

The Ventriloquist Behind the Shattered Mirror: A Study of Pessoa's Bilingual Oeuvre

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Keywords

Fernando Pessoa, bilingualism, heteroglossia, ventriloquism, English, intertextuality, devoicing, influences.

Abstract

Amidst a vast body of literature focussing on Pessoa's Portuguese-language work, until recently comparatively little attention has been paid to his work in other languages, specifically, English. In this essay I argue that Pessoa's bilingualism becomes a fundamental method of self-dilution in his deconstruction of self. In English in particular, a strong presence of other influential voices resonate in Pessoa's language, further reinforcing this process. This ventriloquism leads to a true cacophony of voices in his English work, fulfilling the objectives he sets out for himself in Portuguese. I critique Bloom's conclusion that this made Pessoa's poetry 'weaker'; indeed, in this light his English work asserts itself rather more convincingly than previously considered. Ultimately Pessoa's project(s) of 'deserving' can only be comprehensively appreciated through the careful consideration of all of his work, across voices, heteronyms and languages.

Palavras-chave

Fernando Pessoa, bilinguismo, heteroglossia, ventriloquismo, inglês, intertextualidade, ensurdecimento, influências.

Resumo

Em meio a um vasto corpo de literatura focando nas obras pessoanas em português, comparativamente, pouca atenção tem sido dedicada ao seu trabalho em outros idiomas, mais especificamente, em inglês, até recentemente. Neste ensaio, argumenta-se que para Pessoa o bilinguismo se torna um método fundamental de auto-diluição em seu projeto de auto-desconstrução. É particularmente notável a forte presença de outras vozes influentes ressoando na linguagem de Pessoa em inglês, reforçando ainda mais este processo. Este ventriloquismo leva a poesia a uma verdadeira cacofonia de vozes em sua obra inglesa; o qual cumpre objetivos que o poeta define por si mesmo em português. Eu critico a conclusão de Bloom que sugere que isso torna a poesia de Pessoa 'mais fraca'; de fato, a este respeito seu trabalho em inglês afirma-se um pouco mais convincente do que foi considerado anteriormente. Em última análise, projetos pessoanos de se criar podem ser apreciados de forma abrangente através da análise cuidadosa de todos os seus trabalhos, através de vozes, heterônimos e línguas.

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And if I had to talk about the great poet of the twentieth century, even though Neruda is very powerful at his best, and I have great passion for Pessoa; obviously Neruda and Pessoa are not as good poets as Luis Cernuda was.

I think you could argue that after Lorca, the great poetic genius of the twentieth century in Spanish is Cernuda, surpassing the Latin American poets. Certainly surpassing Pessoa. Pessoa is a wonderful, crazy poet, is an astonishing literary phenomenon, but I don't think that in the end he is as pure a poet as Cernuda.
(Harold Bloom, 1996: 172; 1996: 178)

Pessoa's Portuguese works¹ have placed him on a par with illustrious contemporary modernists like Pound, Yeats, Eliot and Joyce, sparking endless debate amongst academics for his embodiment of the so-called 'modernist' concepts of alienation of the self and artistic insincerity. Such discussions on the whole focus solely on Pessoa the Portuguese poet (and, by extension, his numerous Portuguese heteronyms) however. While there has been a growing interest amongst academics in Anglophone influences upon Pessoa, his bilingualism and his works written in other languages (principally English) has thus far attracted considerably less attention than his Portuguese output.² Within "a poetics and ideology of pluralized selfhood" (Zenith in Pessoa, 2008: 14) however, it seems evident that elements of his poetic personae should have spilled over into other languages as well, and indeed, that this should be central to a Pessoaan poetic enterprise.³ While literature is often studied as part of a national identity or canon, Pessoa's work clearly resists this restrictive categorization, and thus a comparative methodology may bring his work into closer focus.

Rather than re-walking the well-trodden ground of heteronymic study then, in this essay I will begin to consider how, amidst Pessoa's myriad of selves, his bilingualism could be the key to a deeper understanding of the enterprise behind his works and poetic voices, in both Portuguese and English. My focus here is upon his bilingualism in Portuguese and English; certainly, French was another language within which he produced and read a great deal of work, and extensive research into this has been conducted by Quillier (2001, 2002 and 2004). My purpose here is to reflect briefly on how the emergence of other authorial voices in and through Pessoa's work (in English in particular) serves to minimise any cogent unified Pessoaan voice. (Paradoxically, it proves challenging even to discuss Pessoa's 'devoicing' without conceding to a rhetoric which asserts a single

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² Nonetheless, important work focussing on Pessoa's English output spans Monteiro (1956), Sena (1958), Roditi (1963), Centeno (1988), Monteiro, G. (2000), Pizarro (2012), Ferrari (2012).

³ Cf. Quillier (2004) on Pessoa and heteroglossia.

authorial voice). Instead of dividing the poet by heteronym, a consideration of him as at least two constituent poetic personae (a Portuguese poet and an English poet), playing a part in two literary canons, sheds light on how the poet not only shaped language, but was also shaped by the language(s) he employed.

Anglophone Influences, Ventriloquism, and ‘Co-Authoring’

Thanks to an upbringing and education in South Africa,⁴ the bilingual Pessoa certainly considered himself as a valid English poet, and submitted work on various occasions to be published in England:

[...] of my sympathy with English literature, and my ability to disseminate an interest in it, these pages will be ample proof, [...] they yield nothing to any living writer of the English language, both in the accuracy of their logical purport and in the proper balance of their exact English.

(Pessoa, 2003: 134)

Indeed, the English language was used in his early career to express several sides of the Pessoaan prism which remained suppressed or sidelined in Portuguese, as will be discussed in due course. His numerous personae, spilling across languages, released impulses which drew inspiration from or lay dormant in others.⁵

Despite his bilingualism however, his English poetry never fully escaped from the grasp of the influential writers that Pessoa had admired so much during his education. His brand of English “was always of the 19th century variety [...], old-fashioned and affected by the standards of the new century” (Castro, 2009: 144). His English writing echoes with Classical writers, Shakespeare, and the Romantic poets, and he never succeeded in erasing the influence of a decade of British education. In the eyes of most critics, his English poetic voices (which certainly were plural, albeit not relegated so much to heteronymy) consequently never achieve the ‘modernism’ for which Pessoa became so famous in Portuguese. This disposition to imitation was always more apparent in his English voice(s), as his old school English teacher remarked: “his English composition was generally remarkably good and sometimes approached to genius [...] [but] I had some difficulty in checking a disposition on his part to imitate very closely Carlyle’s style” (Pessoa, 2003: 390).⁶ It is this same disposition to imitation that is frequently cited as the qualifying critique of his English work: “Na segunda língua [...] o estilo não é original, não é inovador, é o dos autores de que sofre a influência”; “O

⁴ Cf. Jennings (1984) for further discussion on Pessoa’s education in South Africa.

⁵ Cf. Pizarro and Ferrari (2013) for the most recent anthology of (136) Pessoaan ‘heteronyms’, the most recent of which was only discovered by José Barreto in 2012.

⁶ For further discussion of the influence of Carlyle upon Pessoa, see Perrone-Moisés’s Chapter in Castro (2013: 53-63), and Chapter 2 of Severino (1983).

nosso poeta não pode considerar-se inovador nem em inglês nem em francês” (Centeno, 1988: 80, 87); “A sua obra em inglês nunca atingi[u] a qualidade das suas melhores obras em português” (Jennings, 1984: 125); “Pessoa would write the best of his poetry in Portuguese” (Monteiro, 2000: 3).

While it has been maintained that “the Anglo-American tradition could [...] claim Pessoa as one of its finest poets” (Ramalho Santos, 2003: 1), this English language poet was certainly far more dependent upon his literary forbears, with his heavily convoluted style conveying little of the striking innovativeness of his ‘best’ Portuguese poems. This has arguably been the main reason his English poetry has not thus far met with wide critical acclaim. Traces of Yeats, Coleridge, and Keats are discernible alongside Shakespeare in the Sonnets, while the bluntness of his English heteronym Search’s “Epitaph” (in Lopes, 1993: 180; Pessoa, 1997b: 37) rings with the tone of contemporary English writers, foreshadowing, for example, Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”:

Here lieth A[lexander] S[earch]
Whom God and man left in the lurch

(BNP/E3, 79-42^r)

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization

(Pound, 2003: 552) [V]

Meanwhile, Search’s “A Winter Day” echoes Tennyson’s use of “weary” in “Mariana”:

But I am weary, desolate and cold
E’en as this winter day. I have grown old
In watching dreams go by and pass away

(Pessoa, 1997b: 80; 2007: 140;
BNP/E3, 78B-11^r) [II, l. 15-17]

She only said, “My life is dreary,
He cometh not,” she said;
She said, “I am aweary, aweary;
I would that I were dead!”

(Tennyson, 1987: 207) [l. 9-13]

Pessoa’s mysticism in *The Mad Fiddler* also displays close affinities with Yeats’s early poems, as Patrícia da Silva McNeill has demonstrated:⁷

⁷ For further discussion of Pessoa and Yeats see works listed by McNeill.

Tip-toe aerial gliding
 Shadow-lunar blent,
 Bending, mingling, hiding,
 To and fro they went

(Pessoa, 1999: 36; 2007: 268; BNP/E3, 31-10^r)
 [l. 28-32, "Elf Dance" / var. "Goblin Dance"]

Mingling hands and mingling glances
 Till the moon has taken flight;
 To and fro we leap

(Yeats, 1994: 45) [l. 17-20, "The Stolen Child"]

Arguably, in the struggle in which "strong poets, major figures [...] wrestle with their strong persecutors, even to the death, [while] weaker talents idealize" (Bloom (1973: 5), Pessoa's English voices too explicitly absorbed those of Shakespeare, Tennyson and Yeats (amongst others), resulting in "a generalized phenomenon of pastiches of early influences that pervaded his poetry in English" (McNeill, 2010: 5).

This is not to deny entirely the creative power of these English voices however; Ferrari (2012: 141-144) has revealed how, despite the English heteronym Search's overt imitation of Byron's "I would I were a careless child" in his own poem "Regret", the poet also radically alters the metre, creating an effect of simplicity that touches on reminiscences about the discovery of love. Later we will see other instances of how Pessoa's English voices assert themselves in a more active way upon influential sources than is widely recognised. We are led to question who is the "real" author of these texts which, through their heavy reliance upon other authorial influences, yet distinctive style of their own, are perhaps better understood as "co-authored" acts of ventriloquism, in which multiple authorial voices manifest themselves. Such multiplicity, as in the case of his heteronymous Portuguese works, is at odds with any notion of an "author", and in his English works in particular (but of course, in his works in Portuguese and French as well, which surely invoke just as many external influences), the question of agency becomes a highly relevant one.

Indeed this is especially notable in *35 Sonnets* (his first published collection in English), in which much of the stronger sense of Pessoa's poetic voices in his other works tends to be considered lost amidst the archaisms of what has been called "Pessoa's most direct, overt, and sustained poetic appropriation" (Castro, 2010: 32) of the strongly influential figure of Shakespeare:⁸

I could not tell thee well of how I love
 Loved I not less by knowing it, were all
 My self my love and no thought love to prove

(Pessoa, 1993: 73; 2007: 166) [l. 6-8, "Sonnet XIII"]

⁸ See full analysis in Castro (2010), and also Freire (2004: 207).

Critics have generally been in agreement here that the 35 *Sonnets* represent a departure from Pessoa's more 'distinctive' Portuguese voice(s): "nos sonetos, está sintetizado com inigualável inspiração e maestria, numa linguagem que os aproxima da melhor tradição lírica isabelina e jacobita, o neoplatonismo integral e é subjacente ao pensamento profundo de Fernando Pessoa" (Sena, 1981: 94). Nonetheless, this appears overly simplistic, as his English works certainly resound with echoes of other Anglophone writers as well,⁹ whilst also simultaneously not adhering to any one English poetic mould. Undoubtedly, Pessoa had read Shakespeare's sonnets, yet here the influence of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnet 43 asserts itself also:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight

(Browning, n. d.: 289-290) [l. 1-3, "Sonnet XLIII"].¹⁰

There was certainly a copy of this sonnet in Pessoa's private library, listed amongst the "Sonnets from the Portuguese", in *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*.¹¹ It is surely not unreasonable to suggest that the invocation of an imaginary source language as a means of removing the authorial voice from identifying too wholly with the poem's personal content – Barrett Browning's reason for titling the collection "Sonnets from the Portuguese" – spoke to Pessoa on some level. Perhaps rather than merely being 'appropriated' then, these works in fact impose themselves upon Pessoa's writing, in the way that Benjamin declares some texts beg to be translated.¹² In all of these passages, predecessors assert themselves through Pessoa's work as parasitic texts calling to be reiterated.

⁹ Cf. G. Monteiro (2000) and M. Monteiro (1956) for further English influences within Pessoa.

¹⁰ G. Monteiro (2000: 69-73) also points to how Barrett Browning's poem influenced Pessoa's Portuguese sonnets, in particular, "Antígona" (June 1902) ("Como te amo? Não sei de quantos modos varios | Eu te adoro, mulher de olhos azues e castos" (in Lopes, 1990: II, 166) [l. 1-2].

¹¹ Casa Fernando Pessoa webpage, accessible online, Nov. 30 2014, <http://casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt/bdigital/index/index.htm>

¹² Cf. Walter Benjamin (1923), in Weissbort and Eysteinson (2006: 299).

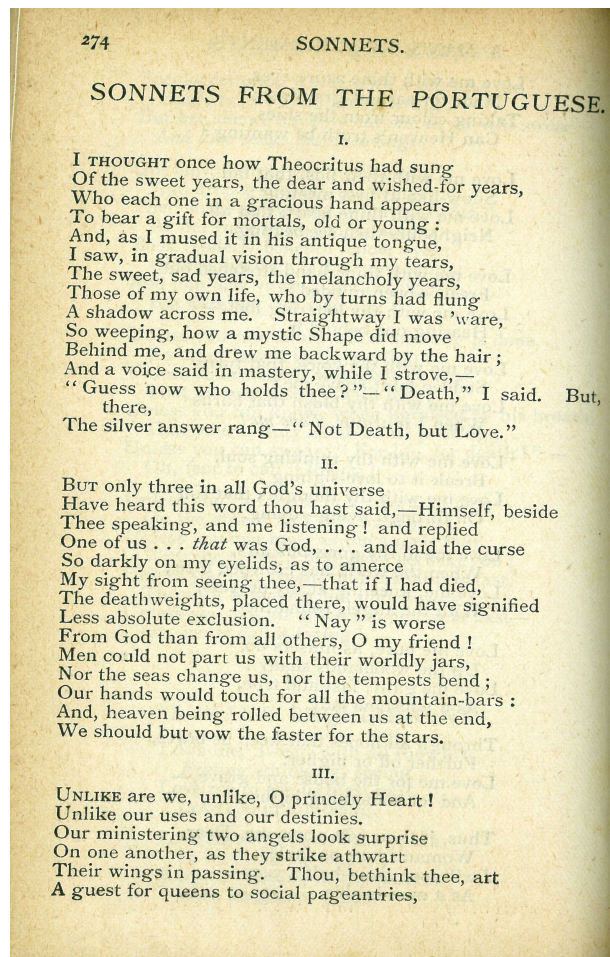


Fig. 1. Casa Fernando Pessoa, 8-72A.

"Sonnets from the Portuguese" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

<http://casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt/bdigital/8-72A>

While such echoes are evident, Pessoa's English writing remains idiosyncratic however, with particularities pointing perhaps to the interference of other languages, or revealing texts to be from some more universal canon, rather than one tighter conceptualization of national identity and linguistic uniformity. As Barthes writes, "le texte est d'emblée, en naissant, multilingue" (Barthes 1970: 127). Quillier (2001) has also argued that there can be no such thing as a language in isolation in Pessoa's works; all languages inevitably sound through one another in a cacophony of thought:

On pourrait donc se risquer à émettre l'hypothèse d'un métissage linguistique: de même que les hétéronymes se font les échos déformants les uns des autres, le portugais retentit dans l'anglais, l'anglais retentit dans le portugais, le latin retentit dans le portugais de Reis, le portugais et l'anglais retentissent dans le français, etc.

Of course this can be explained away as Pessoa's lack of poetic prowess in the English (or French) language, or an artistically 'immature' inclination towards imitation, yet it is this strangeness, inherent in all of his poetry across languages,

which masks the very sense of a unified poetic voice which he went to such lengths to destroy. It has been said of Eliot's use of foreign words in "The Wasteland" (1922) that such "roughness can irritate the senses pleasantly enough to notice both the artist at work and a refreshed world that may have grayed from inattention" (Sommer, 2004: 30), and while such 'roughness' may not lend any unity to one Pessoaan voice as 'the artist at work', it is, arguably, a fresh idiosyncrasy.

Pessoa's odd use of 'other' as a verb, for example, predates the O.E.D entry for the word by 18 years;¹³ a fact perhaps overlooked due to the fact that Pessoa is not typically considered within an English or Anglophone canon:

I find me listening to myself, the noise
Of my words othered in my hearing them

(Pessoa, 1993: 73; 2007: 166) [l. 3-4, "Sonnet XIII"]

Significantly, he mirrors the same verb into Portuguese "Em prosa é mais difícil de se outrar" (Pessoa, 1966b: 106; BNP/E3, 16-60^r); evidence perhaps that while his language may seem to work against the common grain, especially in English, a consideration of him within a bilingual space playing a role in more than one literary canon offers justification. It is also precisely this strangeness- which in English does so much to distort a sense of an accomplished or innovative poet, and in Portuguese disrupts any unified voice- that lies at the heart of an enterprise in self-othering, concealing his voice(s) behind a wall of mirrors where each reflects back another.

If, as Bloom maintains, all poets are belated sons doomed never to surpass their fathers, yet acknowledgement of such inferiority is tantamount to literary death, Pessoa only succeeded in following Freud's advice and killing his literary fathers in Portuguese. In so doing, Pessoa's Portuguese voices constructed a creative space for themselves, and, according to Bloom's criteria at least, point to a far stronger poet "de génio" only within the Lusophone canon:

[...] em cada portuguez, allemão, inglez ha, mas não visivelmente e para o exterior, aquelle sent[iment]o que um Camões, um Goethe, um Shakespeare traz a publico.

Os homens de genio [*var.* poetas] são os representantes d'essa alma intima dos povos; fallam alto o que a si mesma a dispersa alma nacional segreda no divino silencio do ser.

(in Lopes, 1990: II, 72; from "History of a Dictatorship")

According to such criteria then, Pessoa's English voices, when considered within their own canon, were more "fingidor[as]" ("Autopsicografia", Pessoa 2013a: 48) than their Portuguese counterpart(s), insofar as they were constantly weakened and diluted by the overbearing influence of those that Pessoa most admired from his British education. His move to the Portuguese language allowed him to re-

¹³ "Other, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. Accessed 17 Nov. 2014.

create his own intellectual thoughts through a different linguistic medium; affording him a certain freedom and sense of innovation which he seemed largely incapable of providing himself in English. A consideration of these two linguistic elements together is crucial however to understanding the heteronymic project at its deepest level, for there is also a clear dialogue between languages as well as voices.

Nonetheless, Pessoa's appropriations of English-influenced reading into Portuguese do yield examples of an innovative and 'modern' poetic voice at work. A distinctive assertion of Shakespearean material is that of gardens or forests as natural spaces in which we are free to explore or shape our emotions: "'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners" (*Othello*, 1.3.319-321). Often such spaces can represent the psyche: a place in which we can lose or step out of ourselves to inhabit new parallel possibilities of being. In Shakespeare's plays, this frequently leads to love interest, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *As You Like It*, and wandering in a forest or garden allows characters to find or return to themselves: "Are not these woods | More free from peril than the envious court? | Here feel we but the penalty of Adam" [*As You Like It*, 2.1.3-5]. Pessoa adopts similar imagery, but employs it in Portuguese as an epithet for the divided self; using the motif of a garden to explore the inner 'self' in relation to parallel possibilities of being. Indeed, the idea of a garden as a safe place to which one can return to introspect is a recurring theme in his more innovative Portuguese work:

(Sei muito bem que na infância de toda a gente houve um jardim,
Particular ou público, ou do vizinho.
Sei muito em que brincarmos era o dono dele.
E que a tristeza é de hoje.)

(Pessoa, 2013b: 346) [l. 12-15, "Dobrada à Moda do Porto"]

Sou já o morto futuro.
Só um sonho me liga a mim –
O sonho atrasado e obscuro
Do que eu devesse ser – muro
Do meu deserto jardim.

(1967a: 234; cf. BNP/E3, 45-16^r) [l. 41-45, "O Andaime", 29-VIII-1924]

In both poems the "jardim" signifies some untouched, wild, yet innocent core within us, while in "Conselho", the image is reworked to imbue a sense of a trapped 'real' self; a fleeting yet nonetheless tangible truth, hidden amidst the various and falsifying other layers of the artificial self which stem from the modern world. Like in Shakespeare's imagery, the garden is a place of natural freedom, away from the prying eyes and concerns of modernist anxiety and alienation; a place where one can choose to cultivate or to leave a kernel to grow naturally:

Cerca de grandes muros quem te sonhas.
 Depois, onde é visível o jardim
 Atravez do portão de grade dada,
 Põe quantas flôres são as mais risonhas,
 Para que te conheçam só assim.
 Onde ninguém o vir não ponhas nada.
 [...]
 Mas onde és teu, e nunca o vê ninguém,
 Deixa as flôres que vêm do chão crescer
 [...]
 Faze de ti um duplo sêr guardado;
 E que ninguém, que veja e fite, possa
 Saber mais que um jardim de quem tu és –

(Pessoa, 1967a: 244; BNP/E3, 118-53^r) [l. 1-6, 10-11, 13-18, "Conselho"]

Pessoa constructs a psychological space which both engages with the freedom of nature and yet is simultaneously restricted by the artificial construct of modern urbanism, a notion which bears striking resemblance to Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "doch ich will Zäune um meine Gedanken haben und auch noch um meine Worte: daß mir nicht in meine Gärten die Schweine und Schwärmer brechen!".¹⁴ In the conceit of a walled garden, this Shakespearean imagery emerges as a passing glimpse, hidden behind 'modern' social constructs, updated for Pessoa's own social space in time through the Portuguese language.

Pessoa's British education was clearly of critical importance to his Portuguese writings, for his wide reading in various European languages kept him abreast of artistic and intellectual developments and immersed him in the Classics of literary achievement. This broadening of perspectives certainly aided and influenced his more esoteric Portuguese writing, and while this was achieved through the Portuguese language, palimpsests of wider European artistic trends remain visible. The work under the heteronym of Ricardo Reis in particular absorbs strands of classical influence (here we see elements of Greek mythology and Platonic theory),¹⁵ combined with questions typically ascribed to 'modernist' lines of enquiry, surrounding identity and selfhood:

Segue o teu destino,
 Rega as tuas plantas,
 Ama as tuas rosas.
 O resto é a sombra
 De árvores alheias.
 [...]

¹⁴ Nietzsche (1999: 319), translated in Kaufmann (1954: 301) as "I want to have fences around my thoughts and even around my words, lest swine and swooners break into my garden".

¹⁵ Cf. Gonçalves (1974) on the heteronym of Ricardo Reis.

Mas serenamente
 Imita o Olimpo
 No teu coração.
 Os deuses são deuses
 porque não se pensam

(Pessoa, 1966a: 68-69; BNP/E3, 51-28^r)
 [l. 1-5, 21-25, "Segue o teu destino", 1- VII-1916]

Indeed, one might even argue that “se Fernando Pessoa tivesse feito o ensino secundário em Portugal, Ricardo Reis não existiria [...] porque [...] aquilo não é estar com as ‘Odes’ na frente a tentar traduzi-las. É de quem as sabia de cor. É o resultado da educação inglesa” (Pereira, 2010: 59). He clearly read and thought widely in English, at times inventing new Portuguese words or using calques of the English terms to try to express the same idea (such as “outrar”, or “despersonalização”). Typically critics have viewed Pessoa’s English works as of reduced merit for their frequently explicit imitation of other sources, yet evidently Portuguese Pessosan voices also appropriate sources, at times relying heavily upon an external voice as well. If “[a] arte consiste na organização ideal da materia” (in Lopes, 1990: II, 468), the reorganization of imitated or borrowed influences is just as present in Portuguese as in English, making space for a Pessosan cacophony of voices. In the case of Reis, this becomes a cerebral, austere voice focusing on the transience and alienation of life in the clutches of whimsical Fate. Unlike so many other writers, Pessoa’s voices were not subjected to the limitation of one language to express the nature of being, and while the development of both heteronymy and heteroglossia allowed for an exploration of myriad potential ways of being, his multilingualism proving a further dimension of this multiplicity of selves.

The Sublimated Self in English

Sexuality should be viewed as a further crucial consideration in such plural modes of being, and significantly is the only theme which manifests itself far more explicitly and provocatively in or through the English language than in Portuguese. Sexual identity can become a sort of trap; a rigid, binary categorization of what in fact are much more fluid and heterogenous possibilities (cf. Judith Butler, 1990), and such limitations were tested and explored in Portuguese through numerous self-divisive heteronyms. It follows however that the cost of identity’s social straitjacket is inevitable ‘deviant’ behaviour; the very aspect of the Pessosan prism which was entirely relegated to the English language. Joyce once wrote “I cannot express myself in English without closing myself in an institution” (quoted in Zweig, 1943: 275), underlining the Bakhtinian argument that language is full of other people’s words; it shapes us culturally as much as we shape our language. Arguably, the phallic masculinity and dominative power through the aggression of “Epithalamium”, the content bordering on necrophilia and sadomasochism of

“Antinous”, and the consummation of the homoerotic act in “Le Mignon” are highly sexualised and explicit expressions of a poetic voice which could only be realised safely by exploiting the cultural, linguistic and geographical remoteness of England (and France) at a time when Oscar Wilde had only recently been imprisoned for his own acts of “gross indecency”. Quite apart from Jennings’s assertion that “o inglês para ele era a língua do intelecto; o português, a língua do coração” (1984: 125) then, English proved a means of liberating himself from associations of his maternal Portuguese.

In these poems imagery emerges which has the power to shock even a century later, and the deviant sexual, paedophilic and even necrophiliac themes dealt with in “Antinous” (Pessoa, 1993, 41-43; 2007: 192-196) are more extreme in terms of poetic voice and imagery than anything expressed by the Portuguese voices:

O lips whose opening redness erst could touch
 Lust’s seats with a live art’s variety!
 O fingers skilled in things not to be told!
 O tongue which, counter-tongued, made the blood bold!
 O complete regency of lust throned on
 Raged conciousness’s spilled suspension!

[l. 17-22]

There was he wont thy dangling sense to cloy,
 And uncloy with more cloying, and annoy
 With newer uncloying till thy senses bled.

His hand and mouth knew games to instal
 Desire that thy worn spine was hurt to follow.

[l. 69-73]

The marked internal rhyme and assonance here look to Tennyson and Eliot, while there are strong echoes of the sadomasochism and even cannibalism of Swinburne’s voice in “Anactoria” (1911: 58); another case of an apparent ‘co-authoring’ of Pessoa’s English work:

I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
 With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead
 [...]
 Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed
 To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!
 Ah that my mouth for Muses’ milk were fed
 On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!

[l. 23-24, 105-108]

Line 21 of Pessoa’s “Antinous” in fact varies between editions, the original 1918 publication “O glory of a wrong lust pillowed on” was altered when republished by Pessoa’s own publishing house in 1921 to “O complete regency of

lust throned on". Line 18 was also meanwhile changed from "a soiled art's variety" to "a live art's variety". The writing of a poem in English to be published in Portugal was already kin to non-publication; perhaps further textual alterations suggest that Pessoa used his English voices to articulate an otherwise overlooked impulse, one whose expression made him uncomfortable, for despite the extremity of Swinburne's text, these English Pessoaan voices go further still in exploring similar themes through homoeroticism.

Pessoa's "Epithalamium" (1993: 54-65; 2007: 228-254) also arrives at (and perhaps even surpasses) the explicitness of classical epithalamia of writers such as Catullus; arguably the one aspect in which, according to Bloomian criteria, Pessoa's English voices rival their literary forbears through exploration of sublimated eroticism:

Between her and the ceiling this day's ending
 A man's weight will be bending.
 Lo! with the thought her legs she twines, well knowing
 A hand will part them then;
 Fearing that entering in her, that allowing
 That will make softness begin rude at pain.

[IV]

The bridegroom aches for the end of this and lusts
 To know those paps in sucking gusts,
 To put his first hand on that belly's hair
 And feel for the lipped lair.

[XIV]

Pessoa's choice of English is not gratuitous then, but "a conscious strategy [...] to distance himself from [homo]sexual thematic, while at the same time maintaining intact the dense Pessoaan web of masks, personalities, languages, and heteronyms, where all ontological and sexual truths remain fleeting" (Arenas, quoted in Klobucka and Sabine, 2007: 117). If "definitions of genre can hardly be stated before they are falsified" (Fowler, 1985: 42), so bilingualism allows Pessoaan voices to embody this same immediate falsification of a fleetingly definable truth. No sooner has the sexual act been spoken, written (or performed), than the author is lost again; invisible, and inculpable.

Pessoa's own deep interest in questions of Shakespeare's sexuality could lie behind his selection of the English language as a means of expressing this particular aspect: "nem podemos separar na personalidade [de] Shakespeare a intuição dramática de, por ex[emplo], a inversão sexual" (Pessoa 1967b: 134; BNP/E3, 19-15a^r).¹⁶ One of his Portuguese heteronyms – Campos – accused another – Reis – of employing difficult syntax to cast a "veu de pudor" over alleged

¹⁶ For further discussion of this see Castro (2013) and forthcoming (2014).

homosexual content in his Ode XII, an argument based upon one single masculine ending supposedly referring to a female lover;

[...] Se te colher avaro
A mão da infausta sphyngue [...]

[l. 5-6]

maintaining that “é dirigida a um rapaz, pois poucos ha [...] que reparam no pequeno ‘o’ que define a coisa” (Pessoa, 2013b: 498; BNP/E3, 71A-34^r).¹⁷ This naturally stemmed from the impossibility in Portuguese to evade gender attribution. Indeed in an ideal universal language Pessoa argued that “nouns would have no grammatical gender, [as] gender, unless it means sex, is an absurdity, and when the noun indicates sex it is a superfluity” (Pessoa 1997a: 128; BNP/E3, 123A-42^r). Thus, English could prove the perfect language in which to explore questions of gender and sexuality, not just because of its geopolitical remoteness, or cultural links with Shakespeare and other writers, but also because the language intrinsically denies explicitly binary gender discourse. The ambiguity throughout Shakespeare’s sonnets of a ‘master-mistress’ figure, or of Joyce’s ‘womanly-man’, can thus be created in English in Pessoa’s “Antinous” (1993: 41; 2007: 192) as it never could be achieved in Portuguese:

O bare female male-body such
As a god’s likeness to humanity!

[l. 15-16]

Pessoa started his English poetic career just as Shakespeare did: with two sexual narrative poems (“Antinous” and “Epithalamium”; “Venus and Adonis” and “The Rape of Lucrece”), but perhaps here he finally exceeded his literary father, with “harsh, brutal, and crude” visions of love, lust and violence “outdoing even the Elizabethans” (Monteiro, in Klobucka and Sabine, 2007: 139), and with a homoerotic explicitness that even “Pessoa’s post-Wilde English counterparts [would] scarcely [have] dared” (Mager, in Haggerty, 2000: 681). By contrast, any hint of the sexually deviant in Portuguese was at best implied, and never orthonymic, but instead relegated to Álvaro de Campos or disguised by a “veu de pudor”, and thus kept at a safe arm’s length. Perhaps then, “Antinous” should be read as “the textual meeting point of distinct Anglophone and Portuguese sexual and aesthetic conventions and conceptions” (Klobucka and Sabine, 2007:24); with elements of the Portuguese poet(s) being expressed and challenging hetero-normative discourse through the English language.

¹⁷ Cf. Fernando Pessoa, “As figuras de amadas, que aliás não existem como figuras” (in Lopes, 1990: II, 475). See also discussion in Castro (2010: 136-137).

Questions of his own sexual identity and how best to express, appropriate or even sublimate it clearly troubled Pessoa; forewarned that Portuguese critic Gaspar Simões wanted to read the homoerotic elegy “Antinous” in its original English, he accompanied the requested booklet with a pre-emptive justification for the obscenity:

Ha em cada um de nós, por pouco que [se] especialize instintivamente na obscenidade, um certo elemento d’esta ordem, cuja quantidade, evidentemente, varia de homem para homem. Como esses elementos, por pequeno que seja o grau em que existem, são um certo estorvo para alguns processos mentais superiores, decidi, por duas vezes, eliminá-los pelo processo simples de os exprimir intensamente.

(Pessoa, 1998: 137) [Letter to João Gaspar Simões, 18 Nov. 1930]

Freud’s essay on the sublimation and origins of homosexuality in exceptional artists, *Un souvenir d’enfance de Leonard de Vinci* [*Leonardo da Vinci and the Memory of his Childhood*], was the only one of Freud’s books to be found in Pessoa’s personal library, with the sentence “froid éloignement de toute sexualité” underlined (p. 28). Nonetheless, despite his own apparent personal struggle with sexuality as a natural extension of identity, it was on this level and this level alone that Pessoa ‘surpassed his literary forbears’ in the English language and truly went a step further in self-exploration. He seems even to have come to accept male homosexual proclivities as an evil “necessary for the realization of the highest intellectual and creative ambitions” (Klobucka and Sabine, 2007: 22), as in the case of Shakespeare:

[...] o representante supremo do typo maximo masculino, o do homem cheio de interesses e atenções para tantas cousas da vida, que não pode gastar tempo na caça ao prazer sexual normal, e porisso o substitue pelo prazer sexual dado pela amizade com outros homens levada ao requinte.

(in Lopes, 1990: II, 480;
complete in Barreto, 2011: 127; BNP/E3, 55-38^r)

Perhaps then, this aspect of Pessoa’s English poetry represents an Id, subjugated by the Portuguese voices of the Ego, while language further masks any uniform Pessoaan poetic enterprise.

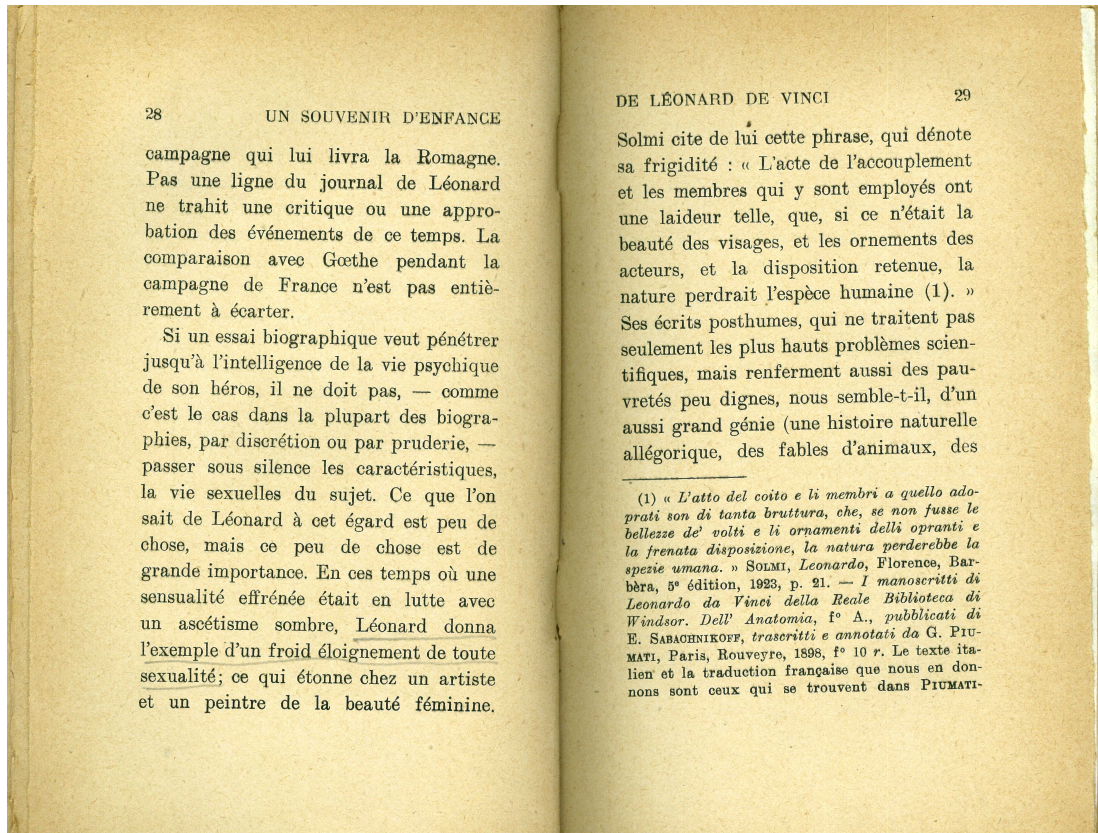


Fig. 2. Casa Fernando Pessoa, 1-50.

Un souvenir d'enfance de Leonard de Vinci by Sigmund Freud.

<http://casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt/bdigital/1-50>

Multilingualism and Diluting Personality

The sexual aspect of 'modern' identity and ontological crisis set aside though, the apex of Pessoa's art as an innovative poet (according to Bloomian criteria), whose strength and credibility stemmed from having surpassed his literary forbears, came firmly in Portuguese; a language in which the Bloomian model seems to apply for Pessoa in a way it never does in English. Having cleared the way for himself with the announcement of "o próximo aparecer de um supra-Camões na nossa terra" (Pessoa, 1980: 15), Pessoa whole-heartedly set about an exploration of 'modernist' ideas and the questioning of reality, identity and truth through the Portuguese language and the development of his heteronymic personae, describing it as "precisamente este detalhe que marca a completa analogia da actual corrente literária portuguesa com aquelas, francesa e inglesa, onde o nosso raciocínio descobriu o acompanhamento literário das grandes épocas criadoras" (Pessoa, 1980: 15).

Alongside the works of Nietzsche, Freud, and Kierkegaard, Kafka, Proust and Joyce, Pessoa's works explore the complex internal contradictions of human personality, and challenge positivist assumptions of a unitary and stable being which could be subjected to rational analysis and explication: "As duas origens do

erro são atribuir ao Objecto, á Realidade, 1º os attributos do Sujeito, da Consciencia, 2º os attributos da Relação” (Pessoa 1968: II, 11; BNP/E3, 24-2^r). With new avant-garde innovations in style and structure, Pessoa accompanied other so-called ‘modernist’ artists in charting a new age of increased industrialisation; one in which all seeming certainties were cast into doubt, and art highlighted the fin-de-siècle neuroses, anxieties and complexities of modern life. Through distinctive self-division across languages, Pessoa’s poetic voices meanwhile remained at the forefront of their art, sharing concepts with and surpassing other prolific writers working within the shared intellectual space of ‘modernism’. The difference between Pessoaan voices and the masks or personae of contemporaries like Pound, Yeats and Eliot “is one of degree rather than kind” (Castro, 2009: 145); Pessoa’s work forms a radical evolution of their enterprise across languages:

Não sei quantas almas tenho.
Cada momento mudei.
Continuamente me extranho.
Nunca me vi nem achei.

(Pessoa, 2001: 197; BNP/E3, 60A-29^r)
[l. 1-4, “Não sei quantas almas tenho”]

The true mask feels no inside to the mask
But looks out of the mask by co-masked eyes.

(Pessoa, 1993: 70; 2007: 160) [l. 5-6, “Sonnet VIII”]

Pessoa the Portuguese poet(s) not only reflected “the growing discussions of the unstable human psyche which developed through the influence of Freud and others during his lifetime” (Frier, 2012: 2), but single-handedly (once again it proves difficult to escape rhetoric which asserts a single selfhood) took this modernist enterprise to new extremes, foreshadowing some of the concepts which would take hold in Post-Modernism and Post-Structuralism, whilst embodying Joyce’s proposal “if we were all suddenly somebody else” (Joyce, quoted in Campbell 1992: 166).

This self-division across voices and languages reversed the Romantic outward gaze on the world to become an inward gaze on the self, and an ontological recognition of one’s own alienation from oneself:

Por isso, alheio, vou lendo
Como paginas, meu ser.

(Pessoa, 2001: 197; BNP/E3, 60A-29^r)
[l. 17-18, “Não sei quantas almas tenho”]

Se me pedissem que explicasse o que é este meu estado de alma, atravez de uma razão social, eu responderia mudamente apontando para um espelho [...]

(Pessoa, 1982: II, 449; 2010: I, 123; BNP/E3, 7-3^r)

Depuz a mascara e vi-me ao espelho...

(Pessoa, 2013b: 304; BNP/E3, 69-25^r)

Partiu-se o espelho magico em que me revia identico,
E em cada fragmento fatidico vejo só um bocado de mim –
Um bocado de ti e de mim!...

(Pessoa, 2013b: 186) [l. 26-27, “Lisbon Revisited (1926)”]

This lack of one distinct ‘self’ leaves work open to constant reappraisal and participation of the reader, for the guiding voice of a singular creative entity or poet from whom the poem derives is absent. Instead, the reader is faced with a multi-authored creation, with which he must collaborate to access a text of multiple meanings with shifting foci, inevitably leading to a crisis of textual and ontological meaning:

Que cada pensamento
Me torna já diverso.

E como são estilhaços
Do ser, as coisas dispersas
Quebro a alma em pedaços
E em pessoa diversas.

[...]

Quem se crê proprio erra
Sou vario e não sou meu.

(Pessoa, 2001: 199-200; BNP/E3, 120-38)

[l. 11-16, 23-24, “Deixo ao cego e ao surdo”]

In the case of Álvaro de Campos’s “Psychetypia”, only a bilingual reader in turn will be able to access the text in its entirety to follow the interior dialogue across languages:

Respondo fielmente à tua conversa por cima da mesa...

“It was very strange, wasn’t it?”

“Awfully strange. And how did it end?”

“Well, it didn’t end. It never does, you know.”

Sim, *you know*... Eu sei...

Sim, eu sei...

É o mal dos símbolos, *you know*.

Yes, *I know*.

Conversa perfeitamente natural... Mas os symbolos?

(Pessoa, 2013b: 287; BNP/E3, 70-56^r) [l. 17-25]

A continual questioning of reality, identity and truth through Pessoa’s artistic insincerity and a “continual extinction of personality” (Eliot, 1921: 47) thus forces the reader to confront ideas later explored by schools of existential and reader-response criticism, by the likes of Sartre, Foucault and Barthes “Sentir? Sinta quem

lê!" (Pessoa, 1967a: 238) [l. 15, "Isto"]; "Morto o autor destes poemas, e deixados eles ao abandono" (Pessoa 1966b: 334). Here, Pessoa's voices or personae take us to a new stage of self-questioning, and the 'modernist' ideologies which Pessoa accessed through his wide reading are compounded, explored and developed in a labyrinth of Portuguese voices. Deep inside an empty room of mirror fragments, any organizing authorial consciousness remains concealed amidst fleeting images, shadows and voices, divided between selves and between languages, allowing Pessoa both to be and not to be:

Neste mundo em que esquecemos
Somos sombras de quem somos
E os gestos reaes que temos
No mundo em que almas vivemos
São aqui esgares de gnomos –

(Pessoa, 2000: 68; BNP/E3, 118-35^r)
[l. 1-5, "Neste mundo em que esquecemos"]

The mirror, of course, once invented, made it impossible to return to the innocence of not being able to see one's own face, and so it is with Pessoa; his poetic voices remain so fragmented between cultures, languages and concepts, that any fleeting 'real' voice is at once made extinct, or falsified:

Multipliquei-me para me sentir
Para me sentir, precisei sentir tudo
Transbordei, não fiz senão extravasar-me
Despi-me entreguei-me
E ha em cada canto da minha alma um altar a um deus diferente.

(Pessoa, 2013b: 136; BNP/E3, 70-15)
[l. 40-44, "Sentir tudo de todas as maneiras..."]

Just as Kierkegaard succeeded in distancing himself from 'himself' – "in the pseudonymous works, there is not a single word which is mine. I have no opinion about these works except as a 3rd person, no knowledge of their meaning, except as a reader" (Kierkegaard, 1846, quoted in Poole, 1993: 162) – Pessoa achieves immortality insofar as he never quite existed (something which his chosen names, in all languages, ironically point to: Pessoa, Search, Anon, Pas).

This is, of course, why Pessoa fails to stand up against Bloom's criteria for a 'great writer'; he opposes any stable or unified subjectivity by diluting himself and paradoxically strengthening himself simultaneously. Arguably however, it is Bloom's criteria that fail to stand up against Pessoa's voices. There is no room in his model for 'innovative' poetry through 'imitation', as in the case of much parody in early-modern poetry, or indeed, for Jameson's notion of the postmodern 'pastiche', defined as "the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language" (Jameson, 1991: 17). The point of

comparison to Pessoaan voices here is immediate and striking, and leads us to a more fluid reading of Pessoa than Bloom allows. Indeed, such intertextuality is hardly shocking: Derrida once remarked that “[i]f one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one’s concept from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*” (Derrida, 1978: 360). It is this very *bricolage*, at work in Pessoa, which ruptures Bloom’s vision of ‘innovation’, and which reinforces this particular project of ‘modernism’ considered here.

If “a complete life may be one ending in so full identification with the non-self that there is no self to die” (Berenson, quoted in Vieira, 1995: 115), Pessoa achieves this by splitting himself first into separate constituent poets (in English, French, and in Portuguese), and then further still between poetic voices amidst languages. Ultimately, Pessoa succeeds in being a constant ‘Other’:

Tudo se me evapora. A minha vida inteira, as minhas recordações, a minha imaginação e o que contém, a minha personalidade, tudo se me evapora. Continuamente sinto que fui outro, que senti outro, que pensei outro. Aquillo a que assisto é um espectáculo com outro cenário. E aquillo a que assisto sou eu.

(Pessoa, 1982: I, 21; 2010: I, 371-372;
BNP/E3, 2-76^r) [“Tudo se me evapora”]

Thus no one language could possibly suffice for this Pessoaan enterprise of deconstructing the self, for each language will inevitably be a “salient feature of the individual’s social cultural identity, while at the same time being a sociocultural marker of group membership in settings where cultures come into contact” (Hamers and Blanc, 2000: 117). While in English and Portuguese Pessoa was a singular case of bilingualism then, with neither language necessarily superseding the other, so too could neither be adequate, as his self-division itself depended upon the fluidity of language. In particular, many of his more distinctive traits were not carried across into English; a language whose intellectual inheritance seems at times to inhibit his more innovative voice(s), yet his English work and voices remain a crucial part of his innovative jigsaw puzzle.

Adrift between two languages and cultures, the Pessoaan voices are acutely aware of the limits of language and the inherent falseness of all statements: “two [languages] are the human limit for any man who is not born to suicide as a philologist of the useless”. Much as Joyce’s experimentations in hybridity reached an apex with the inclusion of all languages in the search for some universal essence of communication, Pessoaan voices too searched for some deeper, intrinsic quality to ‘language’ to convey the internal where no existent language sufficed: “If we are to have a natural universal language, that language should be English [...] If we are to have an artificial universal language, then it will still have to be devised” (Pessoa 1997a: 114; BNP/E3, 123A-40^v).

Darby M'Graw-aw-aw-aw-aw!
 Darby M'Graw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw!
 Fetch a-a-aft the ru-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u, Darby!

Eia, que vida essa! essa era a vida, eia!
 Eh-eh eh eh-eh-eh-eh!
 Eh-lahô-lahô!-laHO-lahá-á-á-à-à!
 Eh-eh-eh-eh-eh-eh-eh!

(Pessoa, 2013b: 87) [l. 417-423, "Ode Marítima"]

The result of such linguistic experimentation was a Derridean reality of impersonality, by which Pessoaan voices participated in genres, languages, heteronyms, and even other authors' voices, without membership to them or contamination by them, leaving everything open in a cycle of endless self-contradiction (cf. Jackson, 2010).

Significantly, such internal contradictions were, according to Pessoa, inherently 'Portuguese' and thus found their best expression through his Portuguese voices:

O bom portuguez é varias pessoas
 [...]
 Nunca me sinto tão portuguezmente eu como quando me sinto diferente de mim – Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Alvaro de Campos, Fernando Pessoa, e quantos mais haja havidos ou por haver.

(Pessoa, 1966b: 94; BNP/E3, 20-69^r)

The fact that he considered himself more 'Portuguese' and felt more 'at home' in this language ("Minha pátria é a língua portuguesa", Pessoa, 1982: II, 17; 2010: II, 326) could explain why he cleared his own space, superseding Camões within the Portuguese national canon, yet felt unthreatened by Shakespeare or Baudelaire, whose significance lay within different national identities.

As innovative as his Portuguese voices might seem however, for Pessoa, his British past "was vital to the process out of which a new literary movement would emerge" (Sadlier, 1998: 42), and this tug of sensibilities between past, present and future can also be felt between languages and cultures, with the Portuguese poets often craning forward into the future, yet still tied to the English poets, glancing back. It is precisely this tension between multiple authorial voices (both internal and external) which makes his bilingual oeuvre so compelling, and which 'redeems' the English writing which, through uncritical application of Bloomian criteria, might otherwise be labelled as 'inferior'. Ultimately Pessoaan writing is multi-authored in both Portuguese and English, whether through conscious self-division into heteronyms, or through the manifestation of other canonical works within the texts. "die Poesie [ist] ein Gemeingut der Menschheit und [sie ist] überall und zu allen Zeiten in Hunderten und aber Hunderten von Menschen

hervortritt" (Goethe (Jan 31st, 1827, in Eckermann 1835),¹⁸ yet it is precisely this which has caused the Portuguese poet to be viewed as 'innovative' and the English poet as 'weak'. The deconstruction of selfhood in English is arguably fulfilled however, as the writing emerges as a ventriloquistic act and thus a true negation of personality, while the Portuguese writing only ever succeeds in a pretence of ventriloquism.

Final remarks

[If] bilinguals develop a 'metaconsciousness' to coordinate (Bakhtin might say orchestrate) alternative egopositions and to withstand shocks with more mechanisms than monolinguals deploy [...] How, for example, do you tell a defense mechanism from rhetorical devices used to create a dramatic or a comic effect?
(Sommer 2004: 19)

It is only through an understanding of Pessoa's bilingualism working within two separate (albeit overlapping) canons of influence that this deconstruction of personality can truly be appreciated; embodying a Bakhtinian ideology of 'speech-genres', in which all utterances will inevitably resound with the voices of others. "[T]he single utterance, with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a completely free combination" (Bakhtin 1984: 81). As we have seen, Pessoa's English work differs strikingly from much of his Portuguese output, and indeed, has too frequently been overlooked (whether by accident, a lack of readily available translations, or its consideration as 'weaker' material). Pizarro has recently revealed there might be as many as 1500 still unedited English texts in the Pessoa archives (Pizarro, 2012: 157-158). A growing interest in the many Anglophone influences manifested within Pessoa's works has led to stimulating new lines of thought regarding this hitherto largely ignored corpus of non-Portuguese writing however. Further investigation and inclusion of Pessoa's French material will also shed light on the arguments framed above, although it was not within the scope of this essay to do so comprehensively here. When we start to piece together the shattered mirror across heteronyms and, more importantly, across languages, we realise that any poetic enterprise at self-negation is made possible precisely by this heteroglossia and, by extension, this multiplicity of authorial voices. Evidently, English, French and Portuguese works will be equally crucial pieces of the puzzle, and indeed, when considered in the light of a modernist poetic enterprise in self-negation, the English voices ultimately assert themselves rather more convincingly than previously considered.

¹⁸ Eckermann (1868: 224), trans. Fuller (1839: 203-4): "Poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds of men".

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