In 1999 the Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda published the critical edition of “The Mad Fiddler,” edited by Marcus Angioni and Fernando Gomes, under the title Poemas Ingleses. The Mad Fiddler. This work is an assemblage of poems in an allegorical drama in eight sections, which Fernando Pessoa wrote between 1911 and 1917. “The Mad Fiddler” had three previous publications, first in a bilingual edition translated to Portuguese and edited by José Blanc de Portugal, under the title O Louco Rabequista (Lisbon: Presença, 1988); an Italian edition translated by Amina di Munno, under the title Il violinist pazzo (Rome: Lucarini, 1989); and a bilingual edition edited and translated by Luísa Freire, Poesia Inglesa (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1995).

the poems of “The Mad Fiddler” were written after the major poems in Portuguese, and that Pessoa’s intention was to change English romanticism into spiritualism. The poems are followed by Portuguese translations by Paulo Quintela. Lind published “The Poem,” “Suspense,” “The Broken Window,” “Her fingers toyed absently with her rings” (which he titles “A SENSATIONIST POEM”), and “Soneto,” for which the critic sees an origin in “Passos da Cruz”, XIII. Also in 1968 in his book Fontes Impressas da Obra de Fernando Pessoa, José Galvão published the poem “The Sunflower” in INÉDITO DE FERNANDO PESSOA, followed by a note explaining that he had received the poem directly from the hands of Francisco Caetano Dias, who had found it in “o fundo do famoso baú” (Galvão, 1968: 113). The critical edition alters the printed record on the basis of handwritten annotations to typescript 31, one of a number of versions of “The Mad Fiddler” found in the Pessoa Archive.

The criticism that the editors of the critical edition aim at Amina di Munno in her preparation of the bilingual Italian edition (1989) are, first, that she did not take into consideration the modifications, substitutions, and additions that Pessoa made on typed versions of his poems; secondly, that she included poems that Pessoa tried to exclude; and finally that she included all 53 poems in order, ignoring Pessoa’s decision indicated in the “cópia final” [“final copy”], with the word “Omit,” to withhold six poems (“If I could carve my poems in wood,” “Summer Moments,” “Rivers,” “Isis,” “Horizon,” and “Elevation”). Munno also failed to alter the titles of certain poems, as Pessoa had marked on a list of contents, “Goblin Dance” to “Elf Dance” and “I feel pale and I shiver” to “Not Myself.”

The problem faced by the editors of the critical edition, in view of the many changes and emendations in multiple copies of the poems, is the certainty of which version is the “final copy.” What is the status, for example, of the clean copy kept in Pessoa’s famous trunk that itself was copied and used for another phase of changes and annotations? Could the poems as sent to Constable and Company be considered definitive? Did typescript 31 precede or follow the rejection by the English press, and if it proceeded why are there no clean copies containing the changes marked in ink on that typescript? How can one be absolutely confident, without a doubt, that Pessoa’s “Omit” represents a definitive decision for “The Mad Fiddler”? In several cases, the “Omit” exists alongside a question mark or doubt. In “Summer Moments,” for example, the annotation after the typed title “Autobiography in the Sunlight” is crossed out and reads “omit or correct much.” “Elevation” carried the notation “Omit or alter altogether.” The lines of the poem contain alterations, which would be unnecessary if Pessoa had definitely decided to eliminate the poem. In “The Broken Window,” included in the critical edition, Pessoa has noted “insert, perhaps for corrections.” In spite of this reservation, the poem appears in the critical edition exactly as it does in Lind’s 1968 essay. Yet in other cases, the editors have decided to act on Pessoa’s single indication, “omit”
even though the list of poems is unreliable, since the poem “Prayer” does not appear in the index to 31, which is the basis for the choices for the critical edition.

With the appearance of the Nogueira typescript (see Section Documents in this issue), an electrostatic copy of which became the basis of typescript 31, scholars have another lens with which to analyze the development of the critical edition, also in view of what was perhaps a special version prepared for Constable and Company. Another complicating factor is the existence of sheets taken or obtained from the archive in the 1960s, which may include poems from “Outros poemas publicados por José Blanc de Portugal” (“Ship sailing out to sea,” “Mother of things impossible,” “When shall we rest?” “Wake with the Sun, wake with the moon,” and “The Master said you must not heed”) or other titles published by Lind?

Some of the alterations to individual poems are significant. In “Not Myself” (also “I feel pale and I shiver”), line 6 has two possible readings, “Unlocks all my soul?” or “Unlooses all my heart?”, and line 16 reads “That I am vainly king” or “That I am fairy king.” In several poems, the rhythm and esthetic effect is altered by the choice of variants, as in “Meantime” (also titled “Far Away”), in which the final lines read either “All me a delight, | All away from sight” or “All me a delight, | Far away from sight” or “For me a delight, | Far away from sight.” Perhaps no single poem is so affected as “Lullaby,” a poem that carries the following note: “The ‘Lullaby’ quoted is the 134th Poem in Palgrave’s Golden Treasury. It was taken by him from Martin Peerson’s Private Music, a Song-Book of 1620. The ‘Lullaby’ is here given twice over, and the last stanza twice again.” Peerson’s quatrains with their two-line refrain are thus divided and form a rhythm for the sections of Pessoa’s lullaby, with the final quatrain and refrain repeated three times for effect to bring the poem to a rhythmic conclusion. Pessoa noted in typescript 31 that the entire poem should be reproduced after his first lines, then only the refrain repeated subsequently throughout the poem. Perhaps should he have seen a typed version he would not have been so hasty, as the entire poem becomes dull and loses its musical effect, while the two-line refrain repeated throughout the poem is too simple and adds nothing either to the development or the meaning of the poem. Here, a sudden impulse resulted in an unmusical and dull poem esthetically, which the editors could have ignored.

Perhaps the major conundrum facing the editors of a critical edition is that definitive textual decisions must be made, even when the evidence is inconclusive, incomplete, or subject to doubt. The situation is even more acute in the case of a work that Pessoa never published and, as far as one can tell from the many possible arrangements of its poems, never concluded. Its place in the English poems further depends on an analysis of the many English poems that followed “The Mad Fiddler” during the period 1921-1934. And perhaps the material taken or borrowed from the famous trunk in the 1960s, about which Jorge de Sena
complained vociferously, will eventually alter our perception of Pessoa’s writing of “The Mad Fiddler?”

What we have now are competing textual records, one in which poems from “The Mad Fiddler” have been published in three journals and two books, including the complete Obras by Aguilar, in translations to Italian and Portuguese, and in Freire’s Poesia Inglesa, which follows the Nogueira typescript, and the Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda critical edition. One can appreciate the careful scholarship in the critical edition, even if the “critical” is not “final.”

Mad Fiddler – comparative editions and typescript in Nogueira’s private collection:

1. Typescript from Nogueira’s private collection.


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Sunset
The Shining Pool
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(Poem not included)
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The Night-Light
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(Poem not included) Prayer
Summer Moments, I, II, III Prayer
Emptiness
Monotony
Sister Cecily
The Ruined Cloister

IV. FOUR SORROWS

Rivers (Poem not included)
Far Away Meantime
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Nothing

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Fever-Garden I, II Template
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VII. THE DROPPED TORCH

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The Bridge
The King of Gaps
The Loophole
The Abyss

VIII. THE LABYRINTH
Jackson

"The Mad Fiddler": The Critical Edition

Fiat Lux
A Summer Ecstasy
Mood
Sonnet
Inversion
Summerland
The End

Textual variants


I. THE MAD FIDDLER

“The Mad Fiddler”
3 First his wild music flowed
4 Into the village that day.
5 He suddenly was in the lane,
6 The people came out to hear,
7 He suddenly went, and in vain
8 Their hopes wished him to appear.
25 The maid and boy felt glad

“The Mad Fiddler”
3 The middle of that music flowed
4 Into the night that day.
5 They felt him pass in the lane
6 And went out in # to hear.
7 But all that they heard was a pain
8 And a sense of coming fear.
25 The maid and boy felt glad

〈Lycanthropy〉
16 Was sometime musical.

〈Lycanthropy〉
16 Is someway musical

“Spell”
6 O veiled spiritually!
12 Could our twined lives feel sweet?

“Spell”
6 O veiled spirituality!
12 Could our twined lives feel sweet?

“I feel pale and I shiver”
2 That power of the moonlight
3 Tremulous under the river
6 Unlocks all my soul?
8 I fade from life’s control!

“I feel pale and I shiver”
2 What power of the moonlight
3 Shaking under the river
6 Unlooses all my heart?
8 Speak to me not! I smart!

II. THE SHINING POOL

“Go: thou hast nothing to forgive”
20 And dearer thoughts than Far Away

“Go: thou hast nothing to forgive”
20 And dearer thoughts than being gay

“The Poem”
9 Day and night in my mystery
10 I dream and read and spell it over
12 Its vague completeness seems

“The Poem”
9 Day and night as I feel it be
10 I dream its passing making it over
12 That vague completeness seems
“Looking At the Tagus”
(last two quatrains absent)

“Fierce Dreams of Something Else”

2 Frenzy to go away
3 (O wave in me that swells!)

Splendour to go away
(Frenzy in me that swells!)

III. THE WRONG CHOICE

“The Night-Light”

47 Whose lost scent throngs
48 Through my sense-screens?
61 And life, life’s hearse,
62 Leaving dreams free,
63 Shrink undefined
64 Into the unknown.
74 Brotherly night,

Whose lost colour throngs
Round my lost sensuousness?
Till cares disperse
Like leaves set free
Where the quick wind
Freshens its moan.

“Lullaby”¹

1 My heart is full of lazy pain
2 And an old English lullaby
3 Comes out of that mist of my brain.
4 Upon my lap my sovereign sits
5 And sucks upon my breast;
6 Meantime his live maintains by life
7 And gives my sense her rest.
8 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
9 Sing lullaby, my only joy!

My heart is full of lazy pain
And an old English lullaby
Comes out of that mist of my brain.
(complete text of Peerson’s
Private Music placed here)

10 I would give all my singing trade
11 To be the distant English child
12 For whom this happy song
   was made.
13 When thou hast taken thy repast,
14 Repose, my babe, on me;
15 So may thy mother and thy nurse
16 Thy cradle also be.
17 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
18 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

I would give all my singing trade
To be the distant English child
For whom this happy song
   was made.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, my only joy!

19 There must have been true

There must have been true

¹ Note: The “Lullaby” quoted is the 134th poem in Palgrave’s Golden Treasury. It was taken by him from Martin Peerson’s Private Music, a Song-Book of 1620. The “Lullaby” is here given twice over, and the last stanza twice again.” The six-line stanzas from Peerson are typed in red in the document extant in Nogueira’s private collection.
20 Near where this song was sung
to small
21 White bands clutching a mother’s
dress.
22 I grieve that duty doth not work
23 All that my wishing would,
24 Because I would not be to thee
25 But in the best I should.
26 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
27 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

28 Oh, what a sorrow comes to me
29 Knowing the bitterness I have
30 While that child had this lullaby!
31 Yet as I am, and as I may,
32 I must and will be thine,
33 Though all too little for thy self
34 Vouchsafing to be mine.
35 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
36 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

37 My heart aches to be able to weep.
38 Oh, to think of this song being sung
39 And the child smiling in its sleep!
40 Upon my lap my sovereign sits
41 And sucks upon my breast;
42 Meantime his live maintains by life
43 And gives my sense her rest.
44 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
45 Sing lullaby, my only joy!

46 I was a child too, but would now
47 Be the child, and no other, hearing
48 This song low-breathed upon
   its brow.
49 When thou hast taken thy repast,
50 Repose, my babe, on me;
51 So may thy mother and thy nurse
52 Thy cradle also be.
53 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
54 Sing lullaby, my only joy!

55 Oh, that I could return to that
56 Happy time that was never mine
57 And which I live but to regret!
58 I grieve that duty doth not work
59 All that my wishing would,
60 Because I would not be to thee
61 But in the best I should.
62 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
63 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

64 Ay, sing on in my soul, old voice,
65 So motherfully laying to sleep
66 The babe that quietly doth rejoice.
67 Yet as I am, and as I may,
68 I must and will be thine,
69 Though all too little for thy self
70 Vouchsafing to be mine.
71 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
72 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

73 Sing on and let my heart not weep
74 Because something a child
    could have
75 This song to lull him into sleep!
76 Yet as I am, and as I may,
77 I must and will be thine,
78 Though all too little for thy self
79 Vouchsafing to be mine.
80 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
81 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

82 Somehow, somewhere I heard
    this song.
83 I was part of the happiness
84 That lived its idle lines along.
85 Yet as I am, and as I may,
86 I must and will be thine,
87 Though all too little for thy self
88 Vouchsafing to be mine.
89 Sing lullaby, my little boy,
90 Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

91 Ay, somehow, somewhere I was
    that
92 Child, and my heart lay happy
    asleep.
93 Now – oh my sad and unknown
    fate!

"Monotony"
13 What vague and cold gusts enter
14 My soul as by a door!
15 My soul is the living centre
16 Of lives that are no more.

Ay, sing on in my soul, old voice,
So motherfully laying to sleep
The babe that quietly doth rejoice.
Sing lullaby, my little boy
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Sing on and let my heart not weep
Because something a child
    could have
This song to lull him into sleep!
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Somehow, somewhere I heard
this song.
I was part of the happiness
That lived its idle lines along.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Ay, somehow, somewhere I was
that
Child, and my heart lay happy
asleep.
Now – oh my sad and unknown
fate!

[Quatrains 13-16 and 17-20
Joined together in 8 lines]
17 Startle yet more each ember!
18 Make the fire nearer yet!
19 How easy it is to remember
20 When memory means regret!
39 The red is rose is dead. Such

“The Mad Fiddler”

“Sister Cecily”
11 With a lily along her conscious arm
12 And a virgin’s aureole.

“The Ruined Cloister”
With a lily along her lowly arm
And a smaller aureole.

IV. FOUR SORROWS

“Rivers”

“Far Away” “Meantime”
1 Far away, far away,
2 Far away from here.
3 There is no running after joy
4 Or away from fear,
17 Shadows and light,
20 Far away from sight

“Nothing”
5 She had left their home, their
God-bright day
14 And near to God as they

“Meantime”
Far away, far away
Far away from here...
There is no worry after joy
Or away from fear
Shadows and light
All away from sight.

She had left their home, their
brighter day
And near to day as they

V. FEVER-GARDEN

I.
4 Rootless just out of Night and There
9 Yet philter-aureole or lay
11 The poppies of o’er memory may
12 Sping cobwebb-circles lusting thrice
II.
23 And intermits our heart-beats’ track
24 Senseward to demon infinites.

“Isis”
3 Stark-lovely stand in a mute row

“Horizon” I, II

(Poem not included)
Rootless just out of Night and then
Far philter-aureole or lay
The poppies of o’er memory stray
Twice cobwebb-circles lusting thrice
And out of sequestering lack
The last dove in void oak alights
Start-lovely stand in a mute row
Poem not included)

(End of typescript)