

Uys Krige and the South African afterlife of Fernando Pessoa

Stefan Helgesson*

Keywords

Fernando Pessoa, Roy Campbell, Armand Guibert, Hubert Jennings, Uys Krige, Afrikaans, the world republic of letters

Abstract

Three letters to Hubert Jennings—two of them from the Afrikaans poet Uys Krige, one from the French poet Armand Guibert—prompt a reconsideration of the South African reception of Fernando Pessoa. Although this reception was and is clearly limited, Krige emerges here as a key individual connecting Jennings, Guibert, Roy Campbell and—by extension—Fernando Pessoa in a transnational literary network structured according to the logic of what Pascale Casanova has called “the world republic of letters” (*La République Mondiale des Lettres*). As such, however, this historical network has limited purchase on the contemporary concerns of South African literature. The letters alert us, thereby, not just to the inherent transnationalism of South African literature, but also to largely forgotten and, to some extent, compromised aspects of South African literary history.

Palavras-chave

Fernando Pessoa, Roy Campbell, Armand Guibert, Hubert Jennings, Uys Krige, Afrikaans, a república mundial das letras

Resumo

Três cartas a Hubert Jennings – duas delas do poeta afrikaans Uys Krige, uma do poeta francês Armand Guibert – incitam uma reconsideração da recepção de Fernando Pessoa na África do Sul. Embora essa recepção tenha sido e ainda seja claramente limitada, Krige aqui emerge como indivíduo chave a conectar Jennings, Guibert, Roy Campbell e – por extensão – Fernando Pessoa, numa rede transnacional estruturada segundo a lógica que Pascale Casanova nomeou “república mundial das letras” (*La République Mondiale des Lettres*). Como tal, porém, essa rede histórica tem recebido limitada atenção nas preocupações contemporâneas da literatura sul-africana. As cartas alertam-nos, pois, não só para o transnacionalismo da literatura sul-africana, mas também para aspectos grandemente esquecidos e, de certo modo, comprometidos da história literária da África do Sul.

* Stockholm University.

We have here three letters that allow us to glimpse the effective life of a remarkably extensive literary network. All deal with Fernando Pessoa in a roundabout way, and Hubert Jennings himself—as the addressee—is their absent centre. My focus in this brief comment will however be on Uys Krige. It is Krige’s voice we hear in two of these letters, and, more importantly, Krige is the one individual connecting Jennings, Roy Campbell, and Armand Guibert. In this way, the letters provide us with a partly new picture of the South African reception of Fernando Pessoa. As such, they alert us not just to the inherent transnationalism of South African letters, but also to largely forgotten and, to some extent, compromised aspects of South African literary history, the relevance of which in our present moment is far from self-evident. I will soon explain what I mean by that.

In a recent article, I claimed that Pessoa has had an extremely limited readership in South Africa, and mentioned Campbell, Jennings, Stephen Gray and Charles Beaumont Eglington as some of the select few who had brought Pessoa’s work to the attention of Anglophone readers in South Africa (HELGESSION, 2015). I have no reason to revise my assessment of the paucity of Pessoa-reception, but Krige’s letters show that his name should have been added to my list.

This is not so very surprising. Conventional literary historiography will tell us that Uys Krige (1910-1987) belonged to the *Dertigers* (the generation of the 1930s), a group of writers who revitalised and consolidated Afrikaans literature in the 1930s and subsequent decades (OLIVIER, 2012: 308-315). As a Creole derived from Dutch, Afrikaans only became standardised and accepted as a language in its own right around 1900. Following the defeat of the Boers in the second Anglo-Boer war, the language itself—and thereby, in Herderian fashion, the creation of an Afrikaans literature—became a rallying cause for Afrikaner nationalism, which reached its political apotheosis with the electoral victory for the Nationalist Party in 1948 and the subsequent dark half century of apartheid in South Africa.

The Dertigers were inevitably absorbed into this nationalistic endeavour, but adopted individually distinct attitudes towards the politics of *volksnasionisme*. N. P. van Wyk Louw (1906-1970), the intellectual leader of the Dertigers, developed during the apartheid era an increasingly ambiguous policy of “lojale verset”, or “loyal resistance”, as has been discussed by Mark Sanders (2003: 57-92). Uys Krige was always more sceptical of nationalism but also more marginal in the Dertigers group. Instead, he cultivated an atypical interest in the romance cultures, especially Spanish poetry, which is what enables his affinities with Roy Campbell (1901-1957), Armand Guibert and Pessoa.

Campbell, of course, is the renegade *cause célèbre* of Anglophone South African—and Durban-based—modernism. Together with William Plomer, he entered the literary scene as the driving force behind the short-lived journal *Voorslag* (“Whiplash”) in 1926. In the 1930s he enjoyed a short period of high

celebrity among London's literary society, the afterlife of which is evident from the roll call of contributors to the memorial volume mentioned by Krige. The problem—and this is a problem that implicates also Pessoa—is that Campbell disgraced himself politically (much like Ezra Pound) by veering towards fascism and becoming a vocal supporter of Franco and Salazar. Towards the end of his life, when he had settled in Portugal, he had even “begun to regard apartheid as a balm against the decline of the West” (CHAPMAN, 1996: 182). To say that some aspects of Pessoa's oeuvre—the rhetoric of imperial grandeur in *Mensagem*, for example—could be made to resonate with such sentiments is, I hope, not completely reductive, and deserves to be explored further by Pessoa critics. My point is not to moralise over Pessoa's poetry. It is rather that the often contradictory intersections between his poetry and an imperial (western) distribution of power can convey critical insights concerning, not least, the changing structure of what Pascale Casanova (1999) has called the world republic of letters.

As I mention in my previous article, Campbell is the first and strongest connection between Pessoa and South African literary circles. He had been to the same Durban school as Pessoa; he translated a number of Pessoa's poems; he wrote about Pessoa in his later prose works. Above all—let's give him his due—being such a gifted, erudite and linguistically versatile lyrical poet himself, Campbell was able to appreciate Pessoa precisely as a poet, through the medium of poetry. This, in turn, is how Krige connects with Campbell. In the letter from 1960, Krige alludes to an article published in *English Studies in Africa* in 1958, where he examines closely the qualities of some of Campbell's poems but skirts completely Campbell's politics.

One way of reading these three letters is to see how they afford a glimpse of a small, Europe-centred—and conspicuously male and white – literary culture in South Africa that would be swept away by the tidal wave of history. Paris, represented by Armand Guibert, still enjoys here the centrality that Casanova accords it, and Pessoa is largely mediated via this version of Paris. At the same time, the local names and institutions that are invoked in the letters – Jennings, Jack Cope, the publisher Balkema, Wits University—testify to a national public sphere that is inescapably marked by the racialised citizen-subject split (see MAMDANI, 1996) of apartheid society, which in colonial fashion privileges European and Europe-derived culture as the norm.

The narrative of South African literary history has always been fraught and fragmented, conceived as an archipelago (GRAY, 1979), a condition of mutual non-influence (VAN WYK SMITH, 1996) or as a seam (DE KOCK, 2001). The three letters in question issue from one of the islands in Gray's “archipelago” and hardly engage with the “seam”, in De Kock's sense, which is the local site of contestation and difference—other than the gap between the English and the Afrikaners, in respect of which the letters show that Krige clearly was a bridge-builder. (Although

Guibert's postscriptum is a striking indication of another, African literary domain in the making.)

The letters resonate instead most powerfully with Van Wyk Smith's unhappy notion of non-influence. They confront us with a past that closes in on itself, at least when viewed from a contemporary South African vantage point. If we want to see where Pessoa's poetry might conceivably connect with a lyrical voice and a literary scene that is relevant also in the post-apartheid present, we should focus on the moment of Krige's second letter, i. e. 1973, and on the singular work of a poet who isn't mentioned here, Wopko Jensma. As a bilingual (Afrikaans and English) avant-garde poet whose work engaged in striking and unprecedented ways with the conflictual nature of South African society, he worked in a lyrical register far removed from Krige or Campbell. It is not evident that Jensma had read Pessoa—but it is clearly possible, given his sojourns in Mozambique, his knowledge of Portuguese, his friendship with the erudite Mozambican modernist Rui Knopfli and his familiarity with Brazilian modernist poetry (GRAY, 2014). It is also the case that the ventriloquising practice of Jensma's poetry, in which the speaking subject is frequently split as well as multiplied, bears an affinity with, if not necessarily the influence of, Pessoaan heteronymism.¹

I need to be clear about what I am saying here: connecting Jensma with Pessoa is speculation and lies beyond the purview of the three letters. Still, it should be seen as an invitation to continue exploring the afterlife of Pessoa in Southern Africa. More obvious cases to be investigated would be Charles Beaumont Eglinton (as I have discussed elsewhere), Breyten Breytenbach² and Douglas Livingstone. What Jensma enables, perhaps, is a bridge between the lyrical universe of Pessoa and more contemporary concerns of South African writers.

¹ See for example the traversing "I" in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (JENSMA, 1977).

² The author thanks Louise Viljoen for drawing Breytenbach to his attention.

Bibliography

- BELL, Aubrey F. G. & VIDIGAL, B. (Editors). (1952). *The Oxford Book of Portuguese Verse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CAMPBELL, Roy (1960). *The Collected Poems of Roy Campbell*, Vol. III. London: The Bodley Head.
- ____ (1957). *Portugal*. London: Max Reinhardt.
- CASANOVA, Pascale (1999). *La République Mondiale des Lettres*. Paris: Seuil.
- CHAPMAN, Michael (1996). *Southern African Literatures*. London: Longman.
- COPE, Jack (1960). *The Tame Ox: Stories*. London: Heinemann.
- DE KOCK, Leon (2001). "South Africa in the Global Imaginary: An Introduction", in *Poetics Today*, pp. 263-298.
- GRAY, Stephen (2014). "Losing His Head: The Poetry of Wopko Jensma and His Reputation", in *Current Writing*, pp. 29-40.
- ____ (1979). *Southern African Literature: An Introduction*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- HELGESSION, Stefan (2015). "Pessoa, Anon and the Natal Colony: Retracing an Imperial Matrix", in *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, pp. 30-46.
- JENSMA, Wopko (1977). *I Must Show You My Clippings*. Johannesburg: Ravan.
- KRIGE, Uys (1966). *Ballade van die groot Begeer en ander gedigte*. Kaapstad (Cape Town): Human & Rousseau.
- MAMDANI, Mahmood (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- OLIVIER, Gerrit (2012). "The Dertigers and the *Plaasroman*: Two Brief Perspectives on Afrikaans Literature", in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*. D. Attridge and D. Attwell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 308-324.
- SANDERS, Mark (2002). *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- SIMÕES, João Gaspar (1950). *Vida e Obra de Fernando Pessoa - História Duma Geração*: Vol. 1, Infância e Adolescência; Vol. 2, Maturidade e Morte. Amadora: Bertrand.
- VAN WYK SMITH, Malvern (1990). "White Writing / Writing Black: the Anxiety of Non-Influence", in *Re-Thinking South African Literary History*. J. A. Smit, J. van Wyk and J-P. Wade, Durban: Y Press, pp. 72-83.

Documents

I. Unpublished. Twelve numbered pages (six leaves written on both sides) of a letter handwritten by Uys Krige and sent to Hubert Jennings, found inside the folder "F— FAMILY HISTORY/Correspondence etc." in the Jennings literary estate (re-filed by us under "L—Letters"). Dated October 24th, 1960.

24/10/60 ²¹
 Sea-Point,
 Beyond Beach,
 Clifton - Cape Town.
 Dear Mr. Jennings,
 I was delighted to
 receive your letter of
 September 16. Please forgive
 this delay - but I've been
 caught up in a wel-
 of lectures, talks & other
 commitments. I am glad
 you liked my article
 on Roy Campbell.

²¹
 as much of it as
 you like. It was translated
 into French and appeared
 in a book in memory
 of Roy, Hommage à
Roy Campbell, which
 appeared in France
^{towards the end of}
 1958 x Hommage
 contains a number of
 articles & essays on Roy
 by leading French
 & English poets &

³⁷
 poets — including such
 people as Richard Aldington,
 Lawrence Durrell, Alan
 Paton, Edith Sitwell,
 Wyndham Lewis etc.
 There was also in the
 same year a smaller
 book in Spanish,
HOMENAJE A Roy Campbell,
 also dedicated to
 the work & life of
 our friend.

⁴¹
 when the French poet,
 Armand GUIBERT, was
 here in 1946 he & I
 tried our best to contact
 people who had known
 the famous poet, Pessoa,
 when he was still a
 school boy in Durban.
 We asked for information
 in several newspapers
 but there was no
 reply. While lecturing

at the ⁵¹ MIT ⁵²waterland
 University in 1956 I
 met there a certain Dr
 — (I have forgotten
 his name) but he is
 in charge of the
 Portuguese section of
 the MITs University
 donated by the
 Oppenheimer family.
 He gave me a biography
 of Pessoa in 2 volumes

which had ⁶¹ recently ⁶²
 appeared in Lisbon. I had it
 in my possession for
 some time — and then
 sent it back to Dr —
 I think you would be
 able to get it from
 him. But can you read
 Portuguese?
 Pessoa's fame is
 spreading all the time.
 When I was in Paris

in November of last
 year ARMAND ⁷¹ ~~Guibert~~
 GUIBERT ⁷² told me he had
 become the great authority
 on Pessoa in France,
 lecturing on him
 frequently & giving
 a whole series of talks
 on his work & life
 over the French radio,
 writing for various
 French journals on

him, etc. etc. They had
 even had ⁸¹ ~~special~~
 Pessoa evenings in Paris.
 — and a ~~new~~ volume
 of Pessoa's poems translated
 into French was about
 to be published by
 a leading Parisian
éditeur. Armand's
 address is:
 80 QUAI ~~de~~ D'ANJOU
 ILE SAINT LOUIS,
 PARIS

9) 9) Comrade,
 You could write to him.
 He is an old friend.
 And speaks & writes fluent
 English. Was at Cambridge.
 Just mention my name.
 In the recent Oxford
Book of Portuguese Verse
 Pessoa's contribution
 is only second in
 length to the one
 of the greatest epic
 poets in literature,

10) 10)
 Luis de Camoes.
 Of course, in his prose
 work, Portugal, he writes about
 Pessoa. My sister spoke about
 Bill Payne to me - so I was
 glad to get his article. May
 I keep the 2 papers on Pessoa
 a little longer? Want to
 read them again.
 If you liked my translations
 you might be interested
 in my new book of verse,
Ballade van die Good
Reger which has just

11) 11)
 been published by
 Belkema in Cape Town.
 Your library should
 have it. It contains
 about 25 "Coloured"
 poems. The best of such
 with your story of
 the Durban High School.
 Lach Lofe was also a
 scholar there. We
 share a language.

12) 12)
 Have you read her new book
 of short stories, The Tame Ox?
 I consider it one of the
 very best collections of short
 stories by a P. African.
 I think there should certainly
 be a mention of him in your
 "her long" since I am confident
 Lach will be going from
 strength to strength.
 alles van die
 penne
 Ulys Krige
 I am not quite sure of Lach's address. The
 go woman me. Will get her address from a mutual friend.

24/10/60

Sea-Point,
Second Beach
Clifton – Cape Town

Dear Mr. Jennings,

I was delighted to receive your letter of September 16. Please forgive this delay—but I've been caught up in a web of lectures, talks & other commitments. I am glad you liked my article on Roy Campbell. [2] Use as much of it as you like. It was translated into French and appeared in a book in memory of Roy, *Hommage à Roy Campbell*, which appeared in France <in> [↑ towards the end of] 1958. *Hommage* contains a number of articles & essays on Roy by leading French & English poets & [3] writers – including such people as Richard Aldington, Lawrence Dürrell, Alan Paton, Edith³ Sitwell, Wyndham Lewis etc. There was also in the same year a smaller book in Spanish, *HOMENAJE a Roy Campbell*, also dedicated to the work & life of our friend.

[4] When the French poet, Armand GUIBERT, was here in 1946 he & I tried our best to contact people who had known the famous poet, Pessoa, when he was still a school boy in Durban. We asked for information in several newspapers but there was no reply. While lecturing [5] at the Witwatersrand University in 1956 I met there a certain Dr □⁴ (I have forgotten his name) but he is in charge of the Portuguese section of the Wits University donated by the Oppenheimer family. He gave me a biography of Pessoa in 2 volumes [6] which had [↑ recently] appeared in Lisbon⁵. I had it in my possession for some time—and then sent it back to Wits—I think you would be able to get it from him. But can you read Portuguese?

Pessoa's fame is spreading all the time. When I was in Paris [7] in November of last year ARMAND <Guibert> GUIBERT told me [↑ he] had become the great authority on Pessoa in France, lecturing on him frequently & giving a whole series of talks on his work & life over the French radio, writing for various French journals on [8] him, etc. etc. They had even had [↑ several] special Pessoa evenings in Paris—and a <new> volume of Pessoa's poems translated into French was about to be published by a leading Parisian *editeur*. Armand's address is:

80 QUAI <*d>D'ANJOU
ILE SAINT LOUIS
PARIS

³ "Édith" in the letter, with a French stress, although the poetess was British.

⁴ We were not able to identify the professor of Portuguese mentioned by Krige.

⁵ SIMÕES, João Gaspar (1950). *Vida e Obra de Fernando Pessoa - História Duma Geração*: Vol. 1, Infância e Adolescência; Vol. 2, Maturidade e Morte. Amadora: Bertrand.

[9] You could write to <him> [↑ Armand]. He is an old friend. And speaks & writes fluent English, was at Cambridge. Just mention my name.

In the recent *Oxford Book of Portuguese Verse*⁶ Pessoa's contribution is only second in length to <th> one of the greatest epic poets in literature, [10] Luis de Camões.

Of course, in Roy's prose work, *Portugal*⁷, he writes about Pessoa. Roy often spoke about Bill Payn⁸ to me—so I was glad to get his article. May I keep the 2 papers on Pessoa a little longer? Want to read them again.

If you liked my *Klopsdans*⁹, you might be interested in my new book of verse, *Ballade van die Groot Begeer*¹⁰ which has just [11] been published by *Balkema* in Cape Town. Your library should have it ... It contains about 25 <co> "Coloured" poems.

The best of luck with your story of the *Durban High School*. Jack Cope was also a scholar there. We share a bungalow. [12] Have you read his new book of short stories, *The Tame Ox*¹¹? I consider it one of the very best collections of short stories by a S. African. I think there should certainly be a mention of him in your "history", since I am confident Jack will be going from strength to strength

alles van die beste

Yours,



I am not sure of Armand's address. That so worries me. Will get his address from a mutual friend, [→ the French consul, here, over the week-end.]

⁶ BELL, Aubrey F. G. & VIDIGAL, B. (Editors). (1952). *The Oxford Book of Portuguese Verse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷ CAMPBELL, Roy (1957). *Portugal*. London: Max Reinhardt.

⁸ Bill Payn was a well-loved headmaster of the Durban High School, as chronicles Hubert Jennings in the chapter 20 of the book *The D.H.S. Story* (Durban: The Durban High School & Old Boy's Memorial Trust, 1966, pp. 195-209), a book which is dedicated "To Bill."

⁹ A poem by Krige dedicated to the dance of the Klopse ("clubs" in Afrikaans), which takes place annually on January 2nd, in Cape Town, South Africa; the poem was published in *Ballade van die groot Begeer en ander gedigte*, pp. 64-68 (see note #9).

¹⁰ KRIGE, Uys (1966). *Ballade van die groot Begeer en ander gedigte*. Kaapstad (Cape Town): Human & Rousseau.

¹¹ COPE, Jack (1960). *The Tame Ox: Stories*. London: Heinemann.

II. Unpublished. Two pages (one leaf typed on both sides, with handwritten signature and postscriptum) of a letter from Armand Guibert to Hubert Jennings, found inside the folder "F—FAMILY HISTORY/Correspondence etc." in the Jennings literary estate (re-filed by us under "L—Letters". Dated March 16th, 1961.

Armand Guibert
 as if from : 5, Quai d'Anjou
 Paris-4^e
 France

16 March '61
 I 79

Dear Mr Jennings,

In spite of a very poor health and the terrific burden of correspondence I have to face, I am only too pleased, as a personal friend of the late Roy Campbell and Uys Krige, to answer your query about Fernando Pessoa - only regretting that lack of time should prevent me from tackling such a vast subject with the accuracy it calls for.

It is a pity you cannot read Portuguese - otherwise I should have directed you to Mr. João Gaspar Simões's book : VIDA E OBRA DE FERNANDO PESSOA, 2 vol., Livraria Bertrand, Lisbon, in which you could have found (Vol. I, pp. 47-54 and 63-70) valuable particulars of young Pessoa's early years in Durban.

It appears to me, though, that you are in a better position than anybody else in Europe to apply locally to the respective Registrars of the hereafter schools : West Street Convent School - that was run in the late nineties by a community of Irish nuns ; Durban High School ; and Durban Commercial School. You may be fortunate enough to be shown the records of Pessoa's achievements - which I was unable to secure when I visited Durban in 1946. I understand that one Mr Ormond, who was young Fernando's contemporary, may be still alive, but I don't know either his Christian name or address.

In Lisbon's F.P.'s half-sister's home I remember seeing the various prize-books won by F.P. when he studied at the Durban High School - among which the Queen Victoria Memorial Award. Incidentally, I have never been able to make out whether Fernando Pessoa ever actually attended the Cape University - which, owing to the age of 17 at which he left South Africa - I am disinclined to think he ever did.

Apart from Roy Campbell's few translations you have seen - presumably in his book PORTUGAL, The Bodley Head, two introductory pages 156-157 and four poems, two of which were reprinted in his COLLECTED POEMS, Vol. III - I do not know of any other English translation of F.P. Mrs Mary Campbell - Roy's widow - Casa da Serra, Linho, Sintra, Portugal, may be of greater help to you in this particular field : I seem to remember she is on friendly terms with an old teacher of the British Council in Portugal whose name I forget, who may have done some further translation work.

-2-

As regards the French language, it so happens that I know everything that has been done for the furtherance of Pessoa's fame - which ~~is~~ is entirely ascribable to my humble self. In the last few years, apart from a dozen lectures delivered on the topic - in Nice, Strasbourg, et and, only last month, at the "Collège Philosophique" - and various broadcasts, I have published quite a good many poems of Pessoa's penmanship in literary weeklies and monthlies, in addition to the following books :

ODE MARITIME (Editions Seghers, 228, Boulevard Raspail Paris - 14)

BUREAU DE TABAC (Ed. Caracteres) - out of print.

ODE TRIOMPHALE (Ed P.J.Oswald, 13, Rue Charles V, Paris

LE GARDEUR DE TROUPEAUX (Ed. Gallimard, 5, Rue Sébastien Bottin, Paris-7)

and

Armand Guibert : FERNANDO PESSOA (Ed. Seghers), this being an essay - biographical and critical - followed by a selection of F.P.'s poetical work.

Let me add that each of the above includes an introduction or preface. Having given away all the copies at my disposal, the only one I have pleasure in forwarding to you this day is the ODE TRIOMPHALE, a comparatively small but not unimportant collection of texts.

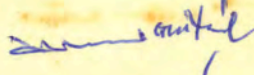
Last November I set up a so-called "Fernando P. week" which seems to have created quite a sensation : over 100 articles came out in the press and a score of broadcasts - to say nothing of the batches of letters I got from every quarter. An authorisation to translate has been asked by the Blind People's Association, and from Italy, Germany, Sweden and Bulgaria.

But I am trying to break away from a work which has proved as overwhelming as it was engrossing and I am now engaged in quite a different book.

Trusting this scanty information may be of some help to you,

I am

Yours sincerely



P.S. I shall be to-morrow, for a month or more, in your continent - where my address will be
 c/o President SENATOR
 Palais de la République
 DAKARA Sen

Armand Guibert
 as if from: 5, Quai d'Anjou
 Paris – 4^e
 France

16 March '61
 [→ I 79]

Dear Mr Jennings,

In spite of a very poor health and the terrific burden of correspondence I have to face, I am only too pleased, as a personal friend of the late Roy Campbell and Uys Krige, to answer your query about Fernando Pessoa—only regretting that lack of time should prevent me from tackling such a vast subject with the accuracy it calls for.

It is a pity you cannot read Portuguese—otherwise I should have directed you to João Gaspar Simões's book: *VIDA E OBRA DE FERNANDO PESSOA*, 2 vol., Livraria Bertrand, Lisbon¹², in which you could have found (Vol. 1, pp. 47-54 and 63-70) valuable particulars of young Pessoa's early years in Durban.

It appears to me, though, that you are in a better position than anybody else in Europe to apply locally to the respective Registrars of the hereafter schools: West Street Convent School—that was run in the late nineties by a community of Irish nuns; Durban High School; and Durban Commercial School. You may be fortunate enough to be shown the records of Pessoa's achievements—which I was unable to secure when I visited Durban in 1946. I understand that one Mr Ormond, who was young Fernando's contemporary, may be still alive, but I don't know either his Christian name or address.

In Lisbon's F.P.'s half-sister's home I remember seeing the various prize-books won by F. P. when he studied at the Durban High School—among which the Queen Victoria Memorial Award. Incidentally, I have never been able to make out whether Fernando Pessoa ever *actually* attended the Cape University—which, owing to the age of 17 at which he left South Africa—I am disinclined to think he ever did.

Apart from Roy Campbell's few translations you have seen – presumably in his book *PORTUGAL*¹³, The Bodley Head, two introductory pages 156-157 and four poems, two of which were reprinted in his *COLLECTED POEMS*, Vol. III¹⁴—I do not know of any other English translation of F.P. Mrs Mary Campbell – Roy's widow—Casa da Serra, Linhó, Sintra, Portugal, may be of greater help to you in this particular field: I seem to remember she is on friendly terms with an old

¹² See note #5.

¹³ See note #7; Guibert indicates the publishing house of the complete works of Campbell.

¹⁴ CAMPBELL, Roy (1960). *The Collected Poems of Roy Campbell*, Vol. III. London: The Bodley Head.

teacher of the British council in Portugal whose name I forget, who may <lo>/ha\ve done some further translation work.

[2] As regards the French language, it so happens that I know everything that h<o>/a\s been done for the furtherance of Pessoa's fame—which is entirely¹⁵ ascribable t[o] my humble self. In the last few years, apart from a doze[n] lectures delivered on the topic—in Nice, Strasbourg, et[c.], and, only last month, at the “Collège Philosophique” —and various broadcasts, I have published a good many poems of <F>/P\essoa's penmanship in literary weeklies and monthlies, in addition to the following books:

ODE MARITIME (Editions Seghers, 228, Boulevard Raspail, Paris—14)

BUREAU DE TABAC (Ed. Caracteres) —out of print.

ODE TRIOMPHALE (Ed P. J. Oswald, 13, Rue Charles V, Paris[])

LE GARDEUR DE TROUPEAUX (E. Gallimard, 5, Rue Sébastie[n] Bottin, Paris—7)

and

Armand Guibert: *FERNANDO PESSOA* (Ed. Seghers), this being an essay—biographical and critical—followed by a selection of F.P.'s poetical work.

Let me add that each of the above includes an intr[o]duction or preface. Having given away all the copies at my disposal, the only one I have pleasure in forwarding to you this day i<d>/s\ the *ODE TRIOMPHALE*, a comparatively small but not unimportant collection of texts.

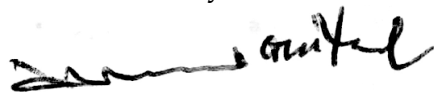
Last November I set up a so-called *Fernando P. week* which seems to have created quite a sensation: over 100 articles came out in the press and a score of broa[d]cast[→s]—to say nothing of the batches of lett<r>ers I got from every quarter. An authorisation to translate has been asked by the Blind People's Association, and from Italy, Germany, Sweden and Bulgaria.

But I am trying to break away from work whic[→h] has proved as overwhelming as it was engrossing and I am now engaged in quite a different book.

Trusting this scanty information may be of some help to you,

I am

Yours sincerely,



PS. I shall be tomorrow, for a month or [so, on] your continent, where my address will [be]

c/o President SENGHOR

Palais de la République

DAKAR [S]éne[gal]

¹⁵ “enterely” in the manuscript, as a typo.

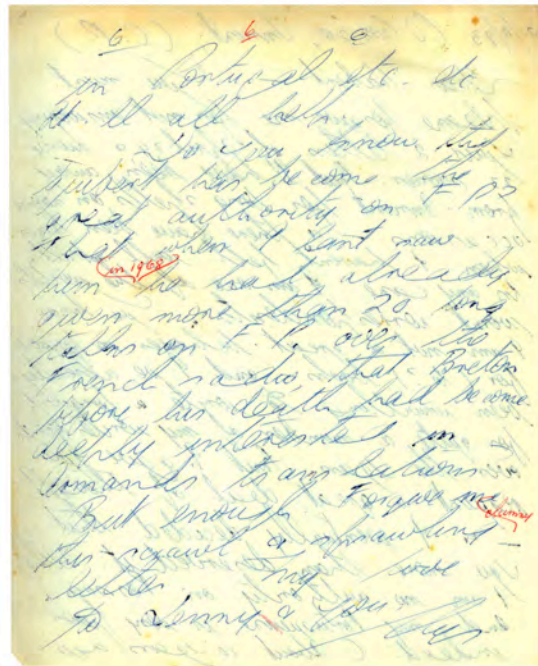
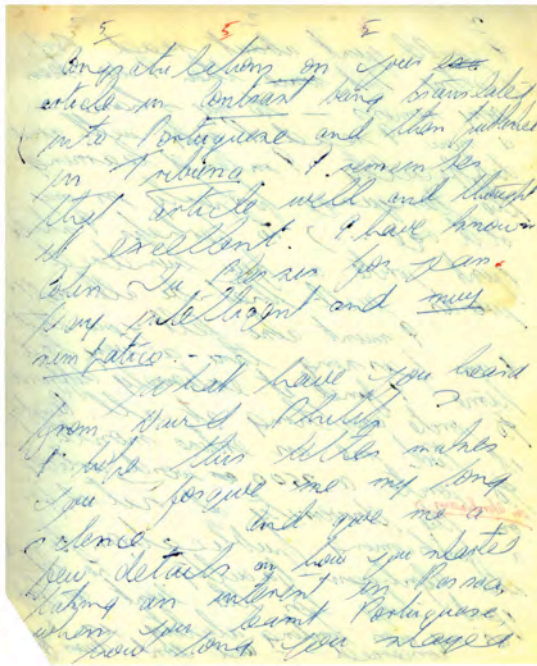
III. Unpublished. Six numbered pages (three leaves written on both sides) of a letter handwritten by Uys Krige and sent to Hubert Jennings, found inside the folder "F— FAMILY HISTORY/Correspondence etc." in the Jennings literary estate (re-filed by us under "L—Letters". Dated August 21st, 1973.

2/18/73 (W. 25, Annual; (C.S.))
Dear Hubert — You must please forgive me for not answering your 2 letters of April 24 & June 23 sooner. But I have been away from Durban for long spells on several occasions — a few have been times when I haven't felt well at all. In any case, I am not a great believer in promises for (to?) books, and I've already been unwilling to write a preface for quite a number of my written books over the years. But I've just spent a great deal of thought — I've tentatively decided that you more than deserved it. Well, I am no authority on P.T.O. and my Portuguese is very poor indeed. (I should 10 years ago

I would just about read Portug. pretty well, but since then I've been very nervous — to my shame — & now I read it only with great difficulty. I'm not learning the language properly on my old copy. I'm perhaps I should just write a few hundred words just that to all right. I must also tell you that I am preparing this a very long time. I find it extremely difficult to write anything at all. Recently it took me an entire month to write a 2500 word article on the evolution of a forthcoming publication of the Department of Education. I just hadn't got the head as you say my own writing ability is concerned.

It's a much from me, the little I talk to my heart — with the little knowledge I have. You know I am very busy about my journey with Command to Durban in 1946. I think we were aboard with the Command along the coast. I thought I had Command to the other side on the way to try to get some information about Command from their columns. But perhaps it was the traveller Daily News that we went to. But I can't remember Command in my own way on Command all more details please if you have any. I've been did I put you in touch with Command all I know is that Command P.T.O.

Have spoken quite often to me about Portug. when I was born 19.10.50 in Durban. I was born in 1944 and during those years I was in the in Durban in 1945. I can't remember the name of the school. I remember Portugal in Portug. Portugal is a fine book and I'm Portugal that in 1946 Command had me access whatever to Portugal and that should be Portugal. I am now very little about Portugal.



21/8/73 P.O. Box 25, Onrust; (C. P.)¹⁶

Dear Hubert — You must please forgive me for not answering your 2 letters of April 24 & June 23 sooner. But I have been away from Onrust for long spells on several occasions—& there have been times when I haven't felt well at all. In any case, I am one the world's worst correspondents. You know, I am not a great believer in forewords for (to?) books—and I've already been unwilling to write a foreword for quite a number of my writer friends over the years. But I gave your request a great deal of thought—& I eventually decided that you more than deserved it although I am no authority on Pessoa, and my Portuguese is very poor indeed. (About 10 years ago [2] I could just about read Port. poetry, but since then I've been very remiss—to my shame—& now I read P. only with great difficulty. I intend learning the language properly in my old age...) So perhaps I should just write a few hundred words. Will that be all right?¹⁷

I must also tell you that I am passing thru a very bad time. I find it extremely difficult to write anything at all. Recently it took me an entire month to write a 2500 <+> word article [↑ in Afrikaans] on the University of Natal for a forthcoming publication of their Afrikaans faculty. So let's just hope for the best as far as my own writing ability is concerned... And don't, dear *friend, [3] expect much from me. I will do my best—with the knowledge I have.

¹⁶ A seaside village in the Cape Province (C. P.).

¹⁷ This would probably be the preface of *The Poet With Many Faces*, a book by Hubert Jennings, which, although intended for publication in 1974, still remains unpublished.

You know I am very hazy about my journey with Armand Guibert to Durban in 1946? Did we come down with Geof[rey] Long¹⁸? I thought I took Armand [↑ in 1946] to the *Star* people in Joh-burg to try to get some information about Pessoa thru their columns. But perhaps it was the *Natal Daily News* that we went to? But I can't remember Armand in my company in Durban [↑ in 1946] at all. More details please, if you have any. When did I put you in touch with Armand? All I know is that Armand [↓ P. T. O.]¹⁹ must [4] have spoken quite often to me about Pes. when I met him frequently in Rome in 1944 [↑ 1944]. And during those last five months of the war in 1945 Roy Campbell must have spoken about him to me too [↑ in London]—as by that time Roy knew Portuguese quite well. And they had been at the same school! Roy wrote about him, if I remember rightly, in his book, *Portugal*²⁰.

Yes, Octavio Paz is a fine poet and critic. Lo, I am <absolutely> certain that in 1946 Armand had no access whatsoever to Pessoa's papers. At that stage he knew, I am sure, very little about him. [5]

Congratulations on your <exc> article in *Contrast* being translated into Portuguese and then published in *Tribuna*. I remember that article well and thought it excellent. I have known Colin Du Plessis²¹ for years. Very intelligent and *muy simpático*...

What have you heard from David Philip²²? I hope this letter makes you forgive my long silence. And give me a few details on how you started taking an interest in Pessoa, when you learnt Portuguese, how long you stayed [6] in Portugal, etc. etc. It all helps.

Do you know that Guibert has become the great authority on FP? That when I last saw him [↑ in 1968] he had already given more than 20 long talks on F. P. over the French radio, that Breton²³ before his death had become deeply interested in Armand's translations?

But enough. Forgive me this scrawl & sprawling [↑ clumsy] letter. My love to Jenny & you



¹⁸ Possibly captain Geoffrey Kellet Long (1916-1961), who was appointed as an official war artist of South Africa in 1941.

¹⁹ "P.T.O." stands for P[lease] T[urn] O[ver].

²⁰ See note #7.

²¹ Perhaps Colin Du Plessis who worked at the South African Broadcasting Company (S.A.B.C.); the Du Plessis family goes far back into the 13th century.

²² *David Philip Publishers* was established in 1971, with the aim of publishing "books that matter for Southern Africa".

²³ André Breton (1896-1966), best known as father of Surrealism in France.