

"Se te queres matar" & "Distante Melodia" in English: Jennings translates Sá-Carneiro

Ricardo Vasconcelos*

Keywords

Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Hubert D. Jennings, Álvaro de Campos, Se te queres matar, Distante Melodia.

Abstract

This essay introduces two unpublished documents in Hubert Jennings's archive that are, in different ways, connected to the Portuguese writer Mário de Sá-Carneiro. The first is a translation of the poem "Se te queres matar, porque não te queres matar?" by Álvaro de Campos, which Jennings explicitly associates with Mário de Sá-Carneiro and his writings. The second is Jennings's translation of Sá-Carneiro's "Distante Melodia," a poem dated June 30, 1914, which was sent by Sá-Carneiro to his fellow Modernist Fernando Pessoa, first as a separate autograph copy and then in the notebook for *Indícios de Ouro*—besides having been published in the first issue of *Orpheu*, in 1915.

Palavras-chave

Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Hubert D. Jennings, Álvaro de Campos, Se te queres matar, Distante Melodia.

Resumo

Apresentam-se aqui dois documentos inéditos do arquivo de Hubert Jennings que, de modos diferentes, estão relacionados com Mário de Sá-Carneiro. O primeiro deles é uma tradução de "Se te queres matar, porque não te queres matar?", de Álvaro de Campos, que Jennings associa expressamente à figura e à obra de Sá-Carneiro. O segundo é a tradução feita por Jennings de "Distante Melodia", poema que Sá-Carneiro data de 30 de junho de 1914 e envia a Fernando Pessoa, primeiramente em folha separada, posteriormente no caderno de *Indícios de Ouro*—além de ter sido publicado no primeiro número de *Orpheu*.

* San Diego State University.

Transcribed on the back of three sheets of paper with the letterhead of the Progressive Party of South Africa, Hubert Jennings's translation of the poem with *incipit* "Se te queres matar, porque não te queres matar?" (translated "If you want to kill yourself, why do you not want to kill yourself?") by Álvaro de Campos, Fernando Pessoa's heteronym, is preceded by an important "Preliminary note." It is a valuable brief introduction because in it Jennings explicitly relates this poem—dated by Pessoa April 26, 1926, the tenth anniversary of the death of Mário Sá-Carneiro in Paris—both to Sá-Carneiro and to his writings. The recognition that ten years passed between the death of Sá-Carneiro and the date attributed by Pessoa to the aforementioned poem (which precisely deals with suicide as one of its main themes, and therefore the assumption that the poem somehow relates to Sá-Carneiro's demise) has been made throughout the past few decades, more recently repeated, and seems fairly unproblematic. However it is relevant, in the first place, to present Jennings's view on what he clearly considers to be a, so to speak, Sá-Carneirian inspiration for the poem "If you want to kill yourself." Secondly, it is worth noting that the translation of the poem Jennings specifically observes two intertextual dialogues between Campos's poem and Sá-Carneiro's general *œuvre*. In fact Jennings adds to the translation a few handwritten notes regarding textual coincidences that further bind together Campos's poem and Sá-Carneiro's works, and, thus, the dialogue between Pessoa and Sá-Carneiro as a whole.

The document is not dated, but of course was written after the late 1960s, when Hubert Dudley Jennings learned Portuguese. At the same time, having been written on sheets of paper from the Progressive Party of South Africa, the translation may or may not be related to the change of name of that party in 1975, and to the existence of possibly obsolete sheets.

It is worth quoting here the entire introductory note, for its insightful understanding of Campos's poem:

This meditation on suicide was written on April 26, 1926, exactly ten years after Pessoa's friend, Mario de Sá-Carneiro, drank six bottles of strychnine on the steps of the Hotel de Nice in Paris. For more than a month Sá-Carneiro had been writing febrile letters saying that he would end his life either by taking poison or throwing himself under the Metro. It would appear that Pessoa did not take him seriously for he wrote only two letters in reply, the second of which did not reach Mario for it was written on the day of his death. It is the only one preserved and is marvellously prosaic. In brief, he inferred that he had been absorbed in his own troubles, his mother in South Africa had just suffered a stroke. † The poem which follows is perhaps what he might have written had he known his friend really intended suicide, or what perhaps that side of him called Alvaro de Campos would have said.¹

¹ Jennings seems to have had a less complete knowledge about the details of the death of Sá-Carneiro. But Sá-Carneiro does say, in the first letter cited by Jennings, dated April 17, 1916: "Recebi a sua carta e o seu postal. Não tenho nervos p[ar]a lhe escrever, bem entendido" (I received your letter and your postcard. I don't have the nervous balance to write you, of course) (2015: 491), despite, in fact, ending up writing a long letter and also sending stanzas of a poem. As for Pessoa, he says about his mother's disease, in his letter dated April 26, 1916: "Ella teve aquillo a que se

The last sentence is particularly relevant, since in it Jennings proposes his explanation for Álvaro de Campos's somewhat disconcerting interpellation to, in Jennings's view, Sá-Carneiro. First, the poem is perceived as an attempt to deter suicide, an eternally failed attempt, I would add, because it is made—and continually repeated at the literary level—after the *fait accompli*. In this sense, it can be inferred from Jennings's words that he conceives an intention and effort by Pessoa, in the timeless literary realm, to stop time and prevent what he once may have not imagined would be possible: a suicide. Secondly, Jennings seeks to explain the tone of the poem, reading it mostly as an option to provoke the reader, who is, at one level, Sá-Carneiro (and the posthumous nature of the dialogue makes sense, when integrated in the rhetoric of the epistolary exchange that Sá-Carneiro and Pessoa did maintain), and at the same time any reader in any age who engages with the poem.

According to Jennings's interpretation, the provoking of the reader is made in order to remember, above all, that after death humans will be "more dead than" they estimate, to paraphrase a verse from the poem in Jennings's version. The poem thus refuses the human illusion of wishing that death may guarantee at least some amiable and regular posthumous memories, and so it states, dryly, reminding the progressive pain of erasure: "Then, gradually, you are forgotten." Jennings still reminds his readers that the most provocative tone of the poem can be explained by the fact that it is signed by the heteronym Álvaro de Campos. It should be understood, however, that these two interpretations by Jennings are not conflicting but complementary, since the provocation by Campos still bears the goal of dissuasion from suicide.²

With regard to Jennings's interpretation of an influence by Sá-Carneiro in the poem "If you want to kill yourself," it should be emphasized, however, that equally important to recognizing the relationship between dates and the suicide theme is the fact that Jennings analyzes how the poem dialogues with Sá-

chama vulgarmente um 'insulto apoplético' e ficou com uma paralisia em todo o lado esquerdo do corpo" (She had what is commonly called an 'apoplectic insult' and got paralyzed completely in the left side of her body) (SÁ-CARNEIRO, 2015: 507).

² Diverging slightly from Jennings's proposal, I would suggest another perspective on the poem. In addition to the dialogue with the image of Sá-Carneiro, in a tone that dissuades act(s) of suicide, when Campos reminds the reader that the *post mortem* is more silent than what he may imagine, and that human memory disappears faster than you can conceive in life—wouldn't this be Pessoa recognizing the erasure, in his own period of time, of the figure of Sá-Carneiro? That is, wouldn't Pessoa-Campos notice that, ten years after Sá-Carneiro's death, his memory (of the man and perhaps also of his literary works) had faded out faster than anyone (Sá-Carneiro and Pessoa himself) could have imagined in 1916? In addition to reading the verse "If you want to kill yourself, kill yourself..." as a somewhat nagging, even puerile, appeal that hypothetically infantilizes the one who makes it, as much as the recipient, I believe the poem inspired by Sá-Carneiro conveys the recognition of the deletion exercised by the passage of time upon the author's work.

Carneiro's work. His conclusion of intertextual relations is reflected in remarks Jennings writes by hand in blue ink on the third page of this document. In fact, Jennings connects Sá-Carneiro's poetry to a line from Campos, which he translates as "Disperse yourself, physico-chemical system" (from the original "Dispersa-te, systema physico-chimico"), by commenting:

Disperse yourself—reference to *Dispersão*, collection of poems by Sá-Carneiro.
In one of the quatrains he writes prophetically:

E sinto que a minha morte—	And I <fell> [↑ feel] that my death
Minha dispersão total—	My total dispersion
Existe lá longe, ao norte	Exists there far away, in the north
Numa grande capital.	In a great capital city

(Quoted Simões Vol II p. 31)

The final parenthetical reference points to João Gaspar Simões's study *Vida e Obra de Fernando Pessoa—História duma Geração, vol. II—Maturidade e Morte*,³ where in fact the stanza of *Dispersão* quoted above is explicitly mentioned on page 31. In turn, Jennings's annotation in the left margin of the third page, written vertically, "Letters p. 55 Vol. II," requires further clarification. I believe it is a likely reference to a passage in the second volume of Sá-Carneiro's *Cartas a Fernando Pessoa*,⁴ published by Ática. In the letter dated August 10, 1915 (pp. 53-56 of that volume), specifically on page 55, Sá-Carneiro refers to the project of his novella "Mundo Interior" (Inner World). Jennings seems to associate this title with the verse "De que te serve o teu *mundo interior* que desconheces?" (my emphasis) of "If you want to kill yourself," which he translates as "What use to you is your interior world that you do not understand?"

One might say that Jennings actively seeks to find in the poem intertextual relations that could further support the interpretation of a relationship between the dates of Sá-Carneiro's suicide and Campos's poem. The analysis of these relations, as made by Jennings, makes sense, and could possibly be taken further. I should point out that the concept and phrase "mundo interior" used in Campos's poem, perhaps referencing the title of Sá-Carneiro's projected novella, is used by Sá-Carneiro in other contexts as well, including his poetry. In fact in "Taciturno" (Taciturn) Sá-Carneiro says: "No meu mundo interior cerraram-se armaduras" (In my inner world armors closed up) (2015, p. 260). And, in his correspondence with Pessoa, the concept is mentioned even before becoming the title of the projected novella. In a letter dated June 15, 1914, for example, Sá-Carneiro speaks of his return to Paris and of the "atmosfera sempre dolorosa do meu mundo interior"

³ Translation: Life and Work of Fernando Pessoa—History of a Generation, vol. II—Maturity and Death.

⁴ Translation: Letters to Fernando Pessoa.

(the always painful atmosphere of my inner world"). By July 27, 1914, Sá-Carneiro refers specifically to the novella, describing the project to Pessoa:

Lembrou-me agora, de subito, ao entrar p[ar]a casa q[ue], nesse volume, cabe tambem, pode ser, "O Mundo Interior" tratado doutra maneira: o narrador conhece um homem (o narrador aqui aparentemente "burguês", isto é: criatura sem complicações psicológicas—talvez um "professor" de matemática ou de física) trava conhecimento no Café com um homem que lhe fala só da sua alma e lhe conta como viaja no seu mundo interior. Um dia esse homem desaparece (como por exemplo desapareceu aquele meu amigo a q[ue] aludo na "Grande Sombra") e a unica explicação que o seu companheiro encontra em vista das buscas da policia improficuas, é esta: q[ue] êle terá desaparecido no seu mundo interior. Donde o inconveniente de ser complicado de mais, de ser "psicologia" a mais, de pensar de mais sobre si próprio... Não é verdade q[ue] esta novela podia caber no livro? Que lhe parece?⁵

(2015: 248-250)

In the letter mentioned by Jennings, from August 10, 1915, Sá-Carneiro explains that he is "pouco disposto a escrever agora o 'Mundo Interior'" (unwilling to now write the "Inner World") (2015, p. 348), and on the last day of that month, with regard to his contribution to the planned *Orpheu* 3, he states: "não vou agora escrever o 'Mundo Interior' de afogadilho" (I will not write the "Inner World" now, in hurry) (2015, p. 370).

Jennings has all the more reason to highlight the textual relationship in question as Pessoa had kept in mind the importance of the concept of "inner world" to Sá-Carneiro. In fact Pessoa had been concerned with the loss of the plausible manuscript of the novella. Among Pessoa's papers at the National Library in Lisbon, there is a draft of a letter to the manager of the Hôtel de Nice, which may or may not have been sent, in which Pessoa affirms:

Comme il s'agit de manuscrits d'une importance strictement et exclusivement littéraire, je vous serais bien reconnaissant si vous pouviez autoriser que mon ami, M. Carlos Ferreira, qui vous est connu, les retire de la malle, pour m'en faire envoi, lors de son prochain retour à Paris. [...] Pour votre gouverne, je puis vous dire que le manuscrit auquel je m'intéresse le plus, se compose de quelques pages (huit ou dix, tout au plus) avec le titre portugais "MUNDO INTERIOR".⁶

(2015: 537)

⁵ Translation: It just occurred to me suddenly, on entering the house, that this volume could maybe include "The Inner World" addressed differently: the narrator meets a man (the narrator here seemingly "bourgeois," i.e. a creature with no psychological complications—perhaps a "professor" of mathematics or physics); becomes acquainted in a cafe with a man who talks about to him only about his soul and tells him how he travels in his inner world. One day this man disappears (as disappeared that friend of mine to whom I allude in "The Great Shadow") and the only explanation that his friend finds, considering the fruitless searches by the police, is this: that he must have disappeared in his inner world. Hence the drawback of being too complicated, of having too much "psychology," thinking too much about oneself... Wouldn't you say this novella could fit in the book? What do you think?

⁶ Translation: As these are manuscripts of a strictly and exclusively literary importance, I would be greatly appreciative if you could authorize that my friend, Mr. Carlos Ferreira, who you know, could take them from the luggage⁶ to send them to me, upon his next return trip to Paris. [...] For

As demonstrated, the value of this document in the Jennings archive, with regard to the relationship established between Campos and Sá-Carneiro, lies not only in the recognition of the coincidence of dates (of Sá-Carneiro's suicide and of the authorship of "If you want to kill yourself") and in Jennings's interpretation of this, but also in his (successful) attempt to identify intertextual relations between the discourses of Sá-Carneiro and Campos. In addition, I should highlight the quality of the translation proper, which we do not address here, given that this paper focuses on the traces of Sá-Carneiro in some of his documents—and the analysis of Jennings's translations does deserve a separate work.

Another document in the Jennings archive that pays particular attention to Sá-Carneiro is a translation of the latter's poem "Distante Melodia." In April 1915, this poem was discussed in a review of the first issue of *Orpheu* published in the Algarve magazine *Alma Nova*, a copy of which was kept in one of Sá-Carneiro and Pessoa's notebooks with press reviews. In this review, A. Bustorff (Antonio Júdice Bustorff Silva) highlighted some of the virtues of Sá-Carneiro's poetry presented in this volume. Bustorff said that the author revealed himself to possess

alma de poeta profundamente ritmica, sonhadora e musical nos sonetos "Salomé" e "Certa voz na noite, ruivamente..." — duas belas composições, cheias de ritmo e de harmonia, — na pequena poesia "Sugestão" e, principalmente nesse "A Inigualável," a pagina 16, de um sabor doentio mas nem por isso menos bela que qualquer das anteriores⁷

(BNP 155-12^r)

At the same time, however, the reviewer, Bustorff, chastised an "excesso de Interseccionismo" (excessive Interseccionism) of some poetry that, in his view, led to "Charadismo" (Riddle-ism). In this regard, he said:

É ver a "Distante melodia" e, sobretudo, essa estranha *blague* (porque é *blague*, pois não, senhor Sá-Carneiro?) — 16 — cujos ultimos versos são dum destrambelhamento tal que só pedem transcrição sem comentarios. De resto estâmos em crêr que apreciaremos por completo todos os poemas do senhor M. de Sá-Carneiro desde que alguma "alma iniciada" na sua esfingica terminologia nos inicie tambem.⁸

your information, I can tell you that the manuscript that interests me the most is composed of a few pages (8 or 10 at the most) with the Portuguese title "MUNDO INTERIOR."

⁷ Translation: a deeply rhythmic, dreaming, musical poet's soul in the sonnets "Salomé" and "Certa voz na noite, ruivamente..." (A voice in the night, red-headed...)—two beautiful compositions, full of rhythm and harmony—in the small poetry "Sugestão" (Suggestion) and especially in that "A Inigualável" (The Unrivaled), on page 16, of a sickly flavor but no less beautiful than any of the previous.

⁸ Translation: It's the case of "Distante Melodia" [Distant Melody] and especially that odd *blague* (because it's a *blague*, right, Mr. Sá-Carneiro?)—16—whose last verses are so derailed that it only deserves a transcription without any comments. Moreover we believe that we will fully enjoy all the poems by Mr. M. de Sá-Carneiro, as long as some soul "initiated" in his sphinxlike terminology initiates us as well.

Such is the radical nature of their imagery, and perhaps so unexpected is their use of color, that Sá-Carneiro's poems presented in *Orpheu* 1 as "Para os 'Indícios de Ouro'" (*Orpheu*, vol. I, 2015: 7) brought about a very widespread rejection in the press of the time, possibly as strong as, or stronger than, that dedicated to any other author in *Orpheu*. These verses are characterized as "quasi incompreensíveis" (almost incomprehensible), to give here but the example of this review, and we can see that the poem "Distante Melodia," the sixth in a set of twelve written between November 1913 and February 1915 and published in this volume of the journal, is actually pointed out as an example of such.

Dated June 30, 1914, "Distante Melodia" was sent to Pessoa in a letter on the same day.⁹ It is an important letter in the collection of correspondence to which it belongs, for several reasons. In it Sá-Carneiro expresses his total admiration for the work of Álvaro de Campos, from the outset, as he had read it for the first time the day before, when he had received "Ode Triumfal" in the mail. It is also a valuable letter because in it Sá-Carneiro affirms what apparently seems to him already an undeniable fact—that Pessoa was the leading figure of his generation:

Não sei em verdade como dizer-lhe todo o meu entusiasmo pela ode do Al[varo] de Campos que ontem recebi. É uma coisa enorme, genial, das maiores entre a sua Obra—deixe-me dizer-lhe imodesta mas m[ui]to sinceramente: do alto do meu orgulho, esses versos, são daqueles que me indicam bem a distancia que, em todo o caso, ha entre mim e você.¹⁰

(SÁ-CARNEIRO, 2015: 222)

And this is an important letter also in that it presents several considerations Mário de Sá-Carneiro makes on the relationship between the European avant-gardes and the voices that months later will be part of *Orpheu*:

Não tenho duvida em assegura-lo, meu Amigo, você acaba de escrever a obra-prima do Futurismo. Porque, apesar talvez de não pura, escolarmente futurista, o conjunto da ode é absolutamente futurista. Meu amigo, pelo menos a partir d'agora o Marinetti é um grande homem... porque todos o reconhecem como o fundador do futurismo, e essa escola produziu a sua maravilha. Depois de escrita a sua ode, meu querido Fernando Pessoa, eu creio q[ue] nada mais de novo se pode escrever para cantar a nossa época—serão tudo mais especializações sobre cada assunto, cada objecto, cada emoção que o meu amigo tocou genialmente.¹¹

(2015: 223)

⁹ With regard to the date when Sá-Carneiro sent "Distante Melodia" to Fernando Pessoa, see the respective endnote in SÁ-CARNEIRO (2015: 577-78).

¹⁰ Translation: I really don't know how to convey to you all my enthusiasm for the ode that I received yesterday. It's a huge thing, genius, among the best of your *Oeuvre*—let me tell you immodestly but very sincerely: from the top of my pride, these verses are of the kind that show me the distance that, in any case, there is between me and you.

¹¹ Translation: I don't hesitate to assure you, my Friend, that you just wrote the masterpiece of Futurism. Because, although perhaps not purely, academically futuristic, the ode as a whole is absolutely futuristic. My friend, at least from now on Marinetti is a great man... because all recognize him as the founder of Futurism, and this school has produced your wonderful work.

With this background, Sá-Carneiro refers to his own poem sent attached, “Distante Melodia,” saying only:

Mando-lhe junto uma poesia minha. É bastante esquisita, não é verdade? Creia que traduz bem o meu estado d’alma actual—indeciso não sei de quê, “artificial”—morto—mas vivo “por velocidade adquirida”—capaz de esforços mas sem os sentir: artificiais, numa palavra.¹²
(2015: 224-25)

“Odd” or not, the poem is sent in this letter and integrates the notebook of “Versos p[ara] os Indícios de Ouro” (BNP/E3, 154), sent by Sá-Carneiro to Pessoa, as its eighth poem. And odd or not, the poem caught the interest of Hubert D. Jennings, who translated it. It is not clear which printed version of “Distante Melodia” Jennings had contact with; whether hypothetically it was the volume of Sá-Carneiro’s *Poesias* (1946), published by *Ática*, or even *Orpheu*, or another publication. But as for the translation itself, one can see that in some more formal aspects Jennings strays slightly from the original, choosing to privilege a higher faithfulness to the imagery and the meaning.

This is visible, for example, in the fact that Jennings gives less importance to the expressive value of Sá-Carneiro’s use of ellipsis in the poem. Both in its first original printed version (*Orpheu* 1, p. 13), as well as in *Ática*’s (1946) edition, “Distante Melodia” uses ellipsis in the end of lines 8, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20, and 21 to 32 (the latter corresponding to all lines of the last three quartets). In his translation, however, Jennings uses an ellipsis only in the first verse of the eighth stanza. The exclusion of all other ellipsis suggests that, for Jennings, the more challenging imagery of the poem did not need the added effect of this punctuation. As a result, the translation loses some of the effect of distancing, or even detachment, that in the original is sharpened with the progress of the poem, given that all lines of the last stanzas end with that punctuation symbol. In the translation, even the break in the first decasyllable of the last stanza, which is achieved with the inclusion of an ellipsis after the fifth metric syllable, is expressed through the use of a dash.

Additionally, Mário de Sá-Carneiro’s very personal use of capital letters is also diluted in the translation. This is visible in the following cases, for example: *Iris* > iris; *Tempo* > time; *Inter-sonho e Lua* > between-sleep and moon; *Amar* > loving; *Templos* > temples; *ser-Eu* > myself; *Rei exilado* > exiled king. The translation only keeps the capital letters of “Outras distâncias,” translated as “Other distances,” besides the expected capitals in proper nouns.

After your ode has been written, my dear Fernando Pessoa, I believe that nothing new can be written to sing our time—everything will be only a development of every theme, every object, every emotion that you, my Friend, addressed brilliantly.

¹² Translation: I send along a poem of mine. It’s rather odd, is it not? Please believe that it reflects well the current state of my soul—undecided I know not about what, “artificial”—dead—but alive “by acquired speed”—able to make efforts but without feeling them: artificial, in a word.

Similarly, Jennings is less focused on the original metric, preferring to centralize his attention on the imagery of the poem. The translator expresses in English the most Paulic (from *Paulismo*) or Interseccionist (from *Interseccionismo*) images, almost always achieving them fully. Two exceptions would be a quite acceptable poetic license when he translates “tempo-Asa” for “a time of wings” and the lesser accuracy in translating, in the eighth line, “Distancias que o segui-las era flôres” as “Distances where to follow *were* flowers” (my emphasis in the verb form, which should more accurately read *was*). Jennings finds valid parallels that make his translation faithful to that which is probably the key aspect of the poem, and that is its desired engagement of color. He understands well the symbols and metaphors implicit in the presentation of these colors, keeping them at all times in his translation, in which the subject is presented “Num sonho d’Iris, morto a ouro e brasa” (“In an iris dream, dead in gold and ashes”), recollects a “Tempo azul” (“azure time”), in which “Caía Ouro” (“Gold fell”) and the “horas corriam sempre jade” (“the hours, always jade, flowed on”), to give just a few examples.

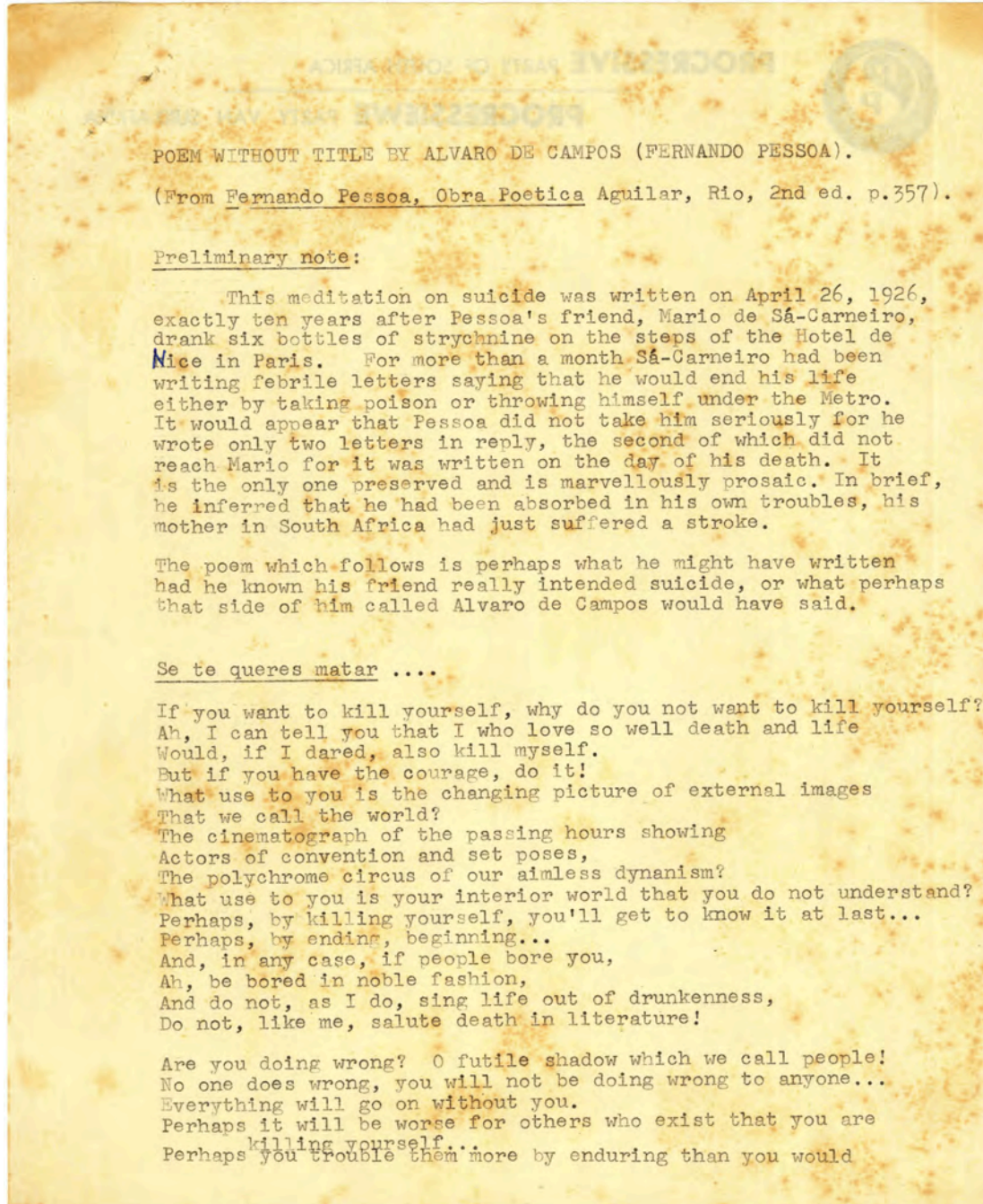
One can ask why this is the only poem by Sá-Carneiro translated by Jennings found in his archive. One hypothesis is that Jennings maintained a special interest in this type of imagery, or wanted to understand how it was developed by Sá-Carneiro. Especially because in another text he tells us that Sá-Carneiro, and not “Pessoa, was the masterchief and only natural exponent only” of Paulismo. Did Jennings see “Distante Melodia” as a clear example of this? Perhaps, although we can not know it for sure; as we cannot know, also, if the lesser importance given to formal aspects such as punctuation and capitalization, in his translation, was due to the fact this might have not been a final version, even if the document is a clean one, with no corrections. And I should also add that Jennings’s archive also contains a reproduction of this document with the translation of “Distante Melodia” which includes at the top of the page an inscription that could be read as a “II” or more likely as a “11.” We cannot ascertain whether it was an order number for a hypothetical series of translations of poems by Sá-Carneiro or, more likely, of several different authors. What we can surely say is that with this translation of “Distante Melodia,” Hubert Dudley Jennings is one of the first translators into English of Mário de Sá-Carneiro’s texts, and that, with excellent results, he finds parallels in English for a particularly challenging language, with an excellent rendition of the lexical richness and imagery of Sá-Carneiro’s poetics.

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Documents

I. Unpublished. A typed translation of the poem "Se te queres matar, porque não te queres matar?," by Álvaro de Campos, on the back of three sheets of paper with the letterhead of the Progressive Party of South Africa, bearing the title "POEM WITHOUT TITLE BY ALVARO DE CAMPOS (FERNANDO PESSOA)." The translation is preceded by a "Preliminary note," and the third sheet includes handwritten corrections.



Se te queres matar... (2)

by ceasing to exist.

Others' sorrow? Are you feeling remorse before
They weep for you?
Relax: few will cry for you...
Before long the vital impulse dries up our tears,
When our own things are not concerned,
When it is something that happens to others, especially death,
Because it is a thing where nothing happens afterwards to
other people.

At first it is anguish, the surprise coming from
the mystery and the loss of your much spoken of life...
Then the horror of the coffin, visible and material,
And the men in black who exercise their profession by being there,
Then the family who keep vigil, inconsolable and recounting
the anecdotes,
Lamenting the pity of your having died,
And you, the mere accidental cause of all that mournfulness,
You are well and truly dead, more dead than you reckon,
Much more dead here than you reckon,
Even if you are much more alive over there...

After the tragic withdrawal to the tomb or the hole,
And after the first shock of death as they remember you,
There is next in everyone an alleviation
Of the rather boring tragedy of your having died...
Then with each day the conversation becomes lighter
And life for everyone returns to its usual way.

Then, gradually, you are forgotten.
Only on two dates are you remembered, anniversarially;
The day when you were born and the day you died.
Nothing else, not a thing more, absolutely nothing more.
Twice in the year they think of you.
Twice in the year they will sigh for you, those who loved you,
And once or twice when you happen to be spoken about.

Face the cold, and face the cold that we are...
If you want to kill yourself, kill yourself...
Don't have any moral scruples, those fears of the intelligence!...
What scruples or fears has the mechanism of life?

What chemical scruples has the impulse that generates
The saps, and the circulation of blood and love?

PROGRESSIVE PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA
PROGRESSIVE PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA

(3)

Se te queres matar... ^{careless}

What memory of others has the ^{cheerful} rhythm of life?
Ah, poor vanity of flesh and bone called man,
Don't you see you have no importance whatever?

It is important for you, because it is yours that you feel.
It is all for you, because for you it is the universe,
It is your own universe and the others
Satellites of your objective subjectivity
It is important to you because only to yourself are you of
any importance. ^{it}

And if this is so, O myth, will not ~~the~~ ^{for others} others be the same?

Do you have, like Hamlet, a fear of the unknown?
But what is known? What do you know,
That you can call anything in particular unknown?

Do you, like Falstaff, have a fat love of life?
If you love materially like that, go on loving it materially!
Become a carnal part of earth and matter.
Disperse yourself, physico-chemical system
Of cells nocturnally conscious
Through the nocturnal consciousness of the unconsciousness
of bodies,
Through the great blanket covering nothing of appearances,
Through the greensward and grass of the proliferation of beings,
Through the atomic fog of things,
Through the swirling walls
Of the dynamic vacuum of the world...

Letters p. 55 Vol II

Disperse yourself - reference to Dispersão.
 collection of poems by Sá-Carneiro
 In one of the quatrains he writes, prophetically;
 E sinto que a minha morte - and I ^{feel} feel that
 minha dispersão total - my total dispersion -
 Existe lá longe, ao norte. ^{exists there far away.}
 Numa grande capital. ^{in the north}
In a great capital
city.

(Antes Finées Vol II L. 31)

POEM WITHOUT TITLE BY ALVARO DE CAMPOS (FERNANDO PESSOA).
(From *Fernando Pessoa, Obra Poetica*¹³ Aguilar, Rio, 2nd ed. p. 357).

Preliminary note:

This meditation on suicide was written on April 26, 1926, exactly ten years after Pessoa's friend, Mario de Sá-Carneiro, drank six bottles of strychnine on the steps of the Hotel de *Ice* in Paris. For more than a month Sá-Carneiro had been writing febrile letters saying that he would end his life either by taking poison or throwing himself under the Metro. It would appear that Pessoa did not take him seriously for he wrote only two letters in reply, the second of which did not reach Mario for it was written on the day of his death. It is the only one preserved and is marvellously prosaic. In brief, he inferred that he had been absorbed in his own troubles, his mother in South Africa had just suffered a stroke.

The poem which follows is perhaps what he might have written had he known his friend really intended suicide, or what perhaps that side of him called Alvaro de Campos would have said.

Se te queres matar...

If you want to kill yourself, why do you not want to kill yourself?
Ah, I can tell you that I who love so well death and life
Would, if I dared, also kill myself.
But if you have the courage, do it!
What use to you is the changing picture of external images
That we call the world?
The cinematograph of the passing hours showing
Actors of convention and set poses,
The polychrome circus of our aimless dynamism¹⁴?
What use to you is your interior world that you do not understand?
Perhaps, by killing yourself, you'll get to know it at last.
Perhaps, by ending, beginning...
And, in any case, if people bore you,
Ah, be bored in noble fashion,
And do not, as I do, sing life out of drunkenness,
Do not, like me, salute death in literature!

Are you doing wrong? O futile shadow which we call people!
No one does wrong, you will not be doing wrong to anyone...
Everything will go on without you.

¹³ "Poetica," unstressed in the document.

¹⁴ "dynamism" in the document, a typo.

Perhaps it will be worse for others who exist that you are killing yourself...
 Perhaps you trouble them more by enduring than you would [2] by ceasing to exist.

Others' sorrow? Are you feeling remorse before
 They weep for you?
 Relax: few will cry for you...
 Before long the vital impulse dries up our tears,
 When our own things are not concerned,
 When it is something that happens to others, especially death,
 Because it is a thing where nothing happens afterwards to other people.

At first it is anguish, the surprise coming from
 The¹⁵ mystery and the loss of your much spoken of life...
 Then the horror of the coffin, visible and material,
 And the men in black who exercise their profession by being there,
 Then the family who keep vigil, inconsolable and recounting the anecdotes,
 Lamenting the pity of your having died,
 And you, the mere accidental cause of all that mournfulness,
 You are well and truly dead, more dead than you reckon,
 Much more dead here than you reckon,
 Even if you are much more alive over there...

After the tragic withdrawal to the tomb or the hole,
 And after the first shock of death as they remember you,
 There is next in everyone an alleviation
 Of the rather boring tragedy of your having died...
 Then with each day the conversation becomes lighter
 And life for everyone returns to its usual way.

Then, gradually, you are forgotten.
 Only on two dates are you remembered, anniversarially;
 The day when you were born and the day you died.
 Nothing else, not a thing more, absolutely nothing more.
 Twice in the year they think of you.
 Twice in the year they will sigh for you, those who loved you,
 And once or twice when you happen to be spoken about.

Face the cold, and face the cold that we are...
 If you want to kill yourself, kill yourself...
 Don't have any moral scruples, those fears of the intelligence!...
 What scruples or fears has the mechanism of life?

¹⁵ Lowercase "the" in the document.

What chemical scruples has the impulse that generates
The saps, and the circulation of blood and love?

- [3] What memory of others has the <cheerful> [↑ careless] rhythm of life?
Ah, poor vanity of flesh and bone called man,
Don't you see you have no importance whatever?

It is important for you, because it is yours that you feel.
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It is your own universe and the others
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Through the greensward and grass of the proliferation of beings,
Through the atomic fog of things,
Through the swirling walls
Of the dynamic vacuum of the world...

Disperse yourself—reference to *Dispersão*, collection of poems by Sá-Carneiro. In one of the quatrains he writes prophetically:¹⁶

E sinto que a minha morte—
Minha dispersão total—
Existe lá longe, ao norte
Numa grande capital.

And to¹⁷ <fell>[↑ feel] that my death
My total dispersion
Exists there far away, in the north
In a great capital city

(Quoted Simões Vol II p. 31)

¹⁶ We convey in a smaller font the handwritten notes at the end of the poem. Written vertically on the left side of the page, one also reads: "Letters p. 55 vol. II."

¹⁷ "2" in the document, as shorthand.

II. Unpublished. One page with a poem titled "DISTANT MELODY," an English translation made by Hubert Jennings of Mário de Sá-Carneiro's poem "Distante Melodia." Undated.

DISTANT MELODY

By MÁRIO DE SÁ-CARNEIRO

In an iris dream, dead in gold and ashes,
Remembrances com back to me of another azure time
Which rocked me and cradled me in veils of tulle -
A time tenuous and light, a time of wings.

Then my senses were colours
My desires were born in a garden.
Within myself were Other distances,
Distances which to follow were flowers.

Gold fell thinking itself stars.
The moon lit up my otherness.
Lagoons of night, how beautiful you were
Under lily-terraces of memory!

Age wakens from between-sleep and moon,
And the hours, always jade, flowed on
To where the nebuline was a longing
And light - desires of a nude princess.

Balusters of sound, arches of loving,
Bridges of lustre, ogives of perfume,
Inexpressible dominions of opium and flame
In colours where I never more may live.

Carpets from other and more Orient Persias,
Curtains from Chinas more ivory-like still;
Aureate temples with rites of satin,
Fountains that run sombrely, softly away.

Cupolaed pantheons of nostalgia,
Cathedrals of myself from over the sea,
Stairs of honours, which lead only to the air,
New Byzantiums of the spirit, other Turkeys.

Fluid remembrance - ashes of brocade...
Anile irreality which laps against myself -
Within myself I am an exiled king,
A vagabond from a siren's dream.

DISTANT MELODY

By Mario¹⁸ de Sá-Carneiro

In an iris dream, dead in gold and ashes,
Remembrances com[e] back to me of another azure time
Which rocked me and cradled me in veils of tulle—
A time tenuous and light, a time of wings.

Then my senses were colours
My desires were born in a garden.
Within myself ere Other distances,
Distances which to follow were flowers.

Gold fell thinking itself stars.
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Anile reality which laps against myself—
Within myself I am an exiled king,
A vagabond from a siren's dream.

¹⁸ "MArio" in the document, a typo.