como deseja embora elas sejam demasiado simples!⁵⁰

⁴⁶ “These things may cause us pain, but the pain will pass. If life, which is all, passes at last, why shouldn’t love and pain, and all the other things which are nothing but parts of life?”

⁴⁷ “I’d prefer not to return anything, and preserve your letters as a live memory of a dead past, like all pasts, as something touching in a life such as mine, in which the progress of the years is commensurate with the progress of unhappiness and disillusion.”

⁴⁸ “My destiny belongs to another Law, whose existence you don’t even know nor suspect and is ever more dependent on Masters who do not allow nor forgive.”

⁴⁹ “Fernando: It is still under the painful impression caused by your letter that I am sending you these words.”

⁵⁰ “As for my letters, you may keep them as you wish, although they are much too simple!”

Then returning to her bitter mood, she says that she would not fail to take advantage of this lesson (“Enquanto a mim, não deixarei de futuro de aproveitar-me desta lição”)⁵¹ and adds this half-humorous anecdote:

Uma mulher da minha amizade dizia há dias estas palavras: “Uma mulher que acredita numa so palavra dum homem, não passa duma pobre pateta; se algum dia virem algum que finja levar uma taça envenenada aos seus lábios por sua causa, entornem-lha depressa na boca porque livrará o mundo de mais dum impostor.”⁵²

With these sentiments, the correspondence ends.

Among Pessoa’s papers there are other letters from Ophelia. They are not with the others in the two packets. They should not be, since they are epitaphs to the Ophelia-Fernando affair. These letters were written by Ophelia nine years later, perhaps after learning of Pessoa’s discreet inquiry after her, as her nephew, the poet Carlos Queiroz, tells us in *Homenagem a Fernando Pessoa* (1936: 34):

A sua renuncia, cuja dolorosa voluntariedade, se reflectiu, certa vez, no humido brilho dos seus olhos, ao perguntar-me por aquela a quem, havia sete anos, deixara de escrever e nunca mais me esquecerei a emocionada surpresa que o seu desabafo me causou: Bela alma! Bela alma!⁵³

Briefly the affair rekindled. Ophelia, still in love with Fernando, writes to him again. His reply is kind and considerate:

[...] Ao meu exilio, que sou eu mesmo, a sua carta chegou como uma alegria lá de casa, e sou eu que tenho que agradecer, pequenina.⁵⁴

He obviously has a high regard for Ophelia, but he is totally committed to his work. Wanting to tell her so, he suggests a chance meeting, on purpose, in his next letter:

Se um dia qualquer, por um daqueles lapsos em que é sempre agradável cair de propósito, nos encontrássemos e tomássemos por engano o carro do Lumiar ou do Poço do Bispo (35 minutos), haveria mais tempo para estarmos encontrando-nos ao acaso.⁵⁵

⁵¹ “As for me, I shall not fail to profit from this lesson in the future.”

⁵² “A woman of my acquaintance was saying these words just the other day: ‘A woman who believes in even one word uttered by any man is nothing but a poor fool; if you ever see one of them pretending to take a cup of poison to his lips because of you, quickly pour it down his mouth; you will have rid the world of another impostor.’”

⁵³ “His renunciation, whose painful violation reflected itself on one occasion in the shiny wetness of his eyes, as he asked about the one to whom he had ceased to write seven years before (I shall never forget the emotional surprise I felt when I heard him confess: “Great soul! Great soul!...”)”

⁵⁴ “To my exile, which is none other than myself, your letter arrived like a happy memory from home; I am the one who has to thank you, little one. [...]” (Queiroz, 1936: 44).

⁵⁵ “If one of these days, through one of those lapses in which it is always pleasant to incur on

We don't know whether the suggested meeting ever took place. Probably it did not, for eleven days later it is again Álvaro de Campos who interferes in the affair:

Um objecto e miserável individuo chamado Fernando Pessoa, meu particular e querido amigo, encarregou-me de comunicar a V.Exa [...] que está proibida de:

- 1 – pesar menos grammas;
- 2 – comer pouco;
- 3 – não dormir nada;
- 4 – ter febre;
- 5 – pensar no individuo em questão.⁵⁶

Ophelia must have known that once Álvaro de Campos, the *mau*, had made his appearance, there would be no hope for her love of Fernando. True enough, for on September 29th he writes the very last letter to her. In it, Fernando Pessoa gives the simple reason why he could not marry Ophelia:

De resto, a minha vida gira em torno da minha obra literária – boa ou má, que seja, ou possa ser. Tudo o mais na vida tem para mim um interesse secundário: há coisas, naturalmente, que estimaria ter, outras que tanto faz que venham ou não venham. É preciso que todos, que lidam comigo, se convençam de que sou assim, [...]⁵⁷

This, of course, was the plain truth. The Masters, the Law, had nothing to do with it any more than the cats, the sea and the gold of Ophelia's dreams. Fernando Pessoa could no more change his nature, as he himself says later in the letter, than he could change the color of his hair and eyes. He still loved Ophelia and would marry, if ever he did marry, no one but her.

Gosto muito – mesmo muito – da Ophelinha. Aprecio muito – muitíssimo – a sua índole e o seu carácter. Se casar, não casarei senão consigo. Resta saber se o casamento, o lar (ou o que quer que lhe queiram chamar) são coisas que coadunem com a minha vida de pensamento. Duvido.⁵⁸

Nothing more need be said. *Nada mais*, as Fernando Pessoa often wrote at the

purpose, we should meet and by mistake take the street car going from the Lumiar to the Poço do Bispo (35 minutes), there would be more time for us to be meeting by chance.”(Queiroz, 1936: 45).

⁵⁶ “An abject and despitiful creature called Fernando Pessoa, a special and dear friend of mine, has asked me to inform you [...] that you are forbidden to 1) weigh less grams; 2) eat less; 3) go without sleep; 4) have a fever; 5) think about the individual in question.” (Queiroz, 1936: 45).

⁵⁷ “As for the rest, my life revolves around my literary work – good or bad as it may be. Everything else has for me a secondary interest; there are things which, naturally, I wish I could have; there are others which I don't care whether I have them or not. It is necessary that all those who deal with me realize that I am like that, [...]” (Queiroz, 1936: 45).

⁵⁸ “I am very fond – very fond indeed – of Ophelia. I appreciate much – very much – your nature and character. If I marry, I will marry no one but you. It remains to be seen whether marriage, a home (or whatever one wants to call it) are things which agree with my life of thought. I doubt it.”

bottom of many of his manuscripts. He had only another six years to live, and he lived those as a solitary, faithful to his Muse. But there is some evidence that the two did not altogether lose touch with one another. In the trunk there is at least one other letter from Ophelia. It was written on Christmas Day 1932. In it she says sadly that she had not been in the house when he rang up to give her his Christmas wishes. The year before he had called with friends on New Year's Day, and she had hoped that this would be an omen and that what would happen on the first day of the year would happen on every succeeding day. But this had not been granted her, and she was sorry. Was it her fault that she still cared for Fernando? We need not glance further into the letter than that. The last word (to our knowledge) is a telegram dated June 26, 1933, which reads: "Parabéns. Saudades. Ophelia."⁵⁹

The purpose of this study is the praise of Ophelia de Queiroz. To do so it is not necessary to show her other than she was. The passages quoted from her letters were not chosen to put her in a favorable light, obviously some do not, but to reveal a living person. Faulty, like all other humans, she made her gift of love in her own way and in her own words, and made it totally.

How about Fernando Pessoa? How did the love of Ophelia affect his life and influence his poetry? We are convinced that he was profoundly affected by the experience, even though he knew he owed his life to poetry and could never marry Ophelia. We know of at least one occasion, described above by Carlos Queiroz, when the mention of her name brought tears to his eyes. Surely his poetry was enriched by the relationship: "Queriam-me casado, fútil, quotidiano e tributável?"⁶⁰ says Álvaro de Campos in "Lisbon Revisited (1923)." Curiously, it is Álvaro de Campos, the heteronym most unfriendly to Ophelia, who reveals in his poetry a tone of quiet regret as he refers to a past, but not forgotten, love. He acknowledges that:

As cartas de amor, se há amor,
Tem de ser
Ridículas.⁶¹

But further on:

A verdade é que hoje
As minhas memórias
Dessas cartas de amor
É que são
Ridículas.⁶²

⁵⁹ "Congratulations. Love, Ophelia."

⁶⁰ "You'd like me to be married, frivolous, methodical and a taxpayer?"

⁶¹ "If there be love, love letters, | Ought to be | Ridiculous."

And in “Vilegiatura”, also by Álvaro de Campos:

Que será feito de ti?
Sei que, no formidável algures da vida,
Casaste. Creio que és mae. Deves ser feliz.
Porque o não haverias de ser?⁶³

To conclude, among the *Poesias Inéditas* there is a short poem, doubtlessly related to Ophelia, written on August 26, 1930:

E ou jazigo haja
Ou sotão com pó,
Bébé foi-se embora.
Minha alma está só.⁶⁴

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⁶² “The truth is that today | The memory | Of those love letters | Is what is | Ridiculous.”

⁶³ “What has become of you? | I know that in life’s formidable somewhere, | You married. I believe you’re a mother. You must be happy. | Why shouldn’t you be?”

⁶⁴ “Be there a tomb | Or attic with dust. | Bébé went away | My soul’s all alone.”