Interview with Robert N. Schwartz

[Entrevista com Robert N. Schwartz]

Fernanda Vizcaíno*

Keywords

Fernando Pessoa, Robert N. Schwartz, Translation, Rhyme, Meter, Writing techniques.

Abstract

In this interview with Fernanda Vizcaíno, the late Robert N. Schwartz (1934-2021) discusses his collaboration with his son, John Pedro Schwartz, in translating into English three volumes by Fernando Pessoa: *Poetry—Minimal Anthology* (Tinta-da-china, 2020); *Message*; and *Prose—Minimal Anthology*. Both the origin and the process of this collaboration are covered. Dr. Schwartz shares his background in the Portuguese language. He explains how he parlayed his prose skills, honed over a long career in history, journalism, and political commentary, into the genre of poetry translation. He reveals the principles guiding their translation of both poetry and prose. His most memorable poems receive mention. His experience of reading Pessoa's poetry for the first time is described.

Palavras-chave

Fernando Pessoa, Robert N. Schwartz, Tradução, Rima, Métrica, Técnicas de escrita.

Resumo

Nesta entrevista com a Fernanda Vizcaíno, o falecido Robert N. Schwartz (1934-2021) discute a colaboração com o seu filho, John Pedro Schwartz, na tradução para inglês de três volumes de Fernando Pessoa: *Poetry—Minimal Anthology* (Tinta-da-china, 2020); *Message*; and *Prose—Minimal Anthology*. Cobrem-se tanto a origem como o processo da sua colaboração. O Dr. Schwartz partilha a sua formação na língua portuguesa, explica como expõe as suas habilidades de prosa, aperfeiçoados ao longo de uma longa carreira em história, jornalismo e comentário político, no género da tradução poética. Revela os princípios que orientaram as suas traduções (dele e do filho), tanto de poesia como de prosa. Os seus poemas mais memoráveis recebem menção. É descrita a sua experiência de leitura da poesia de Pessoa pela primeira vez.

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[Fernanda Vizcaino] 1. What led to your collaboration with your son in translating into English both the poetry and prose of Fernando Pessoa?

Our son John was visiting the family in Houston, Texas, over Christmas of 2018, when he invited me to assist him in translating the last two quatrains of "Sea. Morning.," the first poem of Pessoa's *Poetry—Minimal Anthology*. He explained both the metrical scheme (iambic tetrameter) and the rhyme scheme (ABAB) into which he was rendering the poem. With my training in music, I readily picked up on these poetic devices. I had long since taken piano classes, and I parlayed that skill into learning to play a church organ. After accompanying my church choir for many years, I found an irresistible desire to compose a few liturgical hymns, one of which was performed by a choir in Houston.

Working side by side, we completed the translation—successfully, to our minds, and harmoniously, indeed, enjoyably—and we passed on to the next poem in the anthology, "Night." What began as an invitation more filial than formal grew into an extended collaboration that will soon yield a second published book, *Message*. At present, we are working on our third book by Pessoa, *Prose—A Minimal Anthology*, which we should complete within the year.

I should mention that, prior to this, I had some experience in translating Spanish prose into English.

[FV] 2. Please describe the process of collaboration.

We connect every other day on Gmail video chat, our son in Malta and I in Houston, and work in real time over a shared Google document. In translating rhymed and metered poetry, our son generally does the first draft on his own, and then we get together online either to revise, to complete any remaining lines or half-lines, or to select from among the alternative lines or stanzas that he has generated. Occasionally, we translate such a poem together from the ground up. In the case of both free verse and prose, our son tends to do the literal translation on his own, and then we gather online to recast the translation into poetry or to polish the prose. My son takes the lead in translating the rhymed and metered poetry, I in recasting the free verse. In polishing the prose, we usually share the duties evenly.

[FV] 3. What is your background in the Portuguese language?

It all began with my developing interest in Brazil. After military service in Cold War Germany, I used my GI Bill of Rights to study Brazil's exciting history at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), under the teaching guidance of E. Bradford Burns. Later I attended a course on the Portuguese language in Washington, D.C., after which I began to teach myself the language in depth, as I

had done earlier with Spanish. Still later I joined Helping Hands Medical Missions on two trips to the Amazon, where I translated for many of the team members, having studied Portuguese medical terms on my own. Also, one summer I joined a team of Brazilian volunteers involved in helping street kids in São Paulo.

Still another opportunity came my way to work and learn about the people of Brazil when I was offered the chance to spread the faith while working in northern Brazil with Father "Xico," an active and zealous Maryknoll priest. That pursuit furthered my understanding of and dedication to Brazil and the history and language of its people.

Over the years I have continued to study Brazil's rich history in both Portuguese and English. One title that comes to mind is *História do Brasil*, by Vicente Tapajos. Today I focus my attention on contemporary issues facing that great country. I might also mention that I have an unpublished manuscript on a topic of Brazilian history, written years ago, lying somewhere among my papers.

I also have fond memories of visiting Portugal one summer in the 1990s. After spending some weeks doing archival research in Seville, Spain, I rented a car and met my wife, Irene, at the airport in Madrid, and together we drove into Portugal. It was wonderful to experience what I had only read about—Porto, Fátima, and Lisbon, three cities filled with historical and religious significance. As I have done in so many countries in Worlds both Old and New, I admired the church architecture, especially that of the Lisbon Cathedral and the Jerónimos Monastery.

[FV] 4. You've developed prose-writing skills over a long career in the field of history and through extensive experience with both journalism and social and political commentary. How did you parlay those skills into a new genre of writing, namely, poetry translation?

The opportunities to flex my skills were offered at Lima, Peru, with the challenge of writing about that country for my high school students. I found the seriousness and fidelity, the excitement and understanding of Peruvian history to be of paramount importance in the writing of Peru's history, soon to be reinforced by my efforts in more advanced studies.

Shortly after returning to the U.S., I entered a doctoral program at UCLA. The discipline of history took on greater importance there, under the guidance of E. Bradford Burns, a historian of Brazil. Two years later, while engaged in further historical studies at the University of Houston under John Hart, I was directed to a course on technical writing. This served as the confidence-builder I soon needed as I began to work as the editor for Brown & Root, the Houston designer and builder of the South Texas Nuclear Project. There I became conscious of the precision needed in writing, and this further buttressed my confidence in writing both conservatively and with unerring fidelity to the smallest detail. It helped tremendously in my

doctoral studies and dissertation. Throughout those experiences I was ever more cognizant of the power of words. I became totally concerned about limiting responses and explanations precisely, not going beyond the question.

The essential commonality in these writings with poetry translation lies in expressing ideas clearly and images vividly; stating what needs to be said in as few words as possible; creating parallel structures to pair ideas; forming elliptical constructions; exploiting the expressive possibilities of punctuation, especially the dash, the ellipsis, and the exclamation point; and cultivating, through long years of practice, an ear for the well-balanced line. All these come together in weighing the welter of connotations attached to each word, for each word embodies an entire history of use.

Consider two examples of the use of similar structures to connect ideas, the first taken from a passage from *The Book of Disquiet*, in which we also use inverted word order to create a special effect:

> Dormimos ali acordados dias, contentes de não ser nada, de não ter desejos nem esperanças, de nos termos esquecido da cor dos amores e do sabor dos ódios.
> […]
> Ali vivemos horas cheias de um outro sentirmo-las, horas de uma imperfeição vazia e tão perfeitas por isso, tão diagonais à certeza retângula da vida…
>
> (PESSOA, 2020b: 26)

> *There we slept through days* bright and alert, content not to be anything, nor to have desires or hopes, to have forgotten the very color of loves, the very taste of hatreds.
> […]
> *There we lived through hours* filled with another sense of time, hours of an empty imperfection—therefore, perfect hours—so at odds with the correctness of life…
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, forthcoming; italics mine)[1]

The second example comes from "Don Sebastian, King of Portugal":

> Sem a loucura que é o homem
> Mais que a besta sadia,
> Cadáver adiado que procria?
>
> (PESSOA, 2018: 165)

> Without such reckless madness, what is man
> But just a beast that, strutting, preens and prates,
> A corpse-to-be that, rutting, procreates?
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 169)

[1] The phrasing SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ owes to our respective statuses as primary (John Pedro) and secondary (Robert N.) translators.

Incidentally, in addition to the parallel relative clauses, both the rhyme (end and internal alike) and the meter function as parallel structures (of sound and rhythm) for comparing ideas.

Now let me offer an example of an elliptical construction from "The West," which also appears in the original:

> Foi alma a Sciencia e corpo a Ousadia
> Da mão que desvendou.
>
> (PESSOA, 2020a: 88)

> Yet Boldness, it was body, Science—soul,
> Of that hand stripping clear.
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, forthcoming)

The words ("it was") omitted later in this compound structure are exactly the same as the words earlier in the compound. We use the dash both to indicate the omission and to charge the line with drama.

[FV] 5. What principles govern your translation of poetry?

As our son wrote in his article, "Problems in Translating Pessoa's Poetry into English," in *Pessoa Plural* 17, "Translation is a calculus of gains and losses, weighed according to criteria generally agreed upon but differently ranked" (SCHWARTZ, 2020: 62). Most will agree that fidelity, musicality, emotion, clarity, and vividness count among the guiding principles in translating poetry. The use of a lexicon and a syntax that only rarely stray outside the range of the conversational is also an important desideratum—except where the language is more formal or involved, as in Ricardo Reis or the Pessoa of *Message*.

The translator must aspire to meet all these criteria. The difficulty arises when two or more criteria—for example, fidelity and musicality—conflict, or seem to conflict. At that point, the translator must decide which might be the more important standard to adopt. Upon reflecting, he may discover that fidelity is itself often a matter of musicality—that, where the original is musical, the translation must also be musical if it is to maintain fidelity. Of course, fidelity to the paraphrasable content is paramount, and no amount of rhythm, rhyme, assonance, or consonance will do justice to the original if its basic semantic meaning is not first preserved. That is why we always strive to convey Pessoa's idea in a given verse while hewing as closely as possible to his wording. Where the demands of musicality force us to use different words, we yet take care to render the same meaning or message. Finding different ways of saying the same thing is the task of any translator—whether of poetry or of prose.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the distance between the initial, literal translation and the final, polished version. So different are the idioms of Portuguese and English from one another that our first, word-for-word version of any translation almost always proves distant in meaning from the original. Indeed, the difference in idioms can be measured by the distance between rough and final drafts. A literal translation is almost always unfaithful to the original. Such is the paradox of translation.

We attach great importance to translating with rhyme and rhythm, considering them very much a gain overall. Our two volumes—*Poetry—Minimal Anthology* and *Message*—carry the major distinction of being the only English translations of Fernando Pessoa's poems that recreate both the rhyme and the metrical schemes of the original.

If I may quote a stretch from our Translators' Preface to *Message*:

> So why take the trouble to pair up sounds and pattern out stresses? We do this for the same reasons of sound and sense that Pessoa did. In the ordered repetition of sounds, as in the regular distribution of beats, there is euphony. Where those sounds and stresses—in both their harmonies and dissonances—reinforce the sense of what is said, there is meaning. The comparison of words can reveal an unexpected likeness or unlikeness. A change in rhythm can signal a shift in thought or emotion. […]
>
> Rhythm and rhyme communicate meaning in concert with all the other elements of a poem. Consider the significant form of the poetry of *Message*. In Pessoa's mixture, often within the same poem, of elite and popular verse forms—lines of seven or eight syllables intercalated with lines of eleven syllables—critics have seen a rhythm that evokes both the movement of a ship and a national spirit that blends nobility of race with love of popular legend. Translation that eschews the alternating rhythms afforded by rhyme and meter can hardly hope to limn this nautical and spiritual oscillation.
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, forthcoming)

Another principle shaping our translation bears mentioning. In both poetry and prose, we prefer to use shorter rather than longer words—they are usually smoother on both tongue and ear. We lean, therefore, on Anglo-Saxon words, which, in addition to being shorter, can be more precise and give the reader an immediate perceptual understanding.

"On the Etymology of the English language," the title I chose for a paper I wrote, analyzes the evident dichotomy between Latin and Anglo-Saxon. The paper shows clearly that the English speaker utilizes Anglo-Saxon derivatives in both speaking and writing. The sounds of the words are hard and clear, with great inconsistencies in the rules of pronunciation governing the language. The Latin derivatives, which entered the English language during the Renaissance, carry softer tones. The vocabulary has greatly enriched the English language, yet the words carry a more generic expression, as is clear in juxtaposing *speed* with *accelerate*. They also tend to be longer—note the difference between *strength* and *fortitude*.

In *ending*, that is, in *conclusion*, Latin-based words can express more generally a given scene in poetry, and yet the English speaker is accustomed both to speaking and writing in Anglo-Saxon words. The words are precise, in contrast to the Latin counterpart, which, therefore, discourages the translator from using Latin-based words in order to convey the idea of the poet. Our preference, then, is to use Anglo-Saxon words in translating poetry. That said, it is beautiful to employ the less-used words from time to time, for example, *veracity* instead of *truth*.

Occasionally a polysyllable like *veracity* will strike just the right note, either in ruffling an otherwise rote rhythm or in maintaining that lively tension between the word and the object or idea in the mind that is poetry. Consider, for example, the Greek word *Procrustean* in the poem "*When tired, we long to be some other soul*," included in the anthology:

> Sim, há cansaços sem saber de quê
> Que tornam toda a vida e a sua sina
> Uma coisa indecisa que não é
> Masculina ou feminina.
>
> (PESSOA, 2018: 125)

> Fatigues there are without our knowing why,
> That turn all life, and its Procrustean norm,
> A shapeless, shifting thing that does belie
> Its male or female form.
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 129)

The anapest formed by the last three syllables in the second line—ste | an | norm—strains against the very "Procrustean norm" of the iambic meter. The medium itself reinforces the message.

Indeed, we always try to tailor the language to the subject—in keeping with Pessoa's own precept, our son tells me. Take, for instance, these lines from "King Denis" in *Message*:

> E ouve um silencio murmuro comsigo:
> É o rumor dos pinhaes que, como um trigo
> De Imperio, ondulam sem se poder ver.
>
> (PESSOA, 2020a: 56)

> And hears in silence hushed a murmured strain:
> The sound of pines that, like the Empire's grain,
> In gentle motion swish and sway unseen.
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, forthcoming)

The sibilance of *hushed*, *motion*, and *swish* mimics the rustling of pines in the wind. The sound of the verses echoes the sense therein.

Another example of the fusion of form and content comes from "*Blue, and blue, and blue, the sea uncoils*," included in the anthology:

Ah, mas essa dor, Cheia de consciência do mutável Da pobreza da vida e do amor É tão antiga como o mar E tem marés, Cessa para recomeçar Mais uma vez.	Ah, but that pain— Born from knowledge, borne in vain, Of the protean poverty of life and love, The liquid, shifting shapes thereof— Is ancient like the sea And like the sea has tides. It changes like the sea, Yet like the sea abides.
(PESSOA, 2018: 141)	(SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 145)

In the last four lines, the phrase "like the sea" shifts position from the end to the beginning of the line and again from end to beginning. This to-and-fro movement imitates the ebb and flow of the tides themselves.

Finally, our son tells me that he has been compiling certain ticks, or tricks, or techniques of ours into a style guide of sorts. I might share three or four of these "trade secrets" of ours—and why not? Language is a public good, and so such writing tips should be disseminated far and wide. Of course, we would not want other translators to imitate us—every translation should be as unique as the original.

As I've already noted, we favor parallel structures to pair ideas, as in this example from "Maritime Ode":

> Chamam por mim, levantando uma voz corpórea, os longes,
> As épocas marítimas todas sentidas no passado, a chamar.
>
> (PESSOA, 2018: 241)

> All distances—their bodily voice calls out to me.
> All seagoing eras long gone by—I feel their salt-spray call!
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 245)

We often replace a relative clause with a dash. In "*Come, Night, most ancient, dark, unchanging Night*," instead of writing "To the East, which is everything we lack, | Which is everything we are not," for:

> Ao Oriente que é tudo o que nós não temos,
> Que é tudo o que nós não somos,
>
> (PESSOA, 2018: 229)

we write

> To the East—everything we lack,
> Everything we are not,
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 233)

We eliminate unnecessary articles, as in this line from "Swamps":

> A sentinela é hirta—a lança que finca no chão
> É mais alta do que ela […]
>
> (PESSOA, 2018: 31)

> Stiff stands the sentry—lance stuck in earth
> Is taller than he […]
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 35)

We occasionally replace "and" with "while." The latter conjunction implies a simultaneity that lends dynamism to these lines in "Slanting Rain II":

> Soa o canto do coro, latino e vento a sacudir-me a vidraça
> E sente-se chiar a água no facto de haver coro…
>
> (PESSOA, 2018: 40)

> The choral hymn resounds, both Latin and wind rattle through the panes,
> While rain hisses through the choir of voices rising to the timbered vaulting…
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 44)

[FV] 6. What criteria guide your translation of prose?

Clarity is one criterion. It is the quality that facilitates communication between writer and reader. If at times the reader must wrestle with the meaning, it should be owing to the difficulty of the concept, not to the obscurity of the writing. Words are the writer's tool! The concept is the challenge that must be met by the writer's choice of the precise tool. Ultimately, I judge a writer, as I judge myself, by the criterion of clarity. It is a principle that I absorbed early in my career, through my training in both technical and historical writing.

Conciseness is another criterion. It is a virtue in writing because it aids the cause of clarity. Portuguese sentences tend to be longer, more fraught with clauses, than sentences in English. We often find ourselves dividing Portuguese sentences into two or even three sentences in English. Naturally, we make it a point to eliminate unnecessary words, replace wordy phrases, simplify sentence structure, and avoid wordy noun forms.

In translating the essays of both *Message* and *Prose—Minimal Anthology*, we employed a style that matches the original, namely, one that is objective, rational, and clear. By contrast, the writing in *The Book of Disquiet* is lyrical to the highest degree. In this it is akin to poetry. And so, we followed Pessoa's lead by adapting our expression to the emotion being expressed. Take this excerpt, included in the anthology:

> O movimento parado das árvores; o sossego inquieto das fontes; o hálito indefinível do ritmo íntimo das seivas; o entardecer lento das coisas, que parece vir-lhes de dentro a dar mãos de concordância espiritual ao entristecer longínquo, e próximo à alma, do alto silêncio do céu; o cair das folhas, compassado e inútil, pingos de alheamento, em que a paisagem se nos torna toda para os ouvidos e se entristece em nós como uma pátria recordada — tudo isto, como um cinto a desatar-se, cingia-nos, incertamente.
>
> (PESSOA, 2020b: 25)

> The movement of the trees, stopped; the disturbed peace of the fountains; the indefinite breath of the sap's intimate rhythm; the slow eventide of things, which seems to eclipse them from within, blending in spiritual harmony with distant tristesse; the falling of the leaves, stately but useless, mere drops of alienation, wherein the landscape transforms itself wholly to our hearing and saddens within us like a fatherland remembered—all this, like a cincture coming loose, would encircle us with uncertainty.
>
> (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, forthcoming)

"Eventide" is an archaic, literary term, "tristesse" a Gallicism, "wherein" a formal term, and "cincture" a literary one. Even "fatherland" is a bit old-fashioned, harking back to a time when people were identified with their nation, and nation with race and ancestry. In most other prose contexts, we would have opted for more colloquial language. Yet, Pessoa's writing here is so drenched in lyricism and exoticism, metaphor and simile—"clepsydra" is all I have to say—that a rare and refined and *recherché* lexicon seemed called for.

Equally warranted by Pessoa's poetic prose, in our view, were the sibilance and assonance of "cincture," "encircle," "us," and "uncertainty," not to mention the consonance of "cin*c*ture" and "encir*c*le" and the sight-consonance of "*c*incture *c*oming." Then there are the longish words "indefinite" and "intimate," which, besides balancing each other as modifiers, propel the anapestic rhythm of the phrase they form part of. The positioning of "stopped" at the end of the opening phrase seems to do what it says—stop "The movement of the trees."

Finally, the imperfect verb *cingia*, used by Pessoa in the last line, we could have translated in any of four ways, assuming "encircle" as our lexical unit of choice: "encircled," "used to encircle," "was encircling," or "would encircle." We chose the last option, the conditional mood. A mood that expresses a hypothetical state of affairs struck us as just the right fit for rendering a dreamscape pitched in the *imperfeito*.

In translating this and other passages from *The Book of Disquiet*, then, we did not use the concise and neutral style that we adopted in the essays of *Message* and are generally using in the prose anthology. Rather, we employed an elastic style, capable of limning the quicksilver curves of Bernardo Soares's consciousness—an expressive style, attuned to the disquieting contours of his thought and emotion. Just as "the landscape transforms itself wholly to our hearing," so the language—both Pessoa's and our own—transforms itself wholly to the speaker's inner state.

[FV] 7. Which of your translated poems stand out as the most memorable to you, and why?

My fascination with "Maritime Ode" begins with its concrete visual forms, such as "All seagoing eras—I feel their salt-spray call" and "The cacophonous call of the waters, | The implicit voice of all seaborne things." (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 245). One can almost feel the salt-spray splashing across the deck, wetting everything within reach.

The violence as pirates storm the ship becomes very sanguine, and it gives the historian an insightful feel for Álvaro de Campos's accuracy. The poet identifies with the pirates of old—their brutish exploits, their pitiless feats, the paths across the ocean that they carved in blood. This appeals to the historian in me, since historians seek similarly to visualize the past, the better to express its reality.

Another memorable poem, "Un Soir à Lima," taps into a level of nostalgia for earlier times when I first began to play the piano (SCHWARTZ with SCHWARTZ, 2020: 149-161). Like the poet's mother, my mother also played the piano, yet I imagine she listened to my music from upstairs far more than she played, as her time had become filled with caring for six of us. Nothing can erase my memory of practicing in a dark basement, a lesson due in a day . . . or of preparing, with my brother Ken, a duet for a recital at St. Bernardine's grade school, scheduled for the following week.

[FV] 8. Describe your experience of reading Fernando Pessoa's poetry for the first time.

My reading of *Message* resonated both with my concurrent reading of Roger Crowley's *Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire* and with my lifelong study of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. The Second Part of *Message*, especially, assumed coloring all the more vivid for what I was then reading about the early history of the Portuguese presence in Asia. The heroic deeds of Prince Henry, Diogo Cão, Bartolomeu Dias, Ferdinand Magellan, Vasco da Gama, and King Sebastian, celebrated by Pessoa, leapt to life in my imagination, fresh from retracing the early Portuguese attempts to reach Asia by sailing around Africa.

The roll call of heroes in *Message* conjured up in me the equally illustrious and intrepid names of Francisco Pizarro, Gonzalo Pizarro, Hernán Cortés, Juan de Villaseñor, Bartolomé de las Casas, and Vasco de Quiroga, about whose generally less scientific but more sanguinary—or missionary—exploits I have spent my whole career considering. Juan de Villaseñor was a hidalgo who fought alongside Cortés at the Fall of Tenochtitlan. He was also the ancestor of my Mexican-born wife, Irene de Villaseñor. His portrait, complete with coat of arms, hangs prominently on our living-room wall.

Indeed, reading Pessoa's verse on Portugal's overseas empire called to mind the many books--many of them rare--about the *Conquista* that line my bookshelves at home. Portugal's interest lay in discovering a way to connect with the spice trade that was of major importance to it and other *circum*-Mediterranean countries. Spain's objective lay in finding an alternative all-water route to the East for similar and additional reasons. Both kingdoms ended up with territory they would claim—Goa, and later Brazil, in the case of Portugal, and the islands of the Caribbean, and later the continent from Mexico southward, in the case of Spain—and became transformed into empires in the process. These transformations first introduced the globalization of goods, people, capital, and cultural forms that we speak so much of today.

Close contact with the poems of *Message* further transported me to one summer in the 1990s, when an NEH grant allowed me to explore manuscript journals written by Spanish settlers in the New World at the archives of Seville. My research led me to a better understanding of the men and women who settled the New World, most of them unnamed. They would form the phalanx of culture that reshaped the New World through the introduction of a new language, the Catholic faith, a dominant agricultural economy, roads, the use of concrete... all of which gradually transformed hostile indigenous tribes into stationary settlers, with towns, cities, livestock, and crops, together ushering in a complete transformation of civilization itself.

I might add a final word about my experience of reading some pieces in both the poetry and the prose anthologies. I enjoyed sharpening my views on faith, morals, and social organization against the whetstone of Pessoa's (and his heteronyms') atheistic ideologies and convictions, however much these galled me at times.

[FV] 9. Speak to us of your lifelong readings in general. To what extent did your past serve as prologue for your current work in translating Pessoa's poetry?

History has formed the bulk of my adult reading. It follows that history has shaped my approach both to reading poetry and translating it.

Historians are very careful in recounting the events of the past. They neither embellish nor exaggerate them. It is always their task to research as many pertinent documents and authors as are available to direct their pen to recount bygone events as specifics. These must also guide the historians' thinking to interpret as the data best indicate, weighing probabilities long before expressing the truth.

John Hart's writings on Mexico presented a concrete image of peasant life in Mexico, integrating it with the historical record. E. Bradford Burns researched the intricate details of Brazil's colonial past, which resulted in a classic book of enduring value. In both cases, integrity was—and always will be—essential.

Now, historical writing relies heavily on techniques of description, narration, and argumentation. Imagery and concrete details help historians flesh out a picture of the past. Some of the same techniques are used by poets, so that my transition from reading history to reading poetry was, in a measure, already paved for me. The same can be said for my move into translating poetry. There I found myself bringing to bear some of the same writing techniques I had learned from my favorite historians, such as Hart, Burns, and William H. Prescott. This last, in particular, the author of *History of the Conquest of Peru*, serves as a model of lucid and engaging historical writing.

The great poetry of the past has also inspired the translator in me. While studying in Rome on a Rockefeller Grant, preparatory to writing my second book, *A Concise History of the Roman Empire*, I read Virgil's *The Aeneid*. Later, on one of my many trips to Trujillo, Peru, where I volunteered to teach literacy to the indigenous, I also read the national poet, César Vallejo. Both the lyrical and figurative language of poetry sharply contrasted with the relatively literal and often impersonal nature of historical writing. This taught me the power of metaphor, simile, and imagery in creating word-pictures to communicate, as well as the charge that subjectivity can give to writing.

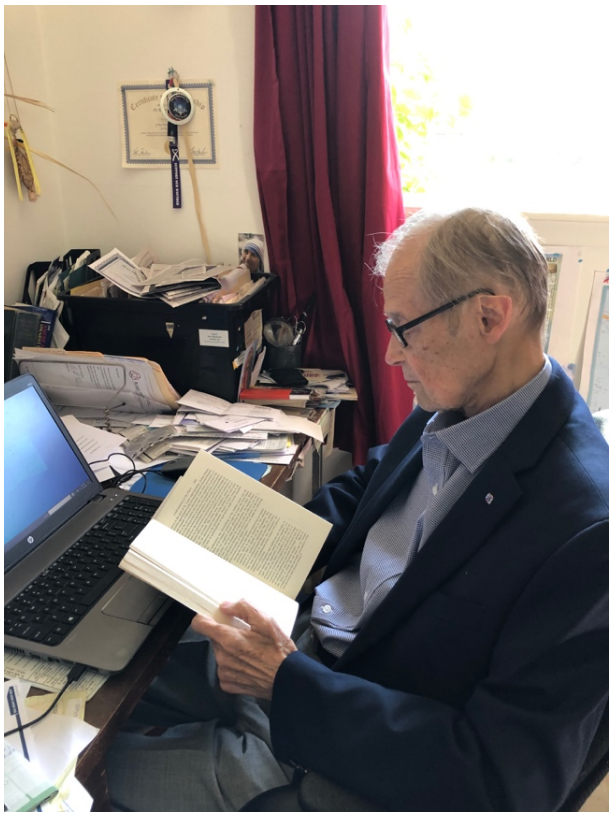

Fig. 1. Robert N. Schwartz in his home office in Houston, Texas, December 2020

[FV] 10. Who are some of the most formative authors from your earlier readings that led you to want to write?

It was early in grade school that, perusing the shelves of the library in Forest Park, Illinois, I discovered the exciting lives of the frontiersmen of early America. After just one work of Joseph Altschuler's, I later made sure I had read every one of his many books, back-to-back on the shelves. His adventure stories led me to an irresistible pursuit of Mark Twain, whose characters left me gasping. This must be true of all those who felt the indelible experiences of the youthful characters of his celebrated stories. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" heads the list, which surely includes *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*.

These authors came across as being the most exciting and most coveted of my youth. Still, what led me eventually to want to write? The urge began in earnest when my wife and I arrived in Lima, Peru in 1967, and I was to teach about that great country at the American School of Lima, without a background in its history. As I began to study Peru, I began also to pen that country's exciting history. With my reading as background, I began to write a page of history every night, to share and discuss with my students the next day in the classroom.

[FV] 11. Explain your career-long fascination with history, in general, and Latin America and Ancient Rome, in particular. What ultimately led you to take up the pen and write books, namely, *Peru—Country in Search of a Nation* (Inter-American Publishing Company, 1970) and *A Concise History of the Roman Empire* (University Press of America, 1998)?

It is not always easy to define one's intellectual or academic influences. From missionaries to teachers to scholars, I have been led by an irresistible set of forces. Thus, I began my hegira . . . from military service in Cold War Germany to teaching grade school while studying sociology as an undergrad at Calumet College of St. Joseph. This was followed by graduate study on Latin America at Indiana University under the guidance of Robert Quirk, doctoral studies at UCLA focused on Brazil, and finally, Mexican and Latin American history at the University of Houston with John Hart.

A year spent teaching in Washington, D.C., at an academic institute for students from Latin America was followed by my marriage to one of my students, Irene, from Guadalajara, Mexico, and a contract to teach at the American School of Lima, Peru. There I began reading on Peru's rich pre-Hispanic past, followed by the arrival of the conquistadors in A.D. 1532. That was more than enough to fill up my two years in Lima and to furnish enough background for my first book. I have continued with my fascination focused on Peru but with a scholarly dedication to the entire continent. Most recently, I completed an article entitled "Peru and the

Formation of a Nation," which awaits publication, in a Spanish translation, at the Museum of Archaeology of the University of Trujillo, Peru.

[FV] 12. What aspects of your intellectual life do you see as motivating future readers to become writers?

There is a saying: "You learn to write by writing." All of us, from students on, are committed to writing at school, and reading advances and facilitates, nourishes and promotes those initial exercises, from youth onward. The study of Latin or of a modern language, buttressed by English classes, is fuel for the pen, and those tools rest upon the overriding element—motivation, which must flow from experiences, history or imagination, any and all of which are treasures.

My own experiences began with an interest in books, written by writers describing places and people, such as the Ohio River Valley and the Native Americans that once lived there. The list begins in my youth in Forest Park, near Chicago, with a bicycle ride to the library on Saturdays, there to seek out books on the western frontier by Joseph Altschuler.

Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary led me through the great philosophers and, next, the great theologians, at Shelby, Ohio, there to anticipate working in a foreign land. Then, my service in the army found me at Frankfurt, Germany, where my language skills in both English and German landed me at Headquarters Company, typing for the Company Commander and the First Lieutenant, even after hours.

After service in Germany, with side trips to Greece, Turkey, and France, I returned to the U.S., with a contract to begin teaching at St. Mary's grade school in Griffith, Indiana. That was arranged for me by my aunt, Sister Lisetta, O.S.F., my father's sister. There I was able to emphasize to my students the importance of reading that leads to writing. From that time to this, I have found that both teaching and reading are the great motivators of further study, and with that can come an excitement that drives the quest for new intellectual horizons.

My horizons rose, and I leaped at the chance—first, to teach Latin American adults in Washington, D.C., then, with marriage, to teach in Peru, where, previously, an M.A. at Indiana University in Latin American Studies had fueled an intense desire to know about the land and people of the southern continent.

If a student today were just slightly excited about exploring the vastness of any aspect of Spanish or Portuguese South America, he ought first to read a book to further pique his interest. Any part of this great area and region—its history or geography, its anthropology or archaeology—or a name fixed in the history of anywhere in "Latin America," as the continent is so often referred to, will yield excitement. That name alone can challenge a student with intellectual curiosity to move quickly into reading about pre-Columbian cultures that were met by Spanish or Portuguese explorers who had no knowledge whatsoever to deal with fierce and

determined tribes . . . with their strange languages, their appearance, their race, their religion, their clothes and weapons, together with all the fascination that accompanies a new adventure.

Any of these can be stepping-stones for the student, as they were for me, to read further, determined to learn more about whatever topic fires his interest. Either consciously or subconsciously he must encourage his reading to form a stimulus to writing.

Biographical Note

Robert N. Schwartz studied philosophy at a Catholic seminary in Ohio, with the beginnings of his scholarly work on the Roman Empire at the American Academy in Rome through a Rockefeller Foreign Language Fellowship. An Arthur Patch McKinley grant from the American Classical League allowed him to complete the chapters. Before that, he studied sociology at Calumet College of St. Joseph, with doctoral studies in Latin American history at Indiana University and at the University of California (UCLA), taking the Ph.D. at the University of Houston. An ardent student of the past, Dr. Schwartz published on the Roman and Incan Empires for both the general public and students. He lived, studied, taught, and explored in both of these bygone empires and taught on these subjects at all levels. In addition, he dedicated many summers to the progress of the developing world through teaching adult literacy in Peru, where he contributed articles to the *Peruvian Times* that reflect Peru's Incan past. He also did developmental work with Helping Hands Medical Missions in the Brazilian Amazon. In his last years, Dr. Schwartz published commentaries on contemporary issues in the United States and abroad through popular media, both digitally and in print. With his son, John Pedro Schwartz, he translated two books of Fernando Pessoa's poetry, *Poetry—Minimal Anthology* (Tinta-da-china, 2020) and *Message*. In 2021, they began translating a third book by Pessoa, *Prose—Minimal Anthology*.

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FERNANDA VIZCAÍNO worked as an English and Portuguese teacher in public education for 7 years. Afterwards, she held a position at a publishing house for 10 years. She has worked in proofreading, in the coordination of school projects, and in literary translation. She is a freelance translator from English to Portuguese. In October 2012, she acquired her master's degree in specialized translation and interpretation from ISCAP, with the dissertation "Canções / Songs: Fernando Pessoa traduz António Botto." She continued her academic education at the Universidade do Minho, in the PhD program of Comparative Modernities: Literatures, Arts and Cultures. In March 2018, she successfully defended her thesis on the critical edition of Fernando Pessoa's literary correspondence, focusing on the letters sent by him.

FERNANDA VIZCAÍNO foi professora de português e inglês durante 7 anos no ensino público. Posteriormente, trabalhou numa editora durante 10 anos, nas mais variadas funções. Foi revisora linguística, coordenadora de projetos escolares e trabalhou também na área de literatura traduzida. É tradutora freelance de inglês-português. Completou o seu Mestrado em Tradução e Interpretação Especializadas, no ISCAP, em Outubro de 2012, com o título "Canções / Songs: Fernando Pessoa traduz António Botto". Continuou o seu percurso académico na Universidade do Minho, no programa doutoral em Modernidades Comparadas: Literaturas, Artes e Culturas. Em Março de 2018, defendeu, com sucesso, a sua tese de doutoramento, baseada na edição crítica da correspondência literária de Fernando Pessoa, focando-se nas cartas enviadas por Pessoa.