

# “The Mad Fiddler”

## The Critical Edition

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**PESSOA, Fernando (1999). *Poemas Ingleses. The Mad Fiddler*. Edited by Marcus Angioni and Fernando Gomes. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda. Critical edition of Fernando Pessoa. Major series, volume V, tome III.**

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).

Importantly, there is a previous publication history for poems belonging to “The Mad Fiddler,” even though the firm Constable and Company rejected the typescript compiled by Pessoa in 1917. Pessoa published two poems: “Meantime,” in *The Athenaeum* (30 January 1920), and “Spell” in the Portuguese journal *Contemporânea* (May 1923). In the second edition of *Obra Poética*, edited by Maria Aliete Galhoz and published by Aguilar in Rio de Janeiro in 1965, in the section “ALGUNS POEMAS DE “THE MAD FIDDLER” E OUTROS POEMAS DISPERSOS,” there appear the poems “The Abyss,” “The End,” “Meantime,” and “Spell,” the latter two being repeated from the journals. In an article by Georg Rudolf Lind, “Descobertas no espólio de Fernando Pessoa,” published in *Ocidente*, vol. LXX, n.º 334 (February 1966) (pp. 57-62), the early Pessoa scholar comments: “The Mad Fiddler” (O Rabequista Louco), um volume dumas 30-40 poesias, compostas entre 1911 e 1916, ordenado pelo próprio poeta e mandado para Inglaterra, sem que tivesse encontrado o interesse do editor. A resposta negativa do inglês estava ao lado da cópia dactilografada” (p. 58). He calls the work post-romantic in the style of Shelley, Wordsworth, and Browning. Lind reproduces the poem “Looking at the Tagus” (p. 59), which he compares to the poem in Portuguese, “Ela canta, pobre ceifeira.” Again in *Ocidente*, vol. LXXIV, n.º 362 (June 1968) Lind publishes “Oito poemas ingleses inéditos de Fernando Pessoa,” in which he explains that many of

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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 134<sup>th</sup>. 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.
2. PESSOA, Fernando (1999). *Poemas Ingleses. The Mad Fiddler*. Edited by Marcus Angioni and Fernando Gomes. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda. Critical edition of Fernando Pessoa. Major series, volume V, tome III.
3. PESSOA, Fernando (1995). *Poesia Inglesa*. Edition by Luísa Freire. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte.

Typescript	Edition (1995)	Critical Edition (1999)
CONTENTS		
I. THE MAD FIDDLER		
The Mad Fiddler		
The Island		
Lycanthropy		
Spell		
Goblin Dance		Elf Dance
Dream		
"I feel pale..."		Not Myself
II. THE SHINING POOL		
Elsewhere		Sunset
"Go: thou hast nothing..."		The Shining Pool
The Poem		
Looking at the Tagus		Moonside
"If I could carry my poems"		(Poem not included)
Suspense		
Fierce dreams of something else		

## III. THE WRONG CHOICE

The Night-Light

Lullaby

(Poem not included)

Summer Moments, I, II, III

Emptiness

Monotony

Sister Cecily

Prayer

Prayer

(Poem not included)

The Ruined Cloister

## IV. FOUR SORROWS

Rivers

Far Away

Episode

Nothing

Meantime

(Poem not included)

Meantime

## V. FEVER-GARDEN

Fever-Garden I, II

The Broken Window

Isis

Ennue

L'Inconnue

Horizon I, II

Her Fingers Played Absently... Her Fingers Toyed Absently...

(Poem not included)

(Poem not included)

Her Fingers Toyed

## VI. SONGS AFTER SLUMBER.

The Lost Key

The Sunflower I, II

The Hours

La Chercheuse

Song

Anamnesis

Chalice

Song After Slumber

Awakening

The Butterfly

## VII. THE DROPPED TORCH

Elevation

To One Singing

The Foreself

The Bridge

The King of Gaps

The Loophole

The Abyss

(Poem not included)

## VIII. THE LABYRINTH



to hover

to hover

"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.  
Motherly night,

- "Lullaby"<sup>1</sup>  
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

<sup>1</sup> "Note: The "Lullaby" quoted is the 134<sup>th</sup> 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.

happiness  
 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

happiness  
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     to small  
 White bands clutching a mother's  
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