

# Pessoa, this volume of being: An anthropological experiment

[Pessoa, um volume de ser:  
Uma experiência antropológica]

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## Keywords

Character, Temperament, Style, Memory, Consciousness, Creativity, Unity, Volume of being, Anthropology, Pessoa.

## Abstract

This article is an essay to apply the notion of volume of being to Fernando Pessoa. The volume of being refers to a human being. It is a container with its edge and a content made up of various components corresponding to the major themes of the human and social sciences: action, gesture, emotion, a thought, idea, memory, character, temperament, social or cultural markers. The article is presented as an exercise in anthropology, not literary criticism. It is based on fragments from *The Book of Disquiet*. Pessoa becomes a volume of being structured by a character or temperament, his memory, his feelings, his modes of consciousness. Rather than focusing on heteronymic multiplicity, the author insists on the intrastructuration of these elements within “the Volume-Pessoa” writing, inventing, remembering and comparing.

## Palavras-chave

Carácter, Temperamento, Estilo, Memória, Consciência, Criatividade, Unidade, Volume de ser, Antropologia, Pessoa.

## Resumo

Este artigo é uma tentativa de aplicar a noção de volume de ser a Fernando Pessoa. O volume de ser designa um ser humano. É um recipiente com o seu bordo e um conteúdo constituído por vários componentes que correspondem aos grandes temas das ciências humanas e sociais: acção, gesto, emoção, um pensamento, ideia, memória, carácter, temperamento, marcadores sociais ou culturais. O artigo é apresentado como um exercício de antropologia e não de crítica literária. Baseia-se em fragmentos do *Livro do Desassossego*. Pessoa torna-se um volume de ser estruturado por um carácter ou temperamento, a sua memória, os seus sentimentos, os seus modos de consciência. Em vez de privilegiar a multiplicidade heteronímica, o autor insiste na intra-estruturação destes elementos no “Volume-Pessoa” que escreve, inventa, recorda e compara.

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I don't want to begin this paper on Pessoa without remarks that are like the expression of a certain caution. For some years now, in anthropology — which is my academic discipline — I have been proposing the notion of volume of being to designate a human being, with the aim of helping to look at, describe and even compare human beings. The volume of being is a container with its edge and a certain content made up of what I call *voluments*, i.e. elements of the volume of being. These correspond to the major themes of the human and social sciences: action, gesture, emotion, thought, idea, know-how, habit, memory, character, temperament, social or cultural markers. Each *volument* has a variety of possibilities. So, for actions: drinking, eating, walking, writing, reading; and for emotions: being sad, angry, joyful, serene. Memories and habits are less diversified, more singularized. Character and temperament are also singularized: one person has such and such a temperament or character, another has other character tendencies. There are also different stylistic traits, detectable in gestures and facial expressions, for example, and very specific to each volume. They also shape the ways of having a given character and performing a given action (for more details, see PIETTE, 2019: 1-56). Certain points will become clearer as the text progresses<sup>1</sup>.

The particularity of *voluments* is that they don't come out of the volume of being. They are intrinsic to the volume that carries them, and between them they are connected, but within the volume of being itself. With *voluments* that do not emerge from itself, the volume of being can be likened to a closed reality. Pessoa does not fail to insist on this closure and the feeling of it: "We never disembark from ourselves"<sup>2</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 123), as we can read, even while dreaming, inventing personalities, thinking of ourselves as several. Even in the "continual dispersion", "it's towards ourselves that we tend"<sup>3</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 190). This implies the possible sensation of "of being imprisoned in an infinite cell"<sup>4</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 45), that of "a squeezing in our head"<sup>5</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 76). Would he like to escape the monotony but "since it stems from me, [it] will always be with me"<sup>6</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 149), with

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Professor Jeronimo Pizarro for his very careful reading of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "Nunca desembarcamos de nós" (PESSOA, 2017a: 366); cf. also alternate translation: "We can never disembark from ourselves" (PESSOA, 2017b: 311).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "perpetua dispersão [...] é para nós que tendemos" (PESSOA, 2017a: 364); cf. also alternate translation: "perpetual dispersion [...] we are nonetheless drawn back to ourselves" (PESSOA, 2017b: 309).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "preso [...] numa cella infinita" (PESSOA, 2017a: 457); cf. also alternate translation: "the prisoner of [...] a cell of infinite size" (PESSOA, 2017b: 423).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "e ha um aperto de dentro da cabeça" (PESSOA, 2017a: 308); cf. also alternate translation: "something tightens inside your head" (PESSOA, 2017b: 254)

<sup>6</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "me pertence, faz parte de mim" (PESSOA, 2017a: 498); cf. also alternate translation: "it belongs to me, [it] is part of me" (PESSOA, 2017b: 445).

“my temperament”<sup>7</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 121). The dream is nothing more than a flight into itself (PESSOA, 2003: 207), it is “the one thing we have that’s really ours”<sup>8</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 275), “no one besides me can see or have the things I dream”<sup>9</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 275). The dream is thus described as a *volument*, to which only the memory capacity of the volume that dreams can bear witness. No volume of being can remember the dream of another volume, unless it has been communicated to it. This “confinement” does not in fact mean a “ego”, for it is “no one. Absolutely no one”<sup>10</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 227). “I, what’s truly I, am the centre that exists only in the geometry of the abyss”<sup>11</sup>, writes Pessoa (PESSOA, 2003: 228). “Everything that happens where we live happens in us”<sup>12</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 241). Whether I feel or perceive, including that it’s not “me” who’s feeling or perceiving, it happens as in a “vehicle” (PESSOA, 2003: 245).<sup>13</sup>

The volume of being is not, of course, impermeable. Pessoa presents a kind of “a well without walls”, but “with the wall’s viscosity”<sup>14</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 228). Are we so sure there are no “walls”? I’d be more cautious in any case. Of course, there are some changes, but “our soul slowly changes”<sup>15</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 255), and the “external accidents [...] can’t affect the substance of our soul”<sup>16</sup>, precises PESSOA (2003: 144). He adds: “The soul conferred on the individual shouldn’t be lent out to its relations

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “o meu temperamento” (PESSOA, 2017a: 144); cf. “my temperament” (PESSOA, 2017b: 102).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “o que temos de realmente nosso” (PESSOA, 2017a: 60); cf. also alternate translation: “what is most [...] ours.” (PESSOA, 2017b: 25).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “ninguem pode vêr senão eu, ninguém a não ser eu possuir”; cf. also alternate translation: “But only I can see what I dream, only I can possess it” (PESSOA, 2017b: 25).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Ninguém, absolutamente ninguém” (PESSOA, 2017a: 417); cf. also alternate translation: “nobody, absolutely nobody.” (PESSOA, 2017b: 367).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “sou o centro que não ha nisto senão por uma geometria do abysmo” (PESSOA, 2017a: 417); cf. also alternate translation: “I, I myself, am the center that exists only because the geometry of the abyss demands it” (PESSOA, 2017b: 367).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Tudo que se passa no onde vivemos é em nós que se passa” (PESSOA, 2017a: 420); cf. also alternate translation: “Everything that happens in the world we live in happens in us” (PESSOA, 2017b: 370).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “parece que me põe[m] num vehiculo” (PESSOA, 2017a: 422); cf. also alternate translation: “I feel as if I had been put in a cart” (PESSOA, 2017b: 371).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “o poço sem muros, mas com a viscosidade dos muros” (PESSOA, 2017a: 417); cf. also alternate translation: “well in which the walls have fallen away to leave only viscous slime” (PESSOA, 2017b: 367).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “mudamos de alma lentamente” (PESSOA, 2017a: 142); cf. also alternate translation: “we are slowly changing souls” (PESSOA, 2017b: 100).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “accidentes externos, impotentes para attingir a substancia da alma” (PESSOA, 2017a: 483); cf. also alternate translation: “external events without the power to touch the depths of our soul” (PESSOA, 2017b: 430).

with others”<sup>17</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 184); “Only my consciousness of myself is real for me; other people are hazy phenomena in this consciousness [...]. We squander our personalities in orgies of coexistence”<sup>18</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 185).

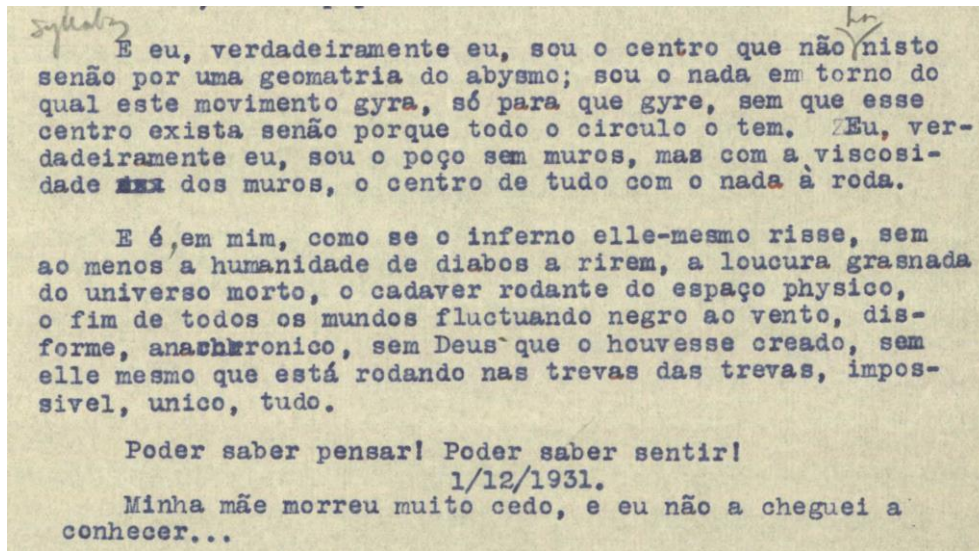


Fig. 1. Fragment from 1931 with the expression “the geometry of the abyss” (BNP/E3, 4-2<sup>o</sup>; detail)

This is not to say that the theory of the volume of being is present throughout all the pages of *The Book of Disquiet*. Here my aim is to attempt an application of the theory of the volume of being. It’s an exercise, an experiment, a kind of document, which I’m making on the basis of information from *The Book of Disquiet* alone, without enquiring into the immense bibliography on Pessoa, its heteronymic multiplicity or its unity, which I would call *monovolumic*. I’m not really seeking a biography of Pessoa, but rather an analysis of a few moments of Pessoa in his process of writing. In this configuration, the complex heterogeneity of the character, his intention to invent authors, and his insistence on his multiplicity, become an interpellation.

Let’s imagine that, in the years 1910-1920, Valéry, Cocteau, Cendrars, Apollinaire and Larbaud were one and the same man, hidden under several “masks”. This will give us an idea of the extraordinary intellectual adventure experienced during the same period in Portugal by Fernando Pessoa, who invented over sixty fictitious personalities for himself<sup>19</sup>, his “heteronyms” (the word is his), charged with expressing the most diverse facets of a multiple author. Four of them have had a masterly impact on his work, four writers of genius

<sup>17</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “A alma que é dada ao indivíduo, não deve ser emprestada às suas relações com os outros” (PESSOA, 2017a: 521); not included in PESSOA (2017b).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Para mim, só a minha autoconsciência é real; os outros são fenómenos incertos nessa consciência [...] Desperdiçamos a nossa personalidade em orgias de coexistência” (PESSOA, 2017a: 521); not included in PESSOA (2017b).

<sup>19</sup> According to more recent studies (PESSOA, 2013), the number of fictitious authors has risen to 136.

as different from each other as if they had really existed: Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Alvaro de Campo, Bernardo Soares, to whom we must add, of course, Fernando Pessoa “himself”, for his orthonymous work. However, his creative genius comes not from his ability to diversify his self, but rather from the profound unity that this protean gift has enabled him to rediscover.

(BRÉCHON, 1999: 7)

So writes Robert Bréchon in his presentation of the French version of *The Book of Disquiet*, which Pessoa lists as written by Bernardo Soares from 1929 onwards. The French biographer believes that Bernardo Soares is not a true heteronym. He is, without mask, “the nothingness that Pessoa discovers in himself when he stops pretending”, “as if everything in normal man of convention, illusion and self-love had been stripped away by the acid of critical consciousness” (BRÉCHON, 1996: 490). In addition to my own fascination with Pessoa’s book, this is one of the reasons why I have asked for *The Book of Disquiet* to carry out my exercise. I also note the remarks of Richard Zenith, from the words of Pessoa himself (PESSOA, 2003: 474-475): “Many of Soares’s aesthetic and existential reflections would no doubt be part of Pessoa’s autobiography, had he written one, but we shouldn’t confound the creature with his creator. Soares was not a replica of Pessoa, not even in miniature, but a mutilated Pessoa, with missing parts” (ZENITH, 2003: XI)<sup>20</sup>. I prefer to leave it to literary critics specializing in Pessoa and literary historians to provide all the necessary details, including in relation to the reading grid I’m proposing.<sup>21</sup>

### Volume, *voluments* and temperament

Firstly, there is a single volume of being, a single unit-entity, the very one I call the “Volume-Pessoa”. It would be possible to trace the existence of this volume almost from day to day, as Pessoa’s biographers do, using a set of documents. And above all, if he had been filmed, I could have followed this same volume writing, creating his personalities, doing other things after writing, walking around Lisbon, going to the café, being aware of his life, which he thought was a failure, meeting friends, being in love, being interested in politics, spiritual things and so on. These would be the activities and emotions of this whole volume of being, remembering too, when he does this, that he has done this already or had this dream before.

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<sup>20</sup> As Pessoa claimed; cf. “[Soares] É um semi-heteronymo porque, não sendo a personalidade a minha, é, não diferente da minha, mas uma simples mutilação della” (PESSOA, 2013: 560, 650) [Soares is a semi-heteronym, because his personality, although not my own, doesn’t differ from my own but is a mere mutilation of it].

<sup>21</sup> I’m thinking in particular of recent books (for example, PIZARRO, 2021; RYAN, TUSA and CARDIELLO, 2021; RAMALHO-SANTOS, 2022).

Character or temperament (I use both words here, one for the other) is undoubtedly an important *volument* of the Volume-Pessoa. At 6, for example, we learn that he shows signs of a tendency to create other worlds, and that he enjoys practical jokes and role-playing. No doubt this happens to other children, but at age 7, he is also writing letters to himself from the Chevalier de Pas (BRÉCHON, 1996: 35).<sup>22</sup> It would be of course important to find the reasons for this temperament-character: the death of the father, the estrangement from the mother, the difficult relationship with the stepfather (BRÉCHON, 1996: 36-37). But we don't know exactly. "Pessoa is more dreamy than bellicose. He withdraws instead of rebelling" (BRÉCHON, 1996: 37), notes Robert Bréchon, who also wonders: "What we'd like to know is what part this emotional trauma of the seventh year played in the blockage of consciousness that would later give the work its own particular tone: abstraction of feelings and sensations, empty plenitude, absence from oneself and the world, erasure of erasure and whiteness, etc." (BRÉCHON, 1996: 37). For me, there is an important point: the Volume-Pessoa is not without his characteristics, without certain tendencies leading to these attitudes, the ideal of which would be to know their genealogy, to consider them according to a sequence of identified and observed acts. In any case, even from moment zero, there is no volume of being without it being associated with some consistency, let's say stylistic traits that will have to unfold, to integrate, according to their mode, what happens.

The Volume-Pessoa admits and describes a specific tendency: "Everything in me tends to go on to become something else. My soul is impatient with itself"<sup>23</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 20). He indicates an obsession "with creating a false world"<sup>24</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 88), a tendency to exist "disguised"<sup>25</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 375). He says over and over again "to sleep with another personality"<sup>26</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 76), "a longing to be another"<sup>27</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 282) and "to be new with each new morning"<sup>28</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 91).

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<sup>22</sup> Or from this Chevalier to a Captain (capitão Thibeaut), cf. PERRONE-MOISÉS (2014: 64).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "Tudo em mim é a tendencia para ser a seguir outra cousa; uma impaciencia da alma comsigo mesma" (PESSOA, 2017a: 343); cf. also alternate translation: "Everything in me is a tendency to be about to become something else; an impatience of the soul with itself" (PESSOA, 2017b: 288-289).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "crear um mundo falso" (PESSOA, 2017a: 137) cf. also alternate translation: "creating a false world" (PESSOA, 2017b: 96).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "disfarçado" (PESSOA, 2017a: 501); cf. also alternate translation: "disguised" (PESSOA, 2017b: 449).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "dormir com outra personalidade" (PESSOA, 2017a: 308); cf. also alternate translation: "to go to sleep clothed in a different personality," (PESSOA, 2017b: 254).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "como eu gostaria de ser outro" (PESSOA, 2017a: 156); cf. also alternate translation: "how I would love to be someone else" (PESSOA, 2017b: 113).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "ser novo com cada nova madrugada" (PESSOA, 2017a: 319); cf. also alternate translation: "be new with each new dawn" (PESSOA, 2017b: 265).

He makes this a distinctive feature of his entity. This is his definition of living: “to be another. It’s not even possible to feel, if one feels today what he felt yesterday”<sup>29</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 91). Thus, he writes, to exist is to deny “who and what I was yesterday”<sup>30</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 324). Again, I would not see any other solution than a continuist methodology that captures the instants that follow one another, allowing us to identify expressions that could be associated with a “Pessoa” mode. In any case I find it hard not to admit the possibility, at a given moment, of a character trait unfolding once in a gesture, an attitude, then a second time, other times, fixing itself and pushing towards what will become a strong particularity of his work.

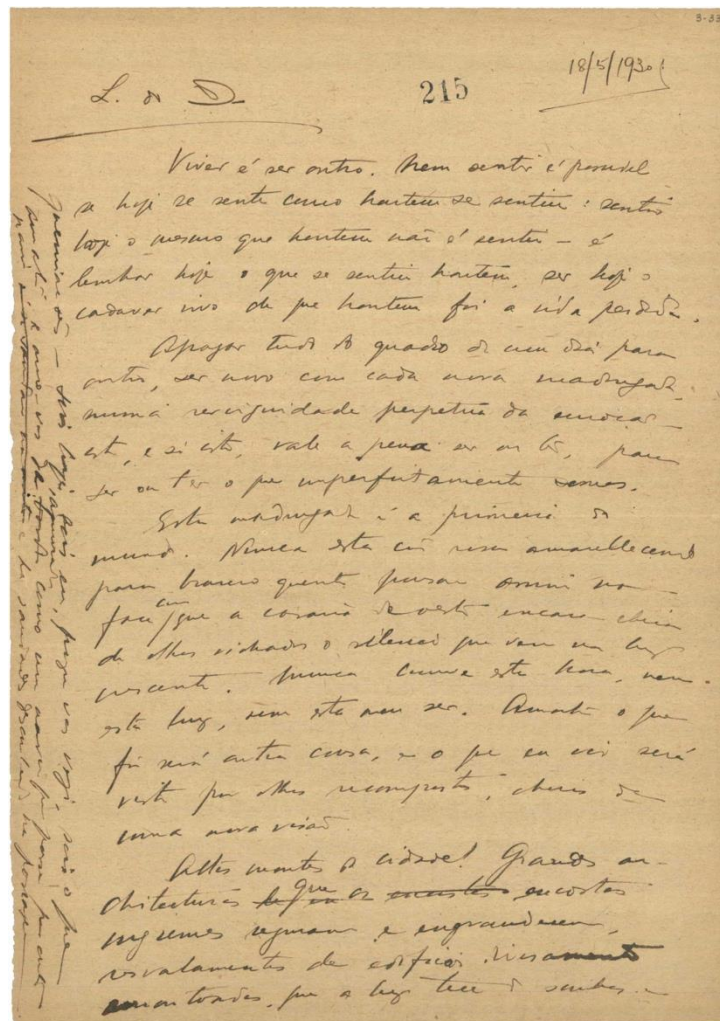


Fig. 2. Fragment from 1930 that begins with “To live is to be other” (BNP/E3, 3-33<sup>a</sup>)

<sup>29</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Viver é ser outro. Nem sentir é possível se hoje se sente como hontem se sentiu” (PESSOA, 2017a: 319); cf. also alternate translation: “To live is to be other. Even feeling is impossible if one feels today what one felt yesterday,” (PESSOA, 2017b: 264).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “do que fui hontem, de que fui hontem” (PESSOA, 2010: 513); not included in PESSOA (2017b).

With this configuration, we discover one character trend particularly cultivated in the Volume-Pessoa: “I’ve shaped my life”, so much so that “to myself I’ve become a not entirely clear and definite individual”<sup>31</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 106). And so, “at my side there was always another”<sup>32</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 356). In the Volume-Pessoa, there is a desire “to feel everything in every way”<sup>33</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 119), to experience the diversity of a volume. I would say: to push the expression of certain *voluments*. The Volume-Pessoa is a volume in which certain *voluments* push for a broader exploration of its entirety. It is he himself, before the anthropologist, who invites this exploration. He is thus a capacity to write “in countless different ways, all of them original”<sup>34</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 405), and to “live” the authors created, with a “depersonalization” of the mind, imagining oneself to be another and writing as if he were another, creating ideas and a specific writing style. I could say that these were sub-*voluments* within the *volument* “desire to be someone else”: the sub-*volument* “writing like Caeiro”, the sub-*volument* “writing like Reis”, and so on. Combined with this ability to “pretend” to be another author are feelings, ideas and imagination, and of course literary know-how, and almost a habit of concretizing all this. These are the *voluments* of the Volume-Pessoa. As I mentioned earlier, the Volume-Pessoa also knows that these *voluments* and sub-*voluments* do not escape his volume of being.

Note, moreover, the indication of an individuality that is “mine”, the very one associated with these character traits and containing these *voluments*. “The slave of my own character”<sup>35</sup>, he also writes (PESSOA, 2003: 355): the one that made possible, determined, delimited, the literary production of the Volume-Pessoa with his system of invented authors along with their ideas and literary style. So, the act of writing in the name of a heteronym with its own ideas and style is filled with the desire for such an operation, with the obviousness intrinsic to the Volume-Pessoa’s mode of being, with habits, skills and, also, stylistic traits and modes of thought that could be found in other heteronyms. This is, in fact, indicated by the Volume-Pessoa, as I shall say in a moment.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Eu assim talhei a minha vida [...] para mim-proprio me tornei uma não de todo clara e nitida individualidade minha” (PESSOA, 2017a: 65); cf. also alternate translation: “I shaped my life, [...] I became, even for myself, a not entirely clear-cut individual” (PESSOA, 2017b: 29).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “ao pé de mim estivesse sempre outro” (PESSOA, 2017a: 494); cf. also alternate translation: “there was always another by my side,” (PESSOA, 2017b: 441).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Sentir tudo de todas as maneiras” (PESSOA, 2017a: 294); cf. also alternate translation: “To feel everything in all possible ways” (PESSOA, 2017b: 240).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “de inumeras maneiras diversas, originaes todas” (PESSOA, 2017a: 101); cf. also alternate translation: “in all kinds of different styles, all of them original” (PESSOA, 2017b: 63).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Escravo do temperamento” (PESSOA, 2010: 466); not included in PESSOA (2017b).



There is a volume of being with temperament determining the work of the Volume-Pessoa, in articulation with other *voluments*: this may seem a simplistic statement, but it's not a rule that would apply for all volumes of being and, above all, for all moments, including the Volume-Pessoa. For other moments or activities, it's not necessarily a temperament's desire that takes priority, but rather, for example, a social role or habit.

### Consciousness, memory and analysis

In the Volume-Pessoa, alongside this temperamental drive to express heterogeneity, alongside multi-writing, there is also a consciousness or knowledge of this temperament, of the invention of authors, and a memory of this invention and of the peculiarities of the fictitious authors. "What I am", he writes, "would be unbearable if I couldn't remember what I've been"<sup>36</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 129). In the diversity of *voluments* activating and expressing themselves, the consciousness of doing this work, or at least the possibility of it, the memory of the differences between the authors created, are combined with a capacity for analysis of the writing produced. Consciousness and memory of actions performed are thus *voluments* capable of controlling various other *voluments* in the volume. Consciousness is glued to the action being performed, and memory retains it, albeit partially, with accompanying feelings. When the Volume-Pessoa, by virtue of his character and skills, makes a heteronym write, he will be able to remember directly, as if by direct access, his intentions and writing choices, his feelings at the time, including when he later has made another heteronym write. Indeed, it is these same *voluments* of Volume Pessoa, consciousness / knowledge and memory with their contents, which can be activated when he creates another fictional author, and which no other volume of being could activate. It's as if there were then a meta-author traversing the others, who directs and controls, who can compare and tell his closeness or difference with the invented authors (cf. PESSOA, 2003: 474 ff.). The Volume-Pessoa's own comparative analysis cannot take place without consciousness and memory of these moments of fictional character creation. It can only emanate from the knowledge intrinsic to the Volume-Pessoa. Consciousness and memory are *voluments* that have a centralizing, gathering activity of contents specific and singular to a volume.

In fragments that are not strictly speaking part of *The Book of Disquiet*, the Volume-Pessoa makes this analysis explicit, mentioning the different styles of the authors created and saying that he sometimes makes an effort to distinguish one from another, and he does so with mistakes; and sometimes he does it instantly

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "Sim, o que eu sou fóra insupportavel, se eu não pudesse lembrar-me do que fui" (PESSOA, 2017a: 371); cf. also alternate translation: "Yes, what I am would be unbearable if I could not remember the person I was" (PESSOA, 2017b: 315).

(PESSOA, 2003: 475)<sup>37</sup>. He also points out partial similarities between the style of one author and another (PESSOA, 2003: 475). Some are closer to his own style (PESSOA, 2003: 475-476). There are authors who are “me-ishly extraneous characters”<sup>38</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 475) to him, but who write with a fairly similar style, the same grammar, the same concern for word choice (PESSOA, 2003: 475). They write “with the style, that, good or bad, is my own”<sup>39</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 475). In any case, whether from explored feelings, known ideas, or the work of the imagination, what constitutes these feigned authors emanates from the Volume-Pessoa’s *voluments*. When he writes not in the name of these heteronyms, perhaps he has less control over style.

Note that it is the “I”, “mine”, “my”, that are used to speak of this activity of comparative overhang and to attribute characteristics that would be his own and thus different from those of the invented characters. Combined with an awareness of these literary creations, the ability to remember and analyze them, the Volume-Pessoa thus distinguishes a part of himself that would not be feigned. In the Volume-Pessoa, there is a sense of a separate self, giving the possibility of saying “I”, which may correspond to a sense of the volume as an entity.

### Moment of presence

If I had this film of the Volume-Pessoa writing, what would I be able to observe? Pessoa offers a description of a moment of writing that expresses its nuanced complexity, allowing us, as if in recapitulation, to put together all the *voluments* encountered in the foregoing: “At this very moment [...] I’m the one who is attentively writing them, I’m the one who is glad not to have to be working right now, I’m the one seeing the sky outside, [...], I’m the one thinking about all of this, I’m the one feeling my body satisfied and my hands still a bit cold”<sup>40</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 328).

There are connections between *voluments*, actions, feelings, thoughts, with effects, we can imagine, of tension or lightning between them. There are no doubt also stylistic modalities infiltrating their intensities, in the ways of linking these

<sup>37</sup> Cf. “Prefacio ás “Ficções do Interludio” (PESSOA, 2010: 455-457); cf. PESSOA (2017b: 466-468).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “figuras minhamente alheias” (PESSOA, 2017a: 528); cf. also alternate translation: “both me and not-me” (PESSOA, 2017b: 466).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “com o estylo que, bom ou mau, é o meu” (PESSOA, 2017a: 528); cf. also alternate translation: “in a style which is, for good or ill, my own” (PESSOA, 2017b: 466).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “Neste mesmo momento, [...] estas poucas palavras de impressão, sou o que as escreve attentamente, sou o que está contente de não ter nesta hora de trabalhar, sou o que está vendo o céu lá fóra, [...] sou o que está pensando isto tudo, sou o que sente o corpo contente e as mãos ainda vagamente frias” (PESSOA, 2017a: 482); cf. also alternate translation: “Today, as I note clown these few impressions in a legitimate break brought about by a shortage of work, I am the person carefully transcribing them, the person who is pleased not to have to work just now, the person who looks at the sky [...] and the person feeling physically at ease and noticing that his hands are still slightly cold” (PESSOA, 2017b: 430).

actions, of chaining them together. At such a time, it's not just temperament or character, in the precise sense of the term, as we've already seen present at the age of 6 or 7, that delimits, determines and characterizes actions, these heteronymous writings. There are also formed habits, such as looking at the sky, randomly and firmly anchored in a volume. And this set of actions (writing, looking, feeling one's body) are also accompanied in stylistic traits anchored in the Volume-Pessoa, with which he carries out his actions, according to such and such a posture, such and such gestures, such and such mimicry, and so on. And with this film of the Volume-Pessoa writing, I'd obviously discover the recurrence of this type of attitude, which is specific to him, transversal to different moments, including when he lets himself be written by a heteronym, for example a particular way of putting the hand on the face or looking at the sky. As we've just seen, the Volume-Pessoa mentions similarities that he can ignore (PESSOA, 2003: 476), in connection with his characters invented with ideas and feelings "which I don't share"<sup>41</sup>, he writes (PESSOA, 2003: 476). It's as if ideas and ways of thinking seep by habit into the various literary creations, as they do into everyday gestures and facial expressions.

A new stratum: at this very moment, there's still the possibility that a trait of his character might prompt us to privilege the feeling of his actions as multiplicities in the Volume-Pessoa. "Each of us is several", we can read in *The Book of Disquiet*, "is many, is a profusion of selves. So that the self who disdains his surroundings is not the same as the self who suffers or takes joy in them. In the vast colony of our being there are many species of people who think and feel in different ways"<sup>42</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 328). He also feels that the life that was his once is a life apart from his life now (PESSOA, 2003: 375). What the Volume-Pessoa thus mentions is a possible feeling and experience, which he likes to cultivate — we know it. The aforementioned effect of a separate "self" is then dislocated into the effect of multiple selves, according to this common expression, which doesn't prevent him from perceiving his body, the entity-volume, and resorting to the first person. But in the strict reality of a volume of being, and of the Volume-Pessoa in particular, there is no single self any more than there are multiple selves. They are sensations, and thus *voluments* of the entity-volume.

Pessoa's work can be interpreted as an exploration of various ways of feeling, of all the possibilities of a volume, but without escaping it. Pessoa undoubtedly

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "distintos dos meus" (PESSOA, 2017a: 529); cf. also alternate translation: "quite different from mine" (PESSOA, 2017b: 467).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: "Cada um de nós é varios, é muitos, é uma prolixidade de si mesmos. Porisso aquelle que despreza o ambiente não é o mesmo que d'elle se alegra ou padece. Na vasta colonia do nosso ser há gente de muitas especies, pensando e sentindo differentemente" (PESSOA, 2017a: 482); cf. also alternate translation: "Each of us is more than one person, many people, a proliferation of our one self. That's why the same person who scorns his surroundings is different from the person who is gladdened or made to suffer by them. In the vast colony of our being there are many different kinds of people, all thinking and feeling differently" (PESSOA, 2017b: 430).

disliked the lexicon of being and substance, but he himself speaks of the impossibility of getting rid of it — “my being’s substance”<sup>43</sup>, he mentions (PESSOA, 2003: 385) — as being unable to leave the feeling of a core, a self, a stability? Does he seek to fill his volume as full as possible, or to escape from it? But filling it up more is like suffocating more. Isn’t that how Pessoa feels, when he’s also looking for escape? Thus, according to ZENITH, “by being so who he was, and so very Portuguese”, Pessoa was “astonishingly true and honest to himself” (2003: xxiv). As has already been said, Pessoa cultivates the multiple, but does not rid it of a separate instance that remembers it, is aware of it, and can make us feel the entity’s confinement as well as its heterogeneity. Thus, in the Volume-Pessoa, the tendency for sensing heterogeneity and change with corresponding emotions, thoughts and words, does not preclude other sensations, such as that of monadic confinement in a “vehicle”, mentioned above. If, like Robert Bréchon, we consider *The Book of Disquiet* to be the expression of an unmasked feeling of nothingness, it would appear to be a kind of disaffirmed or hesitant temperament, capable of the flip-flop of very different feelings, sometimes of a self apart, an enclosed self, sometimes of an experience of heterogeneity: “I’ve so externalized myself on the inside that I don’t exist there except externally”<sup>44</sup> (PESSOA, 2003: 254). But these different experiences are also part of a mode of being. And once again, in addition to a temperament-character that impregnates these feelings, they are undoubtedly traversed by identical traits, including physical ones.

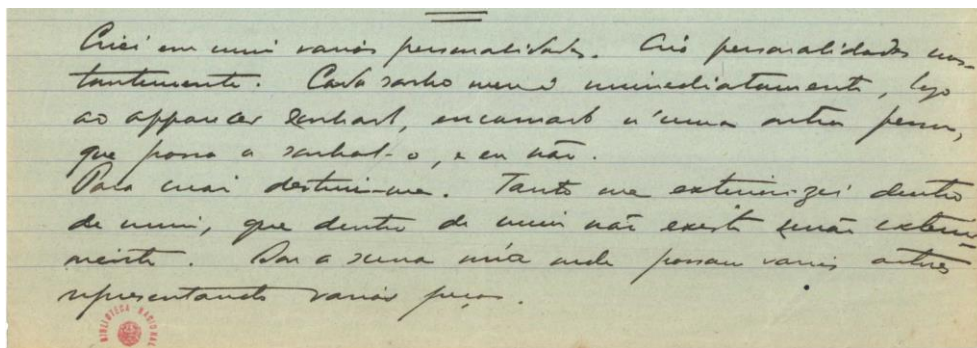


Fig. 3. Fragment from 1918; cf. “I’ve so externalized myself on the inside...” (BNP/E3, 5-74; detail)

### There is a volume of being

The complexity of the Volume-Pessoa makes it possible to specify the volume of being in general. Within the volume of being, the *voluments* as capacities or containers

<sup>43</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “substância do meu ser” (PESSOA, 2017a: 505); cf. also alternate translation: “stuff of my being” (PESSOA, 2017b: 452).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. original in Portuguese: “tanto me exteriorizei dentro de mim, que dentro de mim não existo senão exteriormente” (PESSOA, 2017a: 2065); cf. also alternate translation: “I have externalized myself so much inside that, inside, I exist only externally” (PESSOA, 2017b: 159).

are filled up with different contents. One *volument* corresponds to the capacity for memory; another, for different actions; another, for feeling; yet another, the capacity for consciousness; yet another, temperament and character traits; yet another, language. So, for example, depending on their own dynamics and the power of each *volument*, memory can relate to a feeling, consciousness can focus on an action, temperament leads to this or that practice, language expresses the awareness of a feeling or that of the entity, and so on. To say that memory relates to a feeling indicates that there is memory of a feeling in a volume of being. It's easier to say that the volume remembers; to say that the feeling relates to action means that the volume feels; to say that consciousness relates to memory means that the volume is aware of remembering that.

I can thus distinguish between *voluments* that accompany a volume (the consciousness of a volume, a co-knowledge that relates directly to its action or emotion, as distinguished from that of another volume), and *voluments* that bring together (the memory of a volume that relates to or brings together a diversity of actions, ideas or emotions, as emanating from that same volume, including dreams, as we've seen, and capable of being distinguished from those of another volume) and directing *voluments* (character-temperament or habits determining, impelling, traversing, impregnating various *voluments*). But all these *voluments* have their connections, meanings and possible dynamisms only in the entity that carries them, the volume of being. They can only be filled with this content or that expression, according to their specificity and capacity, in a volume of being from which they cannot be detached. This is why I say that such and such a volume remembers, feels and so on. It's impossible to imagine a temperament or character driving the creation of fictional authors and their corresponding works independently of a volume of being. It is, along with its content, anchored in a volume and articulated to other *voluments* of that volume, such as habits, imaginations, memories, thoughts, stylistic traces, etc. It is only in this way that it motivates someone to say or do this or that. These *voluments* only have meaning and dynamism when carried in an entity, in connection with each other.

It wouldn't be right to say "I remember", "I'm aware", unless we were to imply that this is a shorthand for saying that there is a volume, and that within this volume, there is a *volument*-consciousness of the entity, a *volument*-memory, a *volument*-language that can say I, my, me, a *volument*-attachment to "his" entity, creating a kind of effect (thought and felt) of ownership of it and what it contains. It's an effect of self, of turning in on oneself. In fact, it's also the ego effect felt by the volume, and the attachment to the volume felt and experienced as one's own, which are at odds with the awareness and knowledge of the entity's disappearance.

What solution should we adopt? It seems to me that "the volume does, feels" is an intermediate solution that avoids making us think of an "I" or a "me" as a specific agent and as a *volument*. The agent is this or that *volument* in the volume.

It could be, for example, temperament, habit, desire, role, thought, memory, consciousness, all of which have this stimulating force, articulated with each other, with one or the other dominating, depending on the moment, and possibly dragging the others along with it.

The Volume-Pessoa thinks or feels what would be his own in relation to heteronyms, as we have seen. The feeling or thought of this “mine” is a *volument* associated with the reflexive capacity to know that heteronyms are invented. So, this “own” or “mine” would correspond, according to the Volume-Pessoa, to the orthonym that, from various *voluments*, creates them and remembers each of the other authors, compares them, associates them with different stylistic expressions and also crosses them. This creates a continuity that is not just an effect, but real, through forms of memory stability, character traits, habits and the recurrence of details in gestures or facial expressions, for example.

Can one of the invented authors remember another? No. Fiction doesn’t remember. It’s not an invented author who invents another. A Campos sub-*volument* doesn’t remember a Reis sub-*volument*. They are simply the written expression of this capacity to create and to feign, to know and to remember this act. Just as the *voluments* have meaning and articulation only in a volume, the sub-*voluments* (create Reis, create Campos, create Caeiro) are dependent on the *volument* “literary creation”, “writer’s skill”, “imaginative capacity”. The sub-*voluments* are dependent on the *voluments*, and they in turn are dependent on the volume. This is the ontological reality of “heteronyms”.

Isn’t that what Robert BRÉCHON means, in other words? “One cannot detach from the single face any of its masks without the flesh coming with it” (1996: 15).<sup>45</sup> Let’s say that flesh is volume. This indicates that they are inherent to a volume, that they are part of the volume with links between them, and also that they cannot separate themselves from the volume in which they are, according to BRÉCHON, controlled by a “creative genius”. “All these satellite personalities of his are fictitious” (1996: 15). They cannot be portrayed separately. They are part of a “unique individual, the only one who had a body, an authentic civil status, a real name [...], the only one above all who had a life, a birth and a death, a destiny” (BRÉCHON, 1996: 16). The Volume-Pessoa is a relevant “fieldwork” for understanding the structure of a volume of being in general and I hope that the theory of the volume can help a little to enlighten Pessoa. It was my hypotheses in this experiment.

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<sup>45</sup> This is what Pessoa says, *qua* Campos, in “Tabacaria”: “Quando quiz tirar a mascara, | Estava pegada á cara” (PESSOA, 2014: 203).

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