FERNANDO PE$$OA, POET, PUBLISHER, AND TRANSLATOR

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Fernando Pessoa is widely considered to be the greatest Portuguese poet of the twentieth century and a major writer of European stature. His enigmatic personality and the potent combination of poetic genius and metaphysics in his verse have fascinated a wide variety of readers both in Portugal and abroad. His invention of heteronyms, or alter egos, poets of his own creation who conducted a poetic 'drama in people', has found a response in the anxieties of the twentieth century, while the innovations in his poetic style, partly influenced by his fluency in English, have revolutionized modern Portuguese poetry.

Pessoa published a relatively small proportion of his work during his lifetime, much of it in ephemeral periodical publications. He left behind a trunk full of manuscript poems and fragments of verse into which successive researchers have delved to produce a seemingly inexhaustible supply of 'unpublished' writings. This has tended to divert attention from a detailed study of the works which he did publish while alive. The British Library is fortunate to possess copies of all five of the volumes of Fernando Pessoa's verse which were published in his lifetime as well as some of the periodicals in which he published contributions, together with various other publications associated with him. These help to illuminate not only the bibliographical history of Pessoa as a poet but also his activities as a publisher and translator. They provide too an interesting illustration of the complex way in which a large research library's collections are built up, even where the works of a relatively modern author are concerned.

Fernando Pessoa was born in Lisbon into a well-established middle-class family on 13 June 1888. His father died when he was five and two years later his mother married the Portuguese consul in Durban. Pessoa spent the formative years of his youth in South Africa and was educated in the local schools where he received a thorough grounding in English literature and culture. By the time he was fifteen he was completely fluent in English and that year won the Queen Victoria prize for an English essay, coming first out of 889 entrants. In 1905 he returned to Lisbon where he spent the rest of his life. After a brief period of study in the University he gave up formal education and became increasingly involved with the local literary circles, while earning his living by translating correspondence in English and French for various Lisbon commercial firms.

The 1910s were the most fruitful years for Pessoa as a writer. Around 1914 he developed
the idea of writing through a number of heteronyms. These were more than pseudonyms, being completely separate poets with their own individual biographical details, personalities, and styles of writing, although only existing of course in Pessoa’s mind and in the works he produced under their names. The three main heteronyms were Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos. Alberto Caeiro wrote bucolic poems singing the pleasures of the simple life, which were gathered together under the title *O guardador de rebanhos* (*The Keeper of Flocks*). Ricardo Reis wrote odes in the manner of Horace, while Álvaro de Campos went through two phases. In the earlier one, much influenced by Walt Whitman, his poems were violent evocations of the excitement of modern life while in the later phase he became the poet *par excellence* of the futility of living. Pessoa used a number of other names which were little more than pseudonyms and also published work under his own name.

The heteronyms seem to have been partly a joke with which to bemuse his literary friends (for instance, Pessoa carried on polemics with himself through the press using his different names) but they also had a serious purpose, allowing Pessoa to distance himself from what he wrote. An extremely reserved man, Pessoa rejected the confessional or romantic style of writing, yet his poetry is a constant meditation on the meaning of life and the varieties of human emotion. Pessoa likened his role as poet to that of the dramatist who creates characters who do not necessarily represent his own thoughts or feelings, hence his reference to the heteronyms as a ‘drama in people’. Thus, despite the intimate and profound nature of much of his poetry, none of it can categorically be said to represent what Pessoa ‘really thought’, not even the poems written under his own name. Pessoa’s poetry is about possibilities, not certainties. The reader, in responding to the poems, plays as important a role in giving them meaning as does the poet in writing them. Hence the enigmatic nature of Pessoa’s poetry and the fascination which it has exercised over his readers.

During the years of the First World War Pessoa achieved brief celebrity as a prominent member of the group of young writers and artists who introduced modernism and futurism to Portugal through the magazines *Orpheu* and *Portugal futurista*. During the 1920s he continued to write and publish but it was only in the late 1920s and early 1930s that a younger generation of writers linked to the magazine *Presença* began to recognize the value of his work. When he died on 30 November 1935 from cirrhosis of the liver caused by excessive drinking, his passing was noted by only a handful of friends and literary acquaintances. Full recognition of his genius only started in the 1940s with the beginning of the publication of his complete works.

Fernando Pessoa first came to the attention of the public as a literary critic when, in 1912, he published a series of articles on New Portuguese Poetry in *A Águia*, a review edited by the poet Teixeira de Pascoaes, in which he predicted the appearance of a great new Portuguese poet or ‘supra-Camões’. Three years later Lisbon’s normally tranquil literary life was shaken by the publication of the magazine *Orpheu*, which marked the beginning of modern poetry in Portugal. Pessoa published some of his most innovatory poems in the two issues of this periodical, notably ‘Opiário’, ‘Ode triunfal’, and ‘Ode
maritima' under the name of Álvaro de Campos, and 'Chuva obliqua' under his own name. The second issue was edited by Pessoa and his close friend Mário de Sá Carneiro, another notable poet. A third issue was started but did not appear owing to financial difficulties. Pessoa contributed poems to other ephemeral periodicals, particularly Exílio and Centauro, and in 1917 published the Álvaro de Campos poem 'Ultimatum' in the magazine Portugal futurista. The only issue of this publication was seized by the police. These periodicals are very rare and there are no copies in the British Library.

In 1918 Pessoa published two volumes of poems in English, Antinous and 35 Sonnets. These were published in Lisbon by Monteiro & Co., 190-192 Rua do Ouro, and were both printed at 100 Rua da Alegria, Lisbon. There is no colophon with the date of printing but the printer is given as Sociedade Typographica Editora in Antinous and Lamas, Motta & C.a in 35 Sonnets, suggesting that some time may have elapsed between the printing of the two. The volumes are slim and soberly produced, although the cover of Antinous has some elegant art nouveau lettering. Copies of the two volumes were sent to various newspapers and journals in Britain and reviews appeared in The Scotsman, the Glasgow Herald, the Times Literary Supplement, and the Athenaeum. The review in The Scotsman is the earliest, appearing on 15 August 1918, while in Portugal there are copies of the books with a dedication dated 3 August 1918, so they would seem to have been published sometime in July or early August 1918.

Antinous is a lengthy poem of 360 lines dated 1915, which describes the Emperor Hadrian weeping over the drowned body of his beloved Antinous and vowing to make the boy into a god so that the memory of their love will be a source of inspiration to future generations. The 35 Sonnets are a series of meditations on life and the meaning, or lack of meaning, of things, written in archaic language with a convoluted word order and much use of repetition and word play, which clearly owes a great deal to the Elizabethan and metaphysical poets. The Scotsman's reviewer commented: 'Both the sonnets and the poem are remarkable as instances of the literary accomplishment of a foreigner writing well in English; but it is always a foreigner's English, and is often too Southern both in expression and in feeling to be likely to please a strictly English taste.' This review has hitherto escaped the attention of Pessoa specialists but it seems to be the first appraisal of Pessoa's poetry to appear in English. The review in the Glasgow Herald was longer and more enthusiastic, commenting: 'These two little volumes reveal a poet of great boldness and imaginative power' and 'Both books are the work of a strong poetical intelligence'. Two of the reviewers commented on the Shakespearian influence on the sonnets and all of them baulked at the homosexual theme of the relationship between Antinous and the Emperor Hadrian. Pessoa himself later described Antinous and the poem 'Epithalamium', published in 1921, as 'obscene'. Although tame enough by today's standards, Antinous, with its references to the physical relations between Antinous and the Emperor, went beyond contemporary English poems on the subject which concentrated on the spiritual and symbolic aspects of the relationship. It is interesting to note that in a type of literature where pseudonyms were commonly used Pessoa chose to publish under his own name, although the heteronyms existed by this time. The two volumes in the British
Library were donated to the British Museum in May 1945 and were probably originally review copies sent to newspapers in Britain.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{Antinous} was clearly important to Pessoa because he published a second revised edition in 1921 which, together with other poems, appeared in two volumes entitled \textit{English Poems I–II} and \textit{English Poems III}.\textsuperscript{12} \textit{English Poems I–II} contains ‘Antinous’ and ‘Inscriptions’, a collection of short epigraphs inspired by Roman tombstones, dated 1920. Preceding ‘Antinous’ is a note which reads: ‘An early and very imperfect draft of \textit{Antinous} was published in 1918. The present one is meant to annul and supersede that, from which it is essentially different.’ In fact, although Pessoa rewrote parts of the poem, simplifying the language, the basic structure and contents remained unaltered. \textit{English Poems III} contains the ‘Epithalamium’, a poem dated 1913 about the musings of a bride on the morning of her wedding. The structure is roughly similar to that of Edmund Spenser’s \textit{Epithalamion} but the imagery is much cruder than in ‘Antinous’ and seems to be almost a parody of Spenser. Pessoa later stated that ‘Antinous’ and ‘Epithalamium’ were to form part of a cycle of five poems on the various aspects of love, but so far no trace of the other three has been found.\textsuperscript{13}

Both volumes of the \textit{English Poems} were printed at the Printing Office of the Annuario Commercial, 24 Restauradores, Lisbon, and were published by Olisipo, Apartado 145, Lisbon. Several copies were presented to libraries in Britain accompanied by publishers’ compliments slips.\textsuperscript{14} On the back cover of each volume is the price ‘One and sixpence net’ so it seems that Pessoa intended to put them on sale in Britain, although there is no evidence that this in fact happened.

The copies in the British Library were presented to the British Museum in January 1922 and the single volume into which they were bound by the Museum bears an Olisipo compliments slip with the following words in Pessoa’s own handwriting: ‘The Trustees of / The British Museum. / From the Publishers. / (Published 19th. December, 1921)’. Olisipo was in fact Pessoa’s own publishing house and the \textit{English Poems} was its first publication. This reveals another aspect of Fernando Pessoa: his interest in printing and publishing. As far back as 1907 he had tried to buy a printing press in Portalegre and although nothing seems to have come of this he continued to take an active interest in publishing ventures throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

Olisipo’s next venture was to publish a new edition of the \textit{Canções} of António Botto which was printed by the Typographia do Annuario Commercial in January 1922.\textsuperscript{15} This was a collection of poems which began life in 1920 as \textit{Canções do Sul} and eventually ran into many editions, all under the title of \textit{Canções} but with many additions and alterations.\textsuperscript{16} It included some homosexual love poems and, unlike Pessoa’s poems in English, was put on sale in Portugal, eventually leading both author and publisher into controversy.

Pessoa was himself partly responsible for stirring up this controversy by publishing a lengthy article in the cultural review \textit{Contemporanea} in July 1922 entitled ‘Antonio Botto e o ideal esthetico em Portugal’, in which he attempted to prove that António Botto was the only true aesthete in Portugal, pursuing the Hellenic ideal of perfection through the
search for physical beauty and pleasure in art. This brought forth a violent rebuke by the journalist Alvaro Maia, entitled ‘Literatura de Sodoma: o sr Fernando Pessoa e o ideal estetico em Portugal’, which was published in the following issue of Contemporanea in October 1922. Pessoa contented himself by replying in the next issue for November 1922 with a short note correcting a quotation in Maia’s article.

However, early in the following year tempers were raised again when Pessoa’s Olisipo published Sodoma divinisada, a pamphlet by Raul Leal which was printed by the Imprensa de Manuel Lucas Torres, Rua do Diario de Noticias 59–61, Lisbon, in January 1923. This was a passionate defence of Botto’s work written in esoteric religious language. The polemic then moved into the streets. A group of students led by Pedro Teotónio Pereira and supported by the newspaper A Época formed the Liga d’Ação dos Estudantes de Lisboa (Lisbon Students’ Action Group) which successfully put pressure on the authorities to ban Leal’s book and others like it. Leaflets were issued by Leal and Pessoa, both under his own name and that of Álvaro de Campos, to protest at these actions, but then the controversy seems to have petered out.

The controversy does not seem to have been taken entirely seriously by Pessoa, at least initially, as he sent a letter signed by Álvaro de Campos to Contemporanea criticizing both Botto’s poems and Pessoa’s own article on them. Later, however, he wrote another lengthy article on Botto’s aestheticism, as if to have the final say. The row did not have any lasting repercussions: Teotónio Pereira went on to become one of the leading lights of the Salazar regime but both Pessoa and Botto continued to write and publish under the Estado Novo. The British Library’s copies of Canções, Sodoma divinisada, and Contemporanea were purchased in May 1962, June 1973, and January 1958 respectively. Unfortunately the Library does not possess any copies of the leaflets, which seem to have marked the end of the Olisipo venture.

Despite this setback Pessoa continued his interest in publishing. Together with Ruy Vaz he directed the periodical Athena which published five issues between October 1924 and February 1925 and to which he also contributed a large number of writings under both his own name and those of his heteronyms. He took a hand in the publishing of the business magazine Revista de comercio e contabilidade in 1926, of which his brother-in-law Francisco Caetano Dias was the editor, and of the literary periodical Solução Editora in the late 1920s. Under the auspices of the latter he set to work in collaboration with António Botto on an anthology of modern Portuguese poetry. Some seventy pages of this were printed in 1929 but work then stopped, and the Antologia de poemas portugueses modernos which was published in 1944 under both names is a new edition undertaken by Botto after Pessoa’s death.

Fernando Pessoa was fluent in English and spent a considerable part of his time in translating, both to earn a living and as part of his literary activities. His contributions to Athena reveal the range of his interests as a translator into Portuguese: Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The raven’, ‘Annabel Lee’, and ‘Ulalume’ in verse translations; Walter Pater’s ‘La Giaconda’; two short stories by O. Henry; and excerpts from the Greek Anthology.

Other interests of Pessoa were spiritualism and theosophy and he contributed a number
of Portuguese translations to the *Colecção 'Teosófica e Esoterica'* published by the Livraria Clássica in Lisbon. Two are in the British Library: Annie Besant’s *Os ideais da teosofia (The Ideals of Theosophy)* and C. W. Leadbeater’s *A clarividência (Clairvoyance).* In both works Pessoa is named as the translator on the title-page. These books have an interesting history. They were originally donated by Portuguese publishers for an exhibition of Portuguese translations from the English, organized by the British Council during the Second World War. The exhibition was held in Lisbon, Coimbra, and Oporto and helped to promote the Allied cause in neutral Portugal. After the war one set of the books was added to the library of the British Institute in Portugal (now in the library of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon) while the other set was donated to the British Museum in October 1945 by the British Council representative in Portugal, Mr S. George West.

Ten other books in the theosophy series also formed part of the same donation. Until recently it was thought that the name Fernando de Castro who appears as the general editor of the series and the translator of several of the works in it was another pseudonym or heteronym of Fernando Pessoa but it has now been established that Fernando de Castro really did exist.

Towards the end of his life Fernando Pessoa began to prepare his works for publication, gathering the poems into bundles under each heteronym. The first (and in the event only) volume to appear before his death was *Mensagem* in 1934, a series of patriotic poems evoking Portugal’s past glories and extolling a form of mystic nationalism, which came out under his own name. The book was composed and printed in the workshop of Editorial Império Ltd., 151–153 Rua do Salitre, Lisbon, in October 1934 and was published by the Parceria Antonio Maria Pereira, 44–54 Rua Augusta, Lisbon. It appeared with a paper cover in two shades of yellow. The British Library copy was purchased in September 1978.

*Mensagem* has somewhat hampered recognition of Pessoa’s greatness as a poet, partly because the poems are traditional and do not represent his most innovatory poetry and partly because of the book’s association with the Salazar regime’s discredited colonial policy in Africa. Indeed, the second edition, which appeared in 1941 (after Pessoa’s death), was published by the Ministry of the Colonies. However, it should be noted that Pessoa had written several of the poems many years earlier and the nucleus of the book had already been published in *Contemporanea* in 1922, before Salazar came to power. *Mensagem* shows that it is possible to write patriotic verse which has genuine literary merit. The book was entered in a literary competition run by the government’s propaganda service, where it won the second prize. The first prize went to *Romaria*, a book of verse by Vasco Reis, a Franciscan missionary in Mozambique who has since sunk without trace as a writer. It seems that *Mensagem* was disqualified from winning the first prize by its number of pages but in the end the head of the propaganda service, António Ferro, increased Pessoa’s prize money to the same amount as that awarded to *Romaria*.

Fernando Pessoa died a year after the publication of *Mensagem*, on 30 November 1935. He left behind five volumes of verse which represent only a small proportion of what he wrote. The rest was buried in ephemeral publications or left unpublished.
volume of his complete works, published by the Editorial Ática in Lisbon, appeared in 1942 and, despite arguments over the organization of the series, further volumes have continued to appear over the years. As the corpus of his work becomes more accessible, the full extent of his genius has become more widely recognized, inspiring a stream of critical works which have now established Fernando Pessoa as the greatest Portuguese poet since Camões.

**British newspaper reviews of Fernando Pessoa’s Antinous and 35 Sonnets**

The review published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 19 September 1918, p. 443, can easily be found in the photographic reprint published by R. R. Bowker and has also been reprinted in Américo da Costa Ramalho, ‘Fernando Pessoa e o *Times de Londres*, Revista de história literária de Portugal’, i (1962), pp. 281–2. Both the TLS and the *Glasgow Herald* reviews are reproduced in the Appendix to Robert D. F. Pring-Mill, ‘The Themes of Fernando Pessoa’s English Sonnets’, *Studies in Modern Portuguese Literature* (New Orleans, Tulane Studies in Romance Languages and Literature, no. 4, 1971), pp. 9–37. The other reviews are not so accessible, however, and so their texts are reproduced below:

Two neatly printed pamphlets, one containing 35 Sonnets by Fernando Pessoa, the other containing *Antinous*, a poem by the same writer, have come from Messrs Monteiro & Co., Lisbon. Both the sonnets and the poem are remarkable as instances of the literary accomplishment of a foreigner writing well in English; but it is always a foreigner’s English, and is often too Southern both in expression and in feeling to be likely to please a strictly English taste.

*(The Scotsman* (Thursday, 15 August 1918), p. 2.)*

Pessoa (Fernando). *ANTINOUS*. Lisbon, Monteiro, 190 Rua do Ouro, 1918. 8 in. 16 pp. paper. 821.9

A poem expressing the grief of Hadrian at the death of Antinous. The theme is often repellent, but certain passages have unquestionable power.

Pessoa (Fernando). *THIRTY-FIVE SONNETS*. Lisbon, Monteiro, 1918. 8 in. 18 pp. paper. 821.9

A pessimistic note predominates in these sonnets, and they end in a minor key. The mystery of being mainly occupies the author.

*(Athenaeum*, no. 4637 (January 1919), p. 36.)*


3 Alexandrino E. Severino, ‘A primeira publicação literária de Fernando Pessoa’, *Hispania*, liv, no. 1 (Mar. 1970), pp. 68–72. The essay with which Pessoa won the prize has been lost but an essay on Macaulay which he published at about the same time in the Durban High School magazine has


5 The articles have been reprinted several times, most recently in *Fernando Pessoa, Textos de crítica e de intervenção*, pp. 11–74. The original issues of *A Aguia* are not in the British Library.


11 The books were presented to the British Museum in May 1945 by Leonard Ashley Willoughby who was the executor of Samuel Elsworth Cottam, a collector of pederastic literature. He in turn seems to have acquired them from either John Gambril Nicholson or Charles Philip Castle Kains Jackson, two poets who formed part of the Uranian group of writers. On the title-page of *Antinous*, Pessoa’s name is annotated in Cottam’s handwriting as the ‘Executor to Horatio F. Brown’. Brown was another Uranian poet who spent much of his life in Venice but Pessoa is not mentioned in his will (held in Edinburgh) and the note appears to be a mistake on Cottam’s part. There is no evidence that Pessoa was acquainted with the Uranian poets and the most likely explanation for the provenance of these books is that they were originally review copies sent to British newspapers. Timothy d’Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English ‘Uranian’ Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London, 1970), pp. 153–4; British Museum, list of donations (Trustees’ meeting of 12 May 1945); letter to the author from the Scottish Record Office, 7 June 1982.


13 Letter, 18 November 1930, reprinted in Fernando Pessoa, *Cartas a João Gaspar Simões*, pp. 67–8. It seems that originally Pessoa planned to publish both ‘Antinous’ and ‘Epithalamium’ in the magazine *Orpheu*, since he wrote to Cortes-Rodrigues in a letter dated 4 September 1916: ‘Orpheu 3 is going to appear. It is there that, at the end of the issue, I am publishing two English poems of mine which are very indecent and therefore not publishable in England.’ Fernando Pessoa, *Cartas a Armando Cortes-Rodrigues* ([Lisboa? 1945]), p. 79.

14 Copies with similar publishers’ compliments slips exist in the University Library, Cambridge; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the National Library of Scotland (originally presented to the Library of the Faculty of Advocates); and the
Sterling Library, Senate House Library, University of London. Pessoa stated in his application for the post of librarian in the Museu-Biblioteca Conde de Castro Guimarães in Cascais, dated 16 September 1932, that the English Poems were not sent to newspapers. However, bound in the back of the copy in the Sterling Library is the envelope in which it was originally sent, addressed to the Editor of the Bookman's Journal, London. I have been unable to trace any review or mention of the English Poems in this journal. Sir Louis Sterling bought the books in July 1931 for £7. 4s. 6d. J. G. Simões, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 366–7; Sir Louis Sterling's list of purchases, Sterling Library.

15 António Botto, Canções. Segunda edição muito augmentada com um retrato do auteur e palavras de Teixeira de Pascoaes (Lisboa: 'Olisipo' Sociedade Editora, 1922) 56 pp., C.127.c.28.

16 The most complete bibliography of António Botto is in João José Cochofel (ed.), Grande dicionário da literatura portuguesa e de teoria literária ([Lisboa], 1977–), vol. ii, pp. 27–31. Pessoa translated some of the poems in Canções into English and they were published in 1948 as Songs, with no place of publication or publisher shown: M. E. Monteiro, op. cit., pp. 58–62.

17 Fernando Pessoa, 'António Botto e o ideal estético em Portugal', Contemporanea, ano I, i, no. 3 (July 1922), pp. 121–6, P.P. 1931.pko. The article has been reprinted several times, most recently in Fernando Pessoa, Textos de crítica e de intervenção, pp. 117–31. The ensuing controversy is described in J. G. Simões, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 201–12.


19 Note in Contemporanea Jornal 1922, ano I, ii, p. 1, attached to Contemporanea, ano I, ii, no. 5 (Nov. 1922).


24 Fernando Pessoa, 'António Botto e o ideal estético creador', in António Botto, Cartas que me foram devolvidas (Lisboa, 1932), pages not numbered, X.907/6711(2).


26 Fernando Pessoa & António Botto (eds.), Antologia de poemas portugueses modernos (Coimbra: Nobel, 1944) 190 pp., X.908/22124.

27 Annie Besant, Os ideais da teosofia. Tradução de Fernando Pessoa, 2.a edição (Lisboa: Livraria Clássica Editora de A. M. Teixeira & C.a Filhos, 1925) 121 pp. (Coleção 'Teosófica e Esoterica', ii), 4507.aa.14. C. W. Leadbeater, A clarividência. Tradução de Fernando Pessoa (Livraria Clássica Editora de A. M. Teixeira & C.a Filhos, 1924) 200 pp. (Coleção 'Teosófica e Esoterica', iii), 4507.aa.17. There is a list of the works in this collection and their translators, including Fernando Pessoa, on the half-title of Annie Besant, No recinto externo, 2.a edição (Lisboa, 1926), 4507.aa.12.

28 Letter from S. George West, Esq., to the author, 21 September 1981. I gratefully acknowledge Professor West's help in this matter. The catalogue of the exhibition is also in the British Library: Instituto Britânico em Portugal, Catálogo da exposição de livros portugueses traduzidos de inglês ([Lisboa?], 1944), 11915.bb.15.