

# Fernando Pessoa's *The Mad Fiddler*: Sensationism in English

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## Keywords

Blake, Neo-Paganism, Romanticism, Sensationism, (Transcendental) Pantheism, Shelley, Yeats.

## Abstract

Emphasizing Pessoa's dual cultural heritage, this essay traces the poet's exposure to English literature and culture from a young age, notably through schooling and directed readings during his formative years. Particular attention is paid to the impact of romantic poets from the pantheist lineage of Shelley and Blake on Pessoa's emergent poetics and poetry, as well as to the hitherto little-known details of his reception of Blake's poetry mediated through Yeats. These facets of their works surface in the transcendental pantheism expressed in the poems collected in *The Mad Fiddler*, an unpublished collection of English poems written between 1910 and 1917. A laboratory of the maturing process in Pessoa's poetry, I contend that this collection rehearses analogous aesthetic and philosophical ideas in his poetry in English to those he was developing in Portuguese, namely Sensationism and the Portuguese Neopaganism with which the heteronyms were associated, arguing through close readings of illustrative poems.

## Palavras-chave

Blake, Neo-Paganismo, Panteísmo (Transcendental), Romantismo, Sensacionismo, Shelley, Yeats.

## Resumo

Enfatizando a dupla herança cultural de Pessoa, este ensaio delinea a exposição do poeta à cultura e literatura inglesas desde uma tenra idade, nomeadamente por meio da escolaridade e leituras direccionadas nos seus anos formativos. Particular atenção será dada ao impacto de poetas românticos da linhagem panteísta de Shelley e Blake sobre a poesia e poética emergentes de Pessoa, bem como aos detalhes da sua até à data pouco conhecida receção da poesia de Blake por intermédio de Yeats. Estas facetas das suas obras estão patentes no panteísmo transcendental expresso nos poemas de *The Mad Fiddler*, uma coleção inédita de poemas ingleses escrita entre 1910 e 1917. Enquanto laboratório do processo de amadurecimento na poesia de Pessoa, defendo que esta coleção ensaia ideias estéticas e filosóficas na sua poesia em inglês que são análogas às que estava a desenvolver em português, nomeadamente o Sensacionismo e o Neopaganismo português ao qual os heterónimos estavam associados, argumentando por meio da análise de poemas ilustrativos.

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Portuguese, unlike what is commonly held, “*não era a pátria de Pessoa*” [was not Pessoa’s homeland], claims Carlos Reis in “*Espaços da Língua Portuguesa ou os perigos da imagináutica*” (REIS, 2014: 10). The subtext to his remark is the famous statement “*A minha pátria é a língua portuguesa*” [My homeland is the Portuguese language], the truth value of which, as Reis notes, is circumscribed to the specific context of its enunciation by the semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares, the Lisbon bookkeeper, in *Livro do Desassossego* [*The Book of Disquiet*]. Conversely, the author Fernando Pessoa had a dual linguistic homeland, which encompassed both Portuguese and English, having lived in South Africa from school age and having had a formal education in the latter language. Therefore, Pessoa’s English cultural heritage needs to be taken into account when considering his works comprehensively, particularly the aspects of that heritage imparted by the Victorian education he received in the Durban High School. The English classics, which featured heavily in the syllabus, significantly influenced Pessoa’s English poetry, inspiring such works as *35 Sonnets* (1918), a collection of pseudo-Shakespearian sonnets, *Antinous* (1918, 1921), an elegy evocative of Milton’s “*Lycidas*,” and *Epithalamium* (1921), a celebratory piece in the manner of Donne’s “*Epithalamions*.” The fact that Pessoa self-published these works as chapbooks—the latter two as part of a series issued by Olisipo, the publishing house he founded in 1921—shows that (at that time, at least) he regarded himself as an Anglophone poet and, by inscribing it in an English lineage, sought to have his poetry acknowledged by the British publishing and cultural milieu.

### Influences and Sources

The Romantics were a particularly strong influence during Pessoa’s formative period both in the final years of his schooling in Durban, as he prepared for university-entry exams in English, and in the years immediately following his return to Lisbon in 1905, during which his reading diaries attest to voracious incursions into the sizeable private library of books in English he had brought with him from South Africa and which he continued to stock by placing regular orders with several British publishing houses.<sup>1</sup> The impact of writers like Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth—identified as “*Influences*” in a bibliographical note Pessoa drafted in 1914 (PESSOA, 2003: 150)<sup>2</sup>—is most apparent in his early poems in

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the books in English in Pessoa’s private library were part of the Queen Victoria Memorial Prize for best paper in English, which he received in the Matriculation Examination held by the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1903, attesting to his excellence in written English. For an introduction and full catalogue of Pessoa’s private library see PIZARRO, FERRARI and CARDIELLO (2010).

<sup>2</sup> The information in the bibliographical note is corroborated by Pessoa’s reading diaries from 1905 to 1907 (PESSOA, 2003: 22-54), in which the names of these authors and some of their works feature,

English, notably those written between 1904 and 1909 and attributed to Alexander Search, which were also indebted to Poe likewise mentioned in the note. The influence of the Romantics is also ostensible in *The Mad Fiddler*, a collection of poems written between 1910 and 1917, which attests to Pessoa's reception of Victorian poets, like Tennyson, and the impact of influential readings of Symbolist and post-Symbolist poetry.<sup>3</sup> Yeats was the main English-language symbolist with whose works Pessoa became acquainted while he was writing *The Mad Fiddler*, through *A Selection from the Poetry of W.B. Yeats*, published by Tauchnitz in 1913 and extant in his library. Elsewhere, I argue that the fairy lore, incantatory rhythms, and dream-like quality of Yeats's 'Celtic Twilight' poetry collected in this anthology are emulated by some of the poems in *The Mad Fiddler*.<sup>4</sup> More importantly perhaps for the purposes of this essay, Yeats also mediated Pessoa's reception of Blake, as editor of the volume of his collected poems owned by Pessoa.<sup>5</sup>

Referring to Blake's first work, *Poetical Sketches*, in the introduction, Yeats claims that his "poems mark an epoch in English literature, for they were *the first opening of the long-sealed well of romantic poetry*," describing them as "*the true heralds of our modern poetry of nature and enthusiasm*" (BLAKE, 1905: xxiii). Explaining his momentous assertion, he argues that "[t]here is in them no trace of mysticism, but phrases and figures of speech which were soon to pass from the metaphorical to the symbolic stage, and put on mystical significance, are very common" (BLAKE, 1905: xxiii). The key word here is "symbolic," the epithet used to describe the transfiguring power of Blake's poetic language, capable of assigning "mystical significance" to its referents. The fact that Pessoa underlined the italicised statements in his copy of the book, jotting a line down the side of this passage and writing the abbreviation for *Nota Bene* alongside it, shows that they raised his interest. In effect, the introduction displays numerous reading marks—mostly underlined sentences and lines alongside the text—which suggest that Pessoa

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as well as the fact that he had editions of their books dating from this period in his private library. Some of the authors listed by Pessoa are discussed in relation to his works by MONTEIRO (2000).

<sup>3</sup> In the aforementioned bibliographical note from 1914, Pessoa lists Baudelaire, the French Symbolists and Camilo Pessanha as significant influences he received between 1909 and 1911, and, subsequently, the Portuguese post-Symbolist Saudosistas between the years 1912-1913 (PESSOA, 2003: 150). Tennyson appears repeatedly in his reading diaries, alongside the Romantics.

<sup>4</sup> The hypothesis about Yeats's potential influence on Pessoa's *The Mad Fiddler* is discussed in Chapter I of SILVA MCNEILL (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Pessoa's copy of the book, still housed in his private library, dates from 1905, which suggests that he acquired it before the Tauchnitz anthology of Yeats's poetry. This hypothesis is reinforced by the existence of an edition of Blake letters with a biographical sketch dated from 1906 in Pessoa's private library (also with reading marks), which attests to his interest in the poet around that time as part of a more generalised interest in the English Romantics. Pessoa's acquaintance with Yeats as editor of Blake likely instigated him to purchase a volume of his collected poetry.

found Yeats's impressionistic exposition of significant episodes in Blake's life and central concerns of his works engaging.

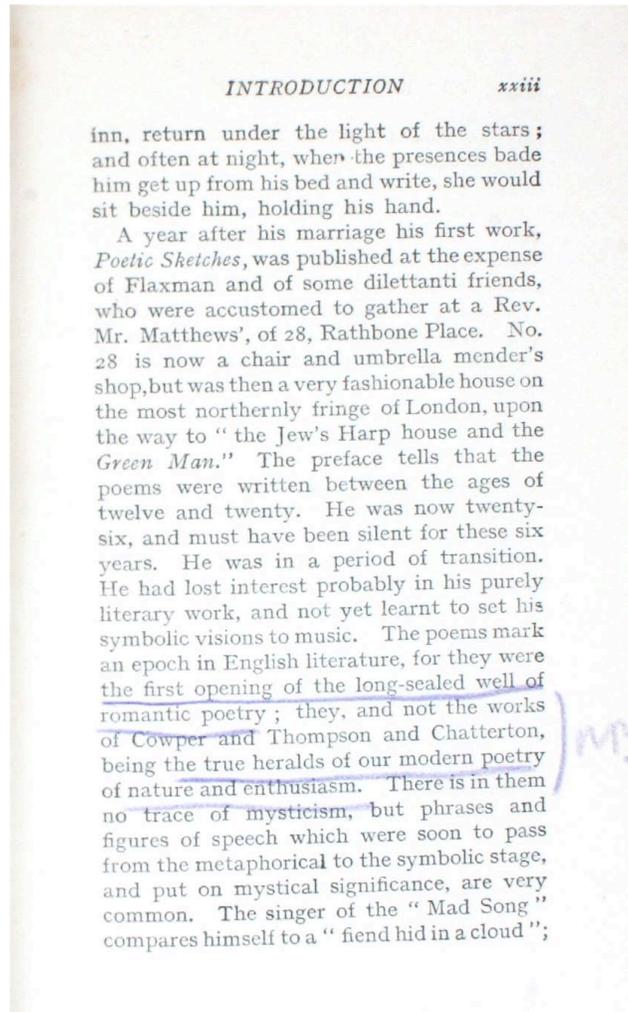


Fig. 1. Markings on p. xxiii of copy of *Poems of William Blake* in Pessoa's library.

As the excerpts quoted above show, Yeats presents Blake as a precursor of a romantic poetry of the symbolic imagination, carried on by the later romantics and leading up to what he calls the "modern poetry of nature and enthusiasm," including his own poetic output under this denomination. Much of the introduction is concerned with tracing the visionary quality of Blake's imagination—emphasizing the ability of the romantic poet to perceive the divine in the natural world and to convey its substance artistically—and with identifying some of the sources from which he drew inspiration for the mythological system of his Prophetic Books. In earlier essays published in *Ideas of Good and Evil* in 1900, Yeats uses the terms "symbolism" ("The Symbolism of Poetry") or "symbolic art" ("Symbolism in Painting") to describe the poetic and artistic works produced by Blake, drawing a poetic lineage from him to the Symbolists, who likewise "dwell upon the element of evocation, of suggestion" (YEATS, 1961: 146 and 155). In

"William Blake and the Imagination," also from the same volume, Yeats claims that Blake "learned from Jacob Boehme and from old alchemist writers that imagination was the first emanation of divinity," and from this concluded "that the imaginative arts were therefore the greatest of Divine revelations," for their ability to awaken 'the sympathy with all living things' (YEATS, 1961: 112). In "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," also from *Ideas of Good and Evil*, Yeats presents Shelley along similar lines, describing him as a "poet of essences," who expresses "the abundance and depth of Nature" by resorting to "ancient symbols," likewise derived from "the traditions of magic and of the magical philosophy" (YEATS, 1961: 78). Yeats's interpretation of the poetry of Blake and Shelley has close affinities with Pessoa's views put forward in the following passage from a drafted letter to an English publisher, enquiring about the potential interest in publishing and anthology of Portuguese 'sensationist' poetry:

Suppose English Romanticism had, instead of retrograding to the Tennysonian-Rossetti-Browning level, progressed right onward from Shelley, spiritualising his already spiritualistic pantheism. You would arrive at the conception of Nature (our transcendentalist pantheists are essentially poets of Nature) in which flesh and spirit are entirely mingled in something which transcends both. If you can conceive a William Blake put into the soul of Shelley and writing through that, you will perhaps have a nearer idea of what I mean.

(PESSOA, 1999a: I, 233)

In attempting to explain Portuguese "transcendentalist pantheism," to which the "sensationists" owe "the fact that in our poetry spirit and matter are interpenetrated and inter-transcended" (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 233), Pessoa traces the origins of the movement to a Romantic tradition that fused Shelley's "spiritualistic pantheism" with Blake's philosophical positioning.<sup>6</sup> Pessoa's genealogical reasoning resembles Yeats's in the introduction to his edition of Blake's poems, and his claims about Blake and Shelley are remarkably similar to Yeats's essays from *Ideas of Good and Evil* which—unless Pessoa had access to them through some as yet unidentified source—reveals strong affinities in their understanding of romantic poetry, undoubtedly originating in a shared literary heritage.<sup>7</sup> In effect, both poets display an analogous urgency to position their poetry within a long lasting, distinguish, and distinctive poetic lineage and seem to find just that in the "well of romantic poetry," as Yeats calls it in his introduction (BLAKE, 1905: xxiii). Pessoa's reference to Blake in this context shows that he was aware, through the auspices of Yeats, of this poet's importance as a forerunner of a trend in modern

<sup>6</sup> Pessoa doesn't specify Blake's positioning in this passage, but elsewhere he calls it "espiritualismo simbolico" [symbolic spiritualism] (PESSOA, 2013: 19).

<sup>7</sup> In *Yeats and Pessoa: Parallel Poetic Styles* (2010), I argue that the poets' shared English literary heritage, particularly from the Romantics, accounts for many of the parallelisms between their poetry and poetics as a whole.

poetry which sought to transcend the dichotomies of body and soul, materialism and idealism, objectivity and subjectivity, and convey the complexities attendant on the perceiving subject resulting from the fluidity of modern external reality and the relativity of internal states of mind. The quotation above also reflects Pessoa's attempt to make new developments underway in Portuguese poetry, including in his own poetry in Portuguese and English, known to an international readership, about which more will be said further ahead.

### *The Mad Fiddler*

In a draft for a preface to *The Mad Fiddler*, Pessoa describes Shelley as “a man who felt Nature exceedingly, & every one who feels Nature exceedingly must feel pantheistically” (PESSOA, 1999b: 114). From this we gather that the “spiritualistic pantheism” which Pessoa identifies in the poetry of Shelley, Blake, and the Portuguese “transcendentalist pantheists” in the drafted letter to the English publisher quoted above constitutes the core aesthetic and philosophical principle underpinning the poems in this collection. Elsewhere, Pessoa terms this poetic stance in modern poetry as “transcendentalismo panteísta” [pantheist transcendentalism]—underscoring the difference in relation to that of the Romantics and of the “Portuguese transcendentalist pantheists” by reversing the order of the term—describing it in “A nova poesia portuguesa no seu aspecto psicológico” [The New Portuguese Poetry in its Psychological Aspect] as:

A espiritualização da Natureza e, ao mesmo tempo, a materialização do Espírito, a sua comunhão humilde no Todo, comunhão que é, já não puramente panteísta, mas, por essa citada espiritualização da Natureza, superpanteísta, dispersão do ser num exterior que não é Natureza, mas Alma.

(PESSOA, 1993: 57)

[The spiritualization of Nature and, at the same time, the materialization of Spirit, their subservient communion in the Whole, a communion which is no longer purely pantheist, but, due to the aforesaid spiritualization of Nature, has become super-pantheist, the dispersion of the being in an exterior plane which is not Nature, but Soul].

Taking his cue from Blake—who stated, “Man has no body distinct from his soul. For that called body is a portion of soul discerned by the five senses” in “Marriage of Heaven and Hell” (BLAKE, 1905: 178), another passage underlined by Pessoa in his copy of the *Poems*—Pessoa emphasises the supremacy of the spiritual element—the soul—in the process of synthesis of material and ethereal realities that constitutes pantheist transcendentalism. The following stanzas from “A Summer Ecstasy” and “Inversion” illustrate what Pessoa calls “the spiritualization of Nature”:

I saw the inner side  
 Of summer, earth and morn.  
 I heard the rivers glide  
*From Within.* I was borne  
 To see, through mysteries,  
 How God everything is.

(PESSOA, 1999b: 81; my emphasis)

Here in this wilderness  
 Each tree and stone fills me  
 With the sadness of a great glee.  
 God in His *altogetherness*  
 Is whole-part of each stone and tree.

(PESSOA, 1999b: 84; my emphasis)

The latter stanza recalls Yeats's observation quoted earlier that for Blake the creative imagination had a power of transfiguration that could awaken "the sympathy with all living things" (YEATS, 1961: 112). A belief which Yeats also partook in, as shown by the following stanza from "Into the Twilight" (1899), which featured in the Tauchnitz anthology that Pessoa owned:

Come, heart, where hill is heaped upon hill:  
 For there the mystical brotherhood  
 Of sun and moon and hollow and wood  
 And river and stream work out their will;

(YEATS, 1913: 114)

As in the Yeatsian stanza, the speakers of Pessoa's poems perceive a mystical unity between the natural elements they enumerate and the supernatural, signified by the word "God." Likewise, the reference to "mysteries" and "altogetherness" in Pessoa's stanzas is semantically close to Yeats's "mystical brotherhood," an expression that underscores the symbolic power of landscape to officiate the transition from the natural to the super-natural or sacred realm, revealing an analogous mysticism of Nature. The spiritual pantheism expressed in these stanzas is akin to that described by Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception: but my senses discovered the infinite in everything" — underlined by Pessoa in his copy of Blake's works edited by Yeats (BLAKE, 1905: 183).

The "pantheist transcendentalism" in *The Mad Fiddler* also displays a visionary quality ostensible in "The Labyrinth," which portrays a vision wherein "each thing was linked into each other thing" and "the outward and the inward became one" (PESSOA, 1999b: 79), encapsulated in the stanza:

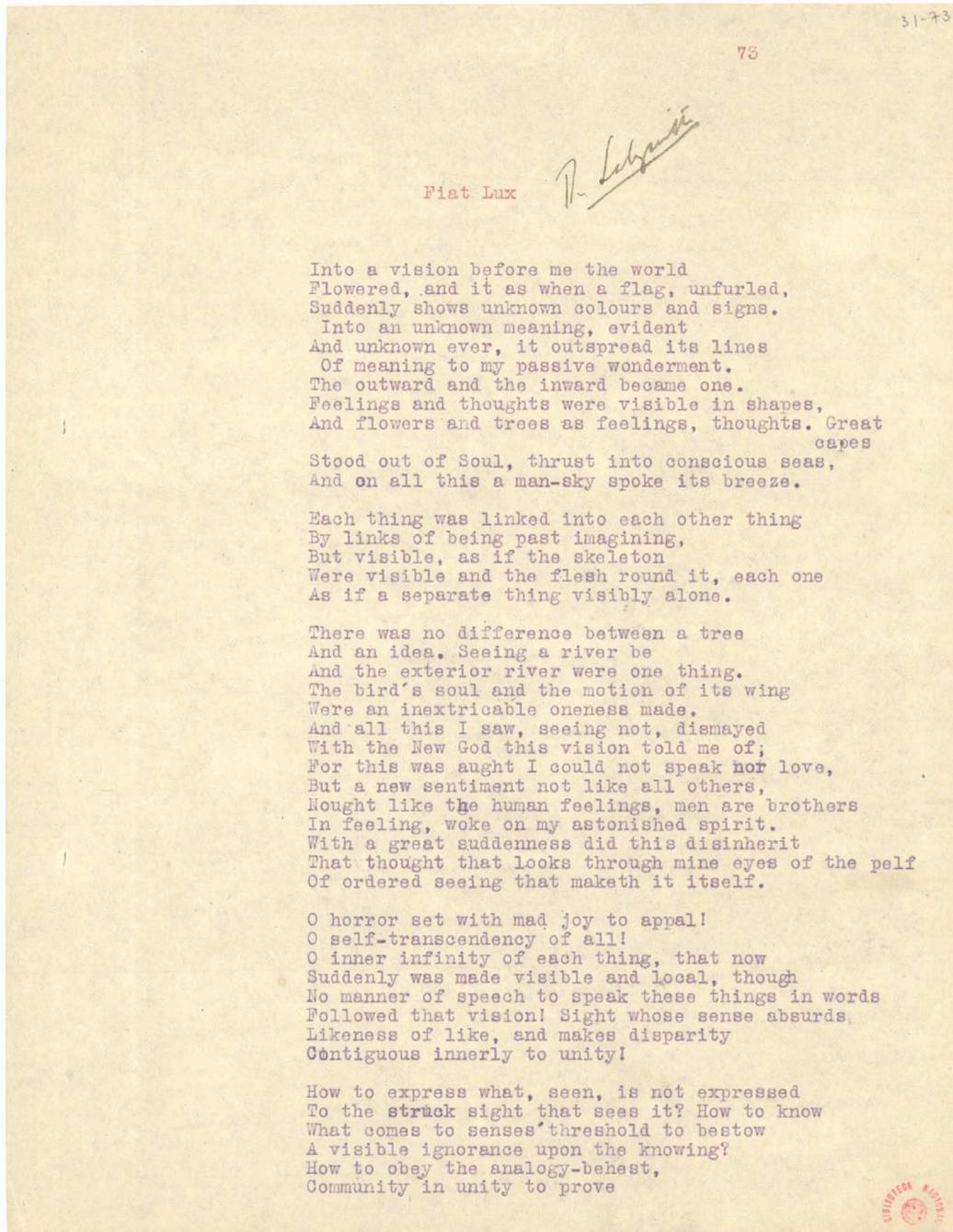


Fig. 2. Typescript of "Labyrinth" (BNP/E3, 31-73).

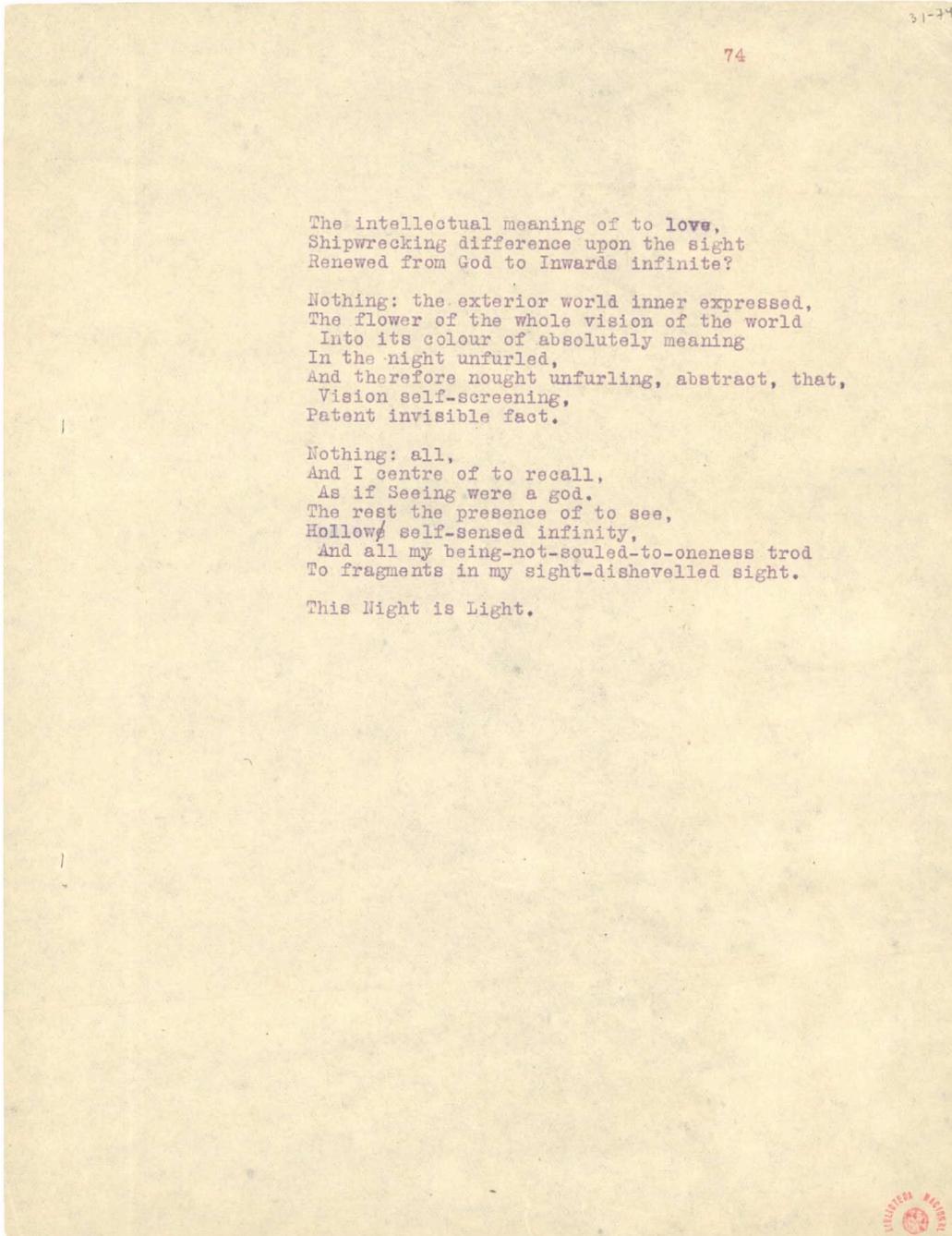


Fig. 3. Typescript of "Labyrinth" (cont.) (BNP/E3, 31-73<sup>v</sup>).

There was no difference between a tree  
 And an idea. Seeing a river be  
 And the exterior river were one thing.  
 The bird's soul and the motion of its wing  
 Were an inextricable oneness made.  
 And all this I saw, seeing not, dismayed  
 With the New God this vision told me of; [...]

(PESSOA, 1999b: 79)

The vision described in this excerpt is grounded in Swedenborg's law of correspondences, likely via Blake, culminating in the advent of a "New God," that is, a new form of religiosity. This poem exemplifies "the religiosity underlying these poems" which Pessoa highlights in the draft of a preface to *The Mad Fiddler* (PESSOA, 1999b: 117). In another fragment from a preface, Pessoa claims that "the intensest [*sic*] way to feel a sensation or an emotion is to feel it religiously and philosophically," adding that he "called this attitude Sensationism, but [...] if followed to its spiritual source, it might be called High Paganism" (PESSOA, 1999b: 114-115). In order to illustrate his claim, he compares the interchangeability between things and their ideal correspondents in transcendental pantheism, as depicted in a poem like "The Labyrinth," to pagan polytheism, stating "as, in the polytheistic system of misunderstanding the world, [...] each thing is eventually endowed with a transcendent personality [...] so, [...] each sensation has its philosophy & its religion & each object of sensation its transcendent body" (PESSOA, 1999b: 114-115). The link Pessoa establishes between Sensationism and High Paganism to explain the dominant religious and philosophical attitude in *The Mad Fiddler* has an equivalent counterpart in his Portuguese poetry between 1913 and 1917 with Sensacionismo and the Neopaganismo Português.

"Into a vision," a fragmentary poem which is a variation of "The Labyrinth," offers proof that Pessoa's neo-paganism was a bilingual phenomenon occurring both in his English and his Portuguese poetry. The speaker of the poem claims to have undergone a transformation that has made him "No pantheist, but pantheism Itself" (PESSOA, 1999b: 196), a line which closely resembles Álvaro de Campos's description of Alberto Caeiro in "Notas para a recordação do meu mestre Caeiro" [Notes for the Remembrance of my Master Caeiro]: "O meu mestre Caeiro não era pagão: era o paganismo" (PESSOA, 2014: 455) [My master Caeiro was not a pagan; he was paganism itself]. According to Campos, Caeiro embodies paganism through "consubstantiation" (PESSOA, 2014: 455), a term which also describes befittingly the transformation undergone by the speaker of "Into a vision" and is in agreement with the religiosity Pessoa assigns to the collection. Thus pantheism and paganism appear to function as complementary worldviews in Pessoa's aesthetic thought, the former drawing on the Romantic lineage hegemonic in Anglophone culture and the latter drinking in the classical tradition

hegemonic in Mediterranean cultures, proving that he was experimenting with comparable poetic stances across his two languages and cultures.

### Sensationism

The mention of Sensationism in a preface to *The Mad Fiddler* from 1917 about poems written mostly before that year shows that its expression in English was concomitant with the development of this aesthetic in his Portuguese poetry. In that fragment of the preface Pessoa describes the “religious and philosophical” attitude underpinning *The Mad Fiddler* as “to feel Nature exceedingly” (PESSOA, 1999b: 114) which echoes Álvaro de Campos’s line “Sentir tudo excessivamente” [to feel everything excessively] in “Afinal a melhor maneira de viajar é sentir” (PESSOA, 2014: 164), which came to encapsulate Sensationism. Although Campos’s turn of phrase ostensibly has a more encompassing sense in its choice of the term “everything” as opposed to “Nature,” this is in keeping with the pantheist type of sensationism conveyed in the English collection. In a fragment from another preface to *The Mad Fiddler*, Pessoa claims, “Some of [the] poems seem to be based on a Christian and mystical philosophy; others on a pantheistic conception of the world; others, still, on what may be best described as a transcendentalist attitude” (PESSOA, 1999b: 40). His summary of the types of mysticism found in the collection not only illustrates the thematic diversity of the collection, but also reveals a syncretic tendency characteristic of the Sensationist aesthetic.

However, the expression of Sensationism in Pessoa’s English and Portuguese poetry is not confined to philosophical stances, but encompasses stylistic issues, which surface when Pessoa compares Sensationism across linguistic and cultural conventions. The poet made several attempts to publish *The Mad Fiddler* in Britain. His collected correspondence includes drafts of letters concerning this collection of poems to at least three different publishers, including John Lane—whose 1915 edition of *The Poems of Ernest Dowson* Pessoa claims to know and uses as reference for the type of edition he sought—and Harold Monro, whose 1915 editions of Richard Aldington’s *Images* and F. S. Flint’s *Cadences* he refers to in a similar manner. Tellingly, in the letter to John Lane, dated from 23 October 1915, Pessoa dissuades the English publisher from attributing “certain eccentricities and peculiarities of expression” in the “book of English poems” (fifteen in total, as mentioned in the letter) enclosed to the fact that their author is “a foreigner” (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 175). Instead, argues Pessoa, he should regard them “as forms of expression necessarily created by an extreme pantheistic attitude, which as it breaks the limits of definite thought, so must violate the rules of logical meaning” (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 176). Therefore, according to Pessoa, the “strangeness” (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 176) of their English does not derive from lack of proficiency in the language but constitutes a deliberate stylistic choice in concurrence with a new aesthetic, which Pessoa refers to

as “the Portuguese ‘sensationist’ movement” (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 175) that requires a different form of expression. Indeed, according to Anna Terlinden, the most accomplished poems of *The Mad Fiddler* convey the novelty of the pantheistic aesthetic through ‘the semantic and syntactic shocks between words so that their symbolic meaning is increased by a breaking of their usual meaning’, in a manner which is evocative of Mallarmé’s practices (TERLINDEN, 1990: 168). In the said letter, Pessoa claims to “practice the same thing, to a far higher degree, in Portuguese” (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 176), establishing a common denominator between *The Mad Fiddler* and the contemporary “*Chuva Oblíqua*” (1915), which he encloses in an English translation as “*Slanting Rain*” with the letter to Harold Monro (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 193) and, likely, with the letter to Lane, although he does not mention it by name, referring to it as “a sensationist poem in English” (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 176).

Pessoa’s observation implies that his contemporary Portuguese poetry displayed an even greater degree of lexical and syntactic oddity than the poetry in English collected in *The Mad Fiddler*, which he claims to be “the nearest, I have, in English, to a conventional standard of poetry” in his undated letter to Monro (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 193). This is confirmed by the comparison of contemporary poems which address the modern theme of the dissociated self in the two languages. In “*Summer Moments*,” from *The Mad Fiddler*, the speaker describes an idyllic scene that encompasses a “golden day” with “glad horizons,” “happy hills” and “fields,” opposing to this pleasant external scenery his tempestuous interior landscape—a “lone shore | Struck by the sea” (PESSOA, 1999b: 93). In the first part of the poem, Nature is endowed with a regenerative quality, which has a soothing effect on the speaker of the poem:

‘Tis very little, I know,  
 But it is happiness,  
 And the hours are but few  
 That we can really bless.

They are hours like this, freed  
 From belonging to thought,  
 When we have nought to heed  
 Save a breeze that is nought.

Let me therefore, breathe in  
 Into my memory  
 This hour, and may it begin  
 Again whenever I see

My heart grow heavy and hot,  
 My thoughts grow close and late.  
 O soft breeze, fan my thought!  
 O calmness, brush my fate!

(PESSOA, 1999b: 98)

The subject's emergence from his prostration into an ecstatic state of bliss and his relish at the prospect of his future retrieval of this emotion through memory recall Wordsworth's definition of poetry as originating in "emotion recollected in tranquillity" (WORDSWORTH and COLERIDGE, [1798] 2007: 82).

In part II of "Summer Moments," the speaker compares his elated state of mind to childhood, likewise following in the Wordsworth's wake:

I am again  
The child I was,  
Having no pain  
More than the grass.

(PESSOA, 1999b: 95)

The simile reinforces the association between the subject and the natural world, basing the identification between child and grass upon their unconsciousness as an essential pre-requisite for internal harmony and happiness.

In the letter to Harold Monro, Pessoa mentions "Chuva Oblíqua" [Slanting Rain] (1914), claiming to enclose a translation of the poem to substantiate his claim that his Portuguese poetry is more advanced than that of the English Imagists (PESSOA, 1999a: I, 193). Contemporary to a great number of the poems in *The Mad Fiddler*, "Chuva Oblíqua" addresses the same theme as "Summer Moments," displaying similar imagery. The parallelism is evident in the opening scene of the poem, which intersects a dreamt sombre seaport with a real sunny countryside landscape. These images re-enact the same dichotomies of earth-water, light-shadow as the English poem. However, they are expanded further through the intersection of different planes in each of the six parts into which "Chuva Obliqua" is divided. Thus, the opposition between the bright exterior plane of the countryside and the sombre internal port in the first part is inverted into the contrast between the artificially lit interior space of a church and the darkness outside it in part II, only to be reversed again through the contrasting dark abyss of the Pyramids and an outdoor boat procession on the Nile in part III, culminating in the climactic fusion of day and night vistas in parts V and VI. According to Yvette Centeno, "Em 'Chuva Obliqua' a intersecção parece ser o esforço de um eu para a Totalidade, realizando-se a partir dos fragmentos de si que intersecciona e até por vezes funde em transitória união" [in "Chuva Obliqua" the intersection appears to be the effort of a subject towards the Totality through the fragments of itself that it intersects and sometimes even fuses in transitory union] (CENTENO, 1978: 111).

In part VI, the transient union of the fragmented self is sought in childhood memories, as it had been in 'Summer Moments'. Yet, the recollection of childhood in "Chuva Obliqua" only affords a fleeting moment of comfort and is summarily overturned by the absurd logic and the surreal imagery at the end of the poem:

Lembra-me a minha infância, aquele dia  
 Em que eu brincava ao pé de um muro de quintal  
 Atirando-lhe com uma bola que tinha dum lado  
 O deslizar dum cão verde, e do outro lado  
 Um cavalo azul a correr com um jockey amarelo...

[...]

Atiro-a de encontro à minha infância e ela  
 Atravessa e o teatro todo que está aos meus pés  
 A brincar com um jockey amarelo e um cão verde  
 E um cavalo azul que aparece por cima do muro  
 Do meu quintal... E a música atira com bolas  
 À minha infância... E o muro do quintal é feito de gestos  
 De batuta e rotações confusas de cães verdes  
 E cavalos azuis e jockeys amarelos...

(PESSOA, 1998a: 17)

[It reminds me of my childhood, of a day  
 I spent playing in my backyard, throwing a ball  
 Against the wall ... On the one side of the ball  
 Sailed a green dog, on the other side,  
 A yellow jockey was riding a blue horse ...  
 I throw it at my childhood, and it  
 Passes through the whole theatre that's at my feet  
 Playing with a yellow jockey and a green dog  
 And a blue horse that pops out over the wall  
 Of my backyard ... And the music throws balls  
 At my childhood ... And the wall is made of baton  
 Movements and wildly whirling green dogs,  
 Blue horses and yellow jockeys ...]

(PESSOA, 1998b: 223)

The denouement of the poem reflects the impossibility of re-integration and the speaker's permanent fractured selfhood, which is reflected stylistically on its jagged, fragmentary imagery and diction, characteristic of Intersectionism, a temporary *ism* devised by Pessoa as the compositional process of Sensationism. In "Chuva Obliqua," Pessoa adopts the de-constructivist logic of Cubism to represent the modern dissociated self who is unable to retrieve his lost sense of internal wholeness and unity with the external world, countering the generally pantheist bias of the Romantically inspired "Summer Moments," which favoured a unitary conception of the subject and the world.

This notwithstanding, certain poems in *The Mad Fiddler* depart from the pervading transcendental pantheism towards the more modern *topos* of the dissociated self and display a symbolist diction which shows the influence of Baudelaire and the French Symbolists, notably in the section entitled "Fever-Garden." Among these, "Her fingers toyed absently with her rings," a poem likely

dating from 1916, subtitled “A Sensationist Poem” and with the notation “impression” in another typescript variant (PESSOA, 1999b: 172-173), displays a vague diction, pregnant with suggestion, which closely resembles the second part of “Impressões do Crepúsculo” [Impressions of the Crepuscule] and, particularly, “Hora Absurda,” [Absurd Hour] both from 1913 and emblematic of Paulismo—a temporary *ism* devised by Pessoa to describe a transitional post-symbolist aesthetic, subsequently subsumed into Sensationism:

Her Fingers Toyed Absently with her Rings

There are fallen angels in the way you look  
 And great bridges over silent streams at your smile.  
 Your gestures are a lonely princess dreaming over a book  
 At a window over a lake, on some distant isle.

If I were to stretch my hand and touch yours that would be  
 Dawn behind the turrets of a city in some East.  
 The words hidden in my gesture would be moonlight on the sea  
 Of your being something in my soul like gaiety in a feast.

Let your silence tell me of the numberless dreams that are you.  
 Let *the drooping of your eyelids* prolong landscapes far away.  
 The *jets of water* return on the listening of being untrue  
 And this is the flower I pluck, with a sound, from what you unsay.

(PESSOA, 1999b: 63-64)

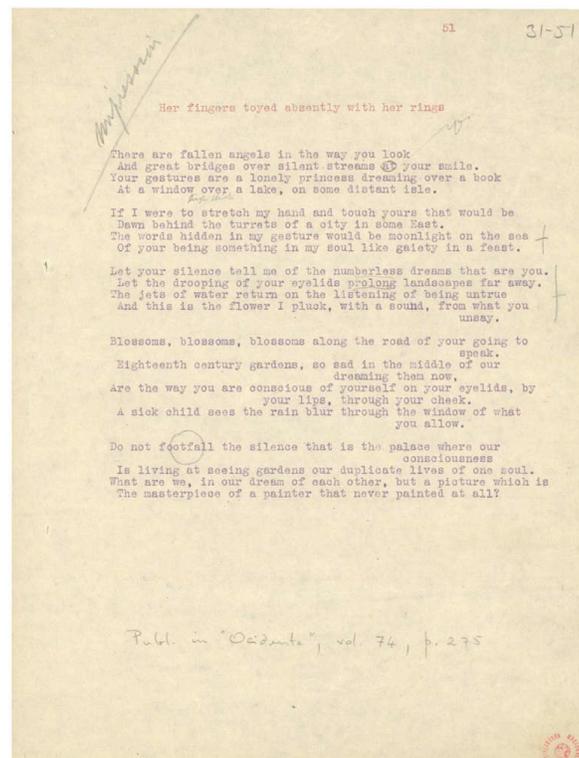


Fig. 4. Typescript of “Her Fingers Toyed Absently with her Rings” (BNP/E3, 31-51†).

As this excerpt shows, the imagery of the poem displays the *topoi* of princesses, towers, bridges, lakes and isles which recurred in symbolist and post-symbolist poems across various languages, including Paulismo. The figure of the princess could draw specifically on João Cabral do Nascimento's *As Três Princesas Mortas num Palácio em Ruínas* [*The Three Dead Princesses in a Palace in Ruins*] (1916), which Pessoa praised as Sensationist in the review he published that year in the magazine *Exílio*. In turn the "jets of water" in the third stanza could bear some resonance from a *topos* particularly dear to Mallarmé, and "the drooping of [the woman's] eyelids" is a distinctly yeatsian turn of phrase which features repeatedly in poems from *The Wind among the Reeds* which Pessoa would have read in the Tauchnitz anthology he owned. Therefore, "Her fingers toyed absently with her rings" constitutes at once an instance of reception of Symbolism and Pessoa's deliberate rendering of the aesthetic of Paulismo in English. Undoubtedly reassured by Yeats's poetry of the "Celtic Twilight" period (the extent of his knowledge of the Irish poet's work) and that of the Imagists like Flint and Aldington, he thought the language and Anglophone culture could accommodate better than the Mediterranean avant-garde frolics of Cubism and Futurism.

The analysis of poems and para-textual materials from *The Mad Fiddler* in the course of this essay corroborates Terlinden's claim that this collection is "a kind of 'English microcosm' of Pessoa's aesthetic theory" (TERLINDEN, 1990: 218). In effect, this collection appears to have functioned as a writing laboratory which accompanied the maturing process in Pessoa's poetry and allowed him to experiment with different poetic traditions and lineages across different languages and cultures and in relation to his own evolving aesthetics in the crucial years immediately preceding and following the creation of the heteronyms and his leading involvement in the Portuguese avant-garde of *Orpheu* and other magazines. Additionally, *The Mad Fiddler* rehearses analogous aesthetic and philosophical ideas in his poetry in English to those Pessoa was developing in Portuguese, and indeed became the English face or expression of Sensationism, understood in the broadest most plural sense encapsulated in Pessoa's remark, "The sensationist movement [...] represents the final synthesis. It gathers into one organic whole [...] the several threads of modern movements, extracting honey from all the flowers that have blossomed in the gardens of European fancy," significantly capped by the statement that the various movements "have their remote origin, through Whitman, in no less a person than William Blake" (PESSOA, 2009: 159).

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