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IRONIC MULTIPLICITY: FERNANDO'S "PESSOAS" SUSPENDED IN
KIERKEGAARDIAN IRONY

by

Michelle Pulsipher Hale

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Comparative Literature

Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Michelle Pulsipher Hale

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date

Steven P. Sondrup, Chair

Date

Stanley V. Benfell

Date

Christopher C. Lund

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's committee, I have read the dissertation of Michelle Pulsipher Hale in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographic style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Steven P. Sondrup
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

V. Stanley Benfell
Department Chair

Accepted for the College

Van C. Gessel
Dean, College of Humanities

ABSTRACT

IRONIC MULTIPLICITY: FERNANDO'S "PESSOAS" SUSPENDED IN KIERKEGAARDIAN IRONY

Michelle Pulsipher Hale

Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature

Master of Comparative Literature

This thesis applies Søren Kierkegaard's understanding of irony as outlined in his master's thesis, *The Concept of Irony*, to the literary works of Fernando Pessoa. Recently Kierkegaardian scholarship has opened possibilities for non-traditional interpretation of Kierkegaard's dissertation and pseudonymous "aesthetic" texts by reading them in the ironic tone in which they were written. This paper offers a similar re-reading of the poetic and prose works Pessoa attributes to his heteronyms.

Kierkegaard's presentation of Socrates as irony serves as a model for how Pessoa sustains the heteronymic project by balancing the use of rhetorical irony within the works of the heteronyms with simultaneous use of "Socratic" irony relating to both the heteronyms and their literary contributions. Pessoa "controls" irony by bringing his heteronyms into his historical reality whereby he posits subjectivities for them. The necessary element of *eros* as it is identified with Socrates and thereby with irony is

defined negatively as the desire for that which one is lacking and is sustained by the distance inherent in desire. Irony-*eros* as desire is present in the works of each of Pessoa's poetic heteronyms, gains for them corporeality, and characterizes the relationship the reader has with those works. Pessoa, like Socrates, is unable to extend controlled irony to his personal life and remains in the negativity of desire.

Bernardo Soares and *O Livro do Desassossego* challenge traditional notions of reality since Soares feels with equal intensity the reality of his actuality and that of his imagination. Kierkegaard holds that the imagination provides the thinker with various possibilities or ideals. The thinker must then actualize the ideal. Kierkegaard's pseudonyms offer possible life-views as do Pessoa's heteronyms. The distance of irony is essential, for in reflecting on the life-views, the reader must not be able to see the author in that reflection. Unlike Kierkegaard, Pessoa successfully distanced himself from his heteronyms by multiplying and deferring his identity. Adept in Socratic midwifery Pessoa establishes the subjectivity of other "Pessoas" through whom he offers his readers possibilities. Pessoa's ironic existence proves the self is indefinable and unassimilable to any System.

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How many masks wear we, and undermasks,
Upon our countenance of soul, and when
If for self-sport the soul itself unmask,
Knows it the last mask off and the face plain?
The true mask feels no inside to the mask
But looks out of the mask by co-masked eyes.
Whatever consciousness begins the task
The task's accepted use to sleepness ties.
Like a child frightened by its mirrored faces,
Our souls, that children are, being thought-losing,
Foist otherness upon their seen grimaces
And get a whole world on their forgot causing;
And, when a thought would unmask our soul's masking,
Itself goes not unmasked to the unmasking.

Fernando Pessoa

Introduction

In 1846 as an appendix to his last pseudonymous work, Søren Kierkegaard wrote to his readership:

My pseudonymity or polyonymity has not had an *accidental* basis in my *person* [...] but an *essential* basis in the *production* itself, which, for the sake of the lines and of the psychologically varied difference of the individualities, poetically required an indiscriminateness with regard to good and evil, brokenheartedness and gaiety, despair and overconfidence, suffering and elation, etc., which is ideally limited only by psychological consistency, which no factually actual person dares allow himself or can want to allow himself in the moral limitations of actuality. (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* [625])

The poetic “indiscriminateness” to which Kierkegaard refers is realized through his use of irony. Only a generation later, Fernando Pessoa, with the same “indiscriminateness,” would sustain a similarly “polyonymous” project. Although in his pseudonymous texts Kierkegaard explores possibilities that are outside the limitations of his “psychological consistency,” Pessoa and his heteronyms, stretching the “moral limitations of actuality,” challenge the very notion of a consistent psychology. Kierkegaardian irony, as outlined and exemplified in *The Concept of Irony* and the pseudonymous texts, suspends Pessoa’s project in a revealing light that offers possible interpretations for the purpose of the heteronyms and possible explanations of readership reactions. Interestingly Kierkegaard’s works were not translated into English from the German translations until the late 1930s, after Pessoa’s death.

In the days and what became years following 30 November 1935 and the premature death of a forty-seven year-old Fernando Antônio Nogueira Pessoa, João Gaspar Simões and Luís de Montalvor set about fulfilling their task of preparing Pessoa's unedited works for publication. It was 1942 before the first volume of Pessoa's *Obras Completas* was finally put into print (Simões, "Sobre as 'Obras,'" 115). Although the painstaking process took his colleagues and friends nearly seven years to complete, as if driven by a sense of urgency and a sudden awareness of his own invaluable contribution to Portuguese and world literature, Pessoa had spent the last five years of his life preparing his papers himself (Simões, Preface, 12). Pessoa's now famous trunk was the repository for his thoughts—a documentary of a life lived unlike any other. Scraps of paper with scribbled lines, fragments of poetry and prose attributed to well over forty different names, and an imaginary world presented with such conviction as to cause one to doubt one's own reality—these were the contents of Pessoa's treasure chest and the valuable clues to a remarkable existence lived in virtual solitude.

Since his death and the subsequent initial publication of his complete works, the world slowly is awakening to the genius of Fernando Pessoa. Colleagues such as Simões, Montalvor, José Régio, and others who worked with Pessoa, together with Portuguese scholars Jorge de Sena, Jacinto do Prado Coelho, and Maria Aliete de Galhoz, to name only a few, launched a series of publications including original compositions, personal correspondence, biographies, and critical analyses that have proved foundational to Pessoa scholarship. As more fragments from the trunk have been recovered and more correspondence has come forth, a parallel increase in scholarly attention has been unavoidable. Translations of selections of Pessoa's poetry and prose have surfaced in

multiple languages, the foremost of English translators being Richard Zenith. Recently, Pessoa has captured the interest of American literary critics such as Harold Bloom, and Pessoa's works have been included in studies of trans-Atlantic poets. As late as 1998, Darlene J. Sadlier published *An Introduction to Fernando Pessoa* for English-reading audiences. Still more fragments surface, and much of Pessoa's Portuguese remains untranslated, already adding to the volumes, written and unwritten, of commentary, analysis, criticism, and praise. This paper is only one more.

The critical literary and philosophical trends of the latter half of the twentieth century also gave rise to a significant turning point in the history of Kierkegaardian scholarship. Studies by scholars such as Sylvanie Agacinski upset traditional scholarly approaches to the Danish philosopher's ironic "aesthetic" works in particular, opening Kierkegaard's life and writings to new and different possibilities. Later readings have engendered re-readings, which in turn have sparked considerable and innovative discourse about Kierkegaard's ironic style and indirect communications. Agacinski, John Vignaux Smyth, Roger Poole, and Mark C. Taylor are only a few who have argued specifically that Kierkegaard's dissertation *The Concept of Irony* is best understood when read in the tone and spirit of how it was written, meaning ironically. The results of such ironic re-readings have cast Kierkegaard in a postmodern light revealing within his works forerunning threads of Derridian, Adornian, Lacanian, and Kristeavian thought, among others. What this means for the concept of irony is that it maintains open the space necessary in order for the process of deconstructive and infinite deferral to take place, because irony, desire, *eros* is inherently never resolved and cannot be assimilated within not just the Hegelian system, but any system that presupposes to circumscribe all aspects

of human experience. What such a conception of irony means for a reader of Fernando Pessoa is precisely the question to which this essay responds.

Relatively new to even the late re-readers of Kierkegaard, I must recognize a few scholars to whom I am greatly indebted for their ideas and perspectives. John Vignaux Smyth's *A Question of Eros* presents the erotic aspects of Kierkegaardian irony which, when extended to Fernando Pessoa have proved fruitful in deciphering certain readership reactions to and relationships with the texts that make up Pessoa's *oeuvre*. Roger Poole's *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* was essential in helping to define the role of irony as presented in Kierkegaard's aesthetic writings, to which my analysis is limited, allowing me to develop the template necessary to see irony at work and play in Fernando Pessoa. Although I could never aspire to the type of Lego-lingo system Poole ascribes to Kierkegaard's use of Hegelian terms, Pessoa himself, in various ways and using various personalities, sets about to redefine essential terms such as "subjectivity," "reality," "actuality," and "self" in an attempt to reconcile the finite with the infinite. Mark C. Taylor's *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship* has similarly provided the possibility of applying Pessoa's system of selves to Kierkegaard's philosophy of the self by coherently presenting Kierkegaard's view of selfhood. Other Kierkegaard scholarship has been instrumental in clarifying complex philosophical and literary content and is specifically acknowledged within the text of my argument.

In the following pages I offer a re-reading of Fernando Pessoa based on the recent re-readings of Søren Kierkegaard. Pessoa, I argue, has placed himself in the same position Kierkegaard reserved for Socrates and for himself, that of the midwife of

modernity. The following passage from *The Concept of Irony* is the crux of Kierkegaard's description of Socrates's negative, ironic subjectivity:

Early Greek culture had outlived itself, a new principle had to emerge[...]. The new principle must contend; world history needs an *accoucheur* [obstetrician]. Socrates fills this place. He himself was not the one who was to bring the new principle its fullness; in him it was only *κατα κρύβιν* [cryptically] present; he was to make its advancement possible. But this intermediate stage, which is not the new principle and yet is that (*potentia non actu* [potentially, not actually]), is precisely irony. (211)

Although Socrates brought a new principle to classical Hellenism, by Kierkegaard's own time the world needed another *accoucheur*. A master *eiron* himself, Kierkegaard's dissertation and game with Danish Hegelianism ushered in a newer principle and a newer phase of world history. Fernando Pessoa, born only thirty-three years after the death of Kierkegaard, and situated in the tiny country Pessoa would later claim is the eye of Europe,¹ has done no less for the progress of history by propelling us beyond modernity. From Greece to Denmark to Portugal,² Socratic irony bred subjectivity; Kierkegaard declared ironic subjectivity an infinite and unassimilable mode of engaging the world;

¹ An excerpt from first stanza of *Mensagem*, the only work Pessoa saw published in a book in his lifetime and for which he won second prize in a competition: "A Europa jaz, posta nos cotovellos: / [...] Fita, com olhar sphyngico e fatal, / O Occidente, futuro do passado. / O rosto com que fita é Portugal" (OP [1-44]). [Europe reclines, leaning on her elbows: / (...) She gazes, with a fatal, sphinx-like look, / The West, future of the past. / The face with which she gazes is Portugal.]

² Pessoa might argue Greece and Portugal are the only two nations with divine destinies: "Só duas nações—a Grécia passada e Portugal futuro—receberam dos deuses a concessão de serem não só elas mas também todas as outras. Chamo a sua atenção para o fato, mais importante que geográfico, de que Lisboa e Atenas estão quase na mesma latitude" (*Obras em Prosa* 331). [Only two nations—the Greece of times past and the Portugal of tomorrow—have received from the gods the gift of being not only themselves but all the others too. I should like to draw your attention to the fact, which is more than just geographical, that Lisbon and Athens are on almost the same latitude] (*Centenary Pessoa* 191).

Fernando Pessoa so engaged the world and proved himself, the self, unassimilable, indefinite, and indefinable. Pessoa, like Socrates, is as easy to form a picture of as is the elf wearing an invisibility cap.³ The process is not complete. There will be more midwives.

The document in hand is not the first study that juxtaposes the irony-laden works of the Danish philosopher and his pseudonyms with those of the Portuguese poet and his heteronyms in an attempt to paint a clearer picture of Pessoa's person. Ana Hatherly, the contemporary Portuguese poetess, essayist, and translator, draws a delightful comparison between Kierkegaard's-Victor Eremita's-A's⁴ description of "the unhappiest one" and Pessoa's poetic description of himself, extracting poems from the unedited corpus attributed to "ortónimo" and lines from Pessoa's *Primerio Fausto* to prove that Portugal's Poet deserves privileged occupancy of the "empty tomb of the West." While Hatherly's pen-strokes reveal Pessoa in the portrait of A's unhappiest man, my own emphasize the emptiness of Pessoa's tomb, if the comparison is a true one, and the dissolution of his portrait in the same moment the group of Συμπαρανεκρωμένοι believes to have finished it.⁵ The final page and word of this paper may signify a completion of sorts, but if my

³ In *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard says of Socrates whose person we know only through the writings and perspectives of others, "If we now say that irony constituted the substance of his existence (this is, to be sure, a contradiction, but it is supposed to be that) and if we further postulate that irony is a negative concept, it is easy to see how difficult it becomes to fix the picture of him—indeed, it seems impossible or at least as difficult as to picture a nisse with the cap that makes him invisible" (12).

⁴ Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* is edited by the pseudonymous Victor Eremita who claims to have discovered the papers he has edited and published. Because he is only able to decipher the first name of one of the two authors, Eremita decides to label them respectively authors "A" and "B." "A" is the author attributed with the document entitled, "The Unhappiest One."

⁵ The short piece, "The Unhappiest One," is an address made at a meeting of a group that calls themselves "Συμπαρανεκρωμένοι" meaning "association of buried lives" or "association of the buried-alive," and is concerned with finding someone who might fill the tomb whose inscription reads, "The Unhappiest One." The orator discusses different qualities and attributes that would describe the unhappiest person, and just when he thinks he has drawn an adequate picture of one who might occupy the empty tomb, the "inspired" orator concludes, "Farewell, then, you the unhappiest one! But what am I saying—'the unhappiest'? I ought to say 'the happiest,' for this is indeed precisely a gift of fortune that no one can give himself. See,

argument proceeds correctly, just when we seem to have attached even a possible identity to Fernando Pessoa, he will disappear once more, and we will find ourselves again standing by the empty grave.

By declaring an elusive Pessoa the empty embodiment of irony, I have had to render suspect the literal interpretation of any piece of writing, especially among his prose, attributed to Pessoa or his heteronyms. Whereas I am certainly not the first to challenge Pessoa and his contradictory assertions, the question of his sincerity has sparked considerable debate among scholars, many of whom deliberately defend Pessoa's right to be believed, viewing any skepticism concerning his assertions as an attack on his integrity. Let me qualify my statements by assuring the reader that Pessoa's ability to convince his readers of the "reality" latent in his heteronyms is a very important part of my argument. It is the continual evidence of the success of his ironic project.

Acknowledging Pessoa's use of irony to relate to his heteronymic project and to the world in general does not preclude the notion that Pessoa was indeed sincere and serious about all he said and wrote. That a debate even exists indicates the presence of possibilities worth exploring, and often what is arguably "sincere" also arguably can be read ironically. Kierkegaardian irony, as I will lay out below, allows for a seriousness that might serve to reconcile the Pessoaan debate. The debate is further complicated, and the irony enriched, by the fact that most of what we know of Pessoa comes from his own writings. For the sake of situating my own argument, it might be interesting to hear a few voices from both sides of the "sincerity" issue.

language breaks down, and the thought is confused, for who indeed is the happiest but the unhappiest and who the unhappiest but the happiest, and what is life but madness, and faith but foolishness, and hope but a staving off of the evil day, and love but vinegar in the wound. He disappeared, and we stand again by the empty grave" (*Either/Or* 230).

In a letter to Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues dated September of 1914 Pessoa

confesses:

O facto é que neste momento atravesso um período de crise na minha vida. [...] Quero disciplinar a minha vida (e, conseqüentemente, a minha obra) como a um estado anárquico, anárquico pelo próprio excesso de “forces vivas” em acção, conflito, e evolução inerconexa e divergente. Não sei se estou sendo perfeitamente lúcido. Creio que estou sendo sincero. Tenho pelo menos aquele amargo de espírito que é trazido pela prática anti-social da sinceridade. Sim, devo estar a ser sincero. (34)

[The fact is that at this moment I am passing through a period of crisis in my life. (...) I want to discipline my life (and, consequently, my work) as it is in a state of anarchy. I say anarchy because of the very excess of “living forces” in action and conflict, and in interconnected and divergent evolution. I don’t know if I am being perfectly clear. I believe that I am being sincere. I have, at least, that bitterness of spirit that comes from the anti-social practice of sincerity. Yes, I should be sincere.]

For Joel Serrão, who compiled and published Pessoa’s letters to Côrtes-Rodrigues, the above declaration is enough to convince him that Pessoa, from his personal correspondence and extending through his entire written *oeuvre*, is indeed as sincere as he admonishes himself to be. Serrão defines sincerity as the truthful expression of one’s feelings and ideas. He quickly points out, however, that without a clear understanding of one’s own feelings and ideas, as might occur in a complex mind, “ou de génio doentio”

[or that of a troubled genius], such as “our Fernando Pessoa (12),” those feelings and ideas often befuddle themselves making a sincere expression seem contradictory and deliberately misleading.

Serrão dedicates the introduction of his collection of correspondence to proving Pessoa’s passive sincerity. The argument, a myriad of excuses for the “gênio doentio” and for his mis-interpreters, is just as befuddled and contradictory as the poet whose earnestness Serrão seeks to defend. Pessoa’s personal letters are sincere, he claims, except for the famed letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro describing the genesis of the heteronyms because Casais Monteiro was a potential critic rather than Pessoa’s literary colleague and friend. The Casais Monteiro letter, Serrão claims, is “menos sincera e mais ‘literária,’ [less sincere and more literary],” because in it Pessoa employs his most effective misdirecting tool, irony. Parenthetically Serrão adds, “Sabendo, como sabemos, que a ironia é um dos traços fundamentais da personalidade de Pessoa, não será de admitir que as afirmações dessa carta mais difíceis de interpretar e unificar sejam de raiz irónica? (18). [Knowing, as we do, that irony is one of the fundamental traits of Pessoa’s personality, would it not be right to admit that the affirmations of this letter that are more difficult to interpret and unify stem from ironic roots?] According to Serrão, the Casais Monteiro letter is not the only piece of writing in which readers should not look for “sincerity.” The poem “Autopsicografia,” or “O poeta é um fingidor” [The poet is a pretender] is not to be taken straightforwardly either (16-17). The heteronyms, however, are indeed sincere manifestations of Pessoa’s dramatic psychology, just as King Lear was and is sincerely part of William Shakespeare (23-24).

Sincerity is difficult to discern when most of what is known about the man in question comes from his own pen, and whether or not Serrão is accurate in his distinctions between Pessoa's honest, "literary," and ironic instances is not as important as it is interesting. What Serrão seems to be arguing is that in the literary realm of poems and correspondence crafted for the critic, irony is welcome and must not be overlooked. However, in the realm of actuality, the realm of personal letters and psychological confessions, irony has no place, for if one were to deceive in his personal letters and confessions, he would be a "mistificador inconcebível" [inconceivable mystifier], and such a person would be incapable of composing a body of works "que brilha de sinceridade como o aço duma espada polida" (13) [that shines with sincerity like the steel of a polished sword.]

Serrão's sincerity syndrome is exemplary of other Portuguese scholarship and the overloaded effects of an honest emphasis placed on the gravity of Pessoa's poetic contribution. Antônio Quadros cites another passage from a letter to Côrtes-Rodrigues in an attempt to defend a straightforward reading of Pessoa's heteronyms and inevitably a literal reading of what Pessoa writes about them. The letter is dated January of 1915:

Mantenho, é claro, o meu propósito de lançar pseudonicamente a obra Caeiro-Reis-Campos. Isso é toda uma literature que eu criei e vivi, que é sincera, porque é sentida, e que constitui uma corrente com influência possível, benéfica incontestavelmente, nas almas dos outros. [...] Isso é sentido na pessoa do outro; é escrito dramaticamente, mas é sincero (no meu grave sentido da palavra) como é sincero o que diz o Rei Lear, que não é Shakespeare, mas uma criação dele. Chamo insinceras às coisas

feitas para fazer pasmar, e às coisas, também—repare nisto, que é importante—que não contém uma fundamental idéia metafísica, isto é, por onde nada passa, ainda que como um vento, uma noção da gravidade e do mistério da Vida. Por isso é serio tudo o que escrevi sob os nomes de Caeiro, Reis, Álvaro de Campos. Em qualquer destes pus um profundo conceito da vida, diverso em todos três, mas em todos gravemente atento à importância misteriosa de existir. (46)

[I maintain, it is certain, my purpose of pseudonymously sending forth the works of Caeiro-Reis-Campos. This consists of a literature that I created and lived, and it is sincere because it is felt, and because it constitutes a chain of possible influence and uncontestable benefit to the souls of others. (...) It is felt in the person of the other; it is written dramatically, but it is sincere (in my gravest sense of the word) just as what King Lear says is sincere, who is not Shakespeare, but his creation. I call those things insincere that are made to shock, and also those things—note this because it is important—that do not contain a fundamental metaphysical idea, that is, through which cannot pass, although like a gust of wind, a notion of gravity and of the mystery of Life. For this reason, everything I wrote under the names of Caeiro, Reis, and Álvaro de Campos is serious. In any one of these I put a profound concept of life, diverse in all three, but in all I put grave attention to the mysterious importance of existence.]

In his 1985 publication, *Fernando Pessoa, O Poeta Singular e Plural*, João Alves das Neves includes Quadros's article "A Criação Heteronímica" in which Quadros claims critics have disregarded Pessoa's grave assertions at sincerity by relegating the creation of and the ideas presented by the heteronyms to spheres of the literary, fictional, and provocative. Pessoa's sincerity is significant, Quadros argues, because it reveals a superior knowledge of the complexity of the psychological workings of the "I" (Neves 172). Undoubtedly the views of the heteronyms provide sincere possibilities of thought, and Pessoa most definitely raises serious questions about the positing of the "I," but these questions certainly call to mind Fichte and the influence his observations had on the development of romantic irony.

In a 1980 publication, Ronald M. Sousa seeks to clarify the dilemma of Pessoa's sincerity, a dilemma he argues begins with the poet himself. What seems to throw scholars into confusion, Sousa argues, is Pessoa's own preoccupation with the question "Am I being sincere?" "That simple formulation," Sousa says, "should have put a definitive end to the mixture of ranting and marveling concerning the supposed ethical question about 'sincerity' (72). Instead, critics such as Adolfo Casais Monteiro and Joel Serrão have taken Pessoa's diverting lead and extended to an entire corpus of literature what Sousa argues is of personal and psychological origin. The issue has less to do with the establishment of the heteronyms and the development of his poetic project than it does with Pessoa's personal existential dilemma. It seems, then, that an open, serious yet ironic spotlight on not only Pessoa's *oeuvre* but his poetic life as well might constitute areas of meaning just as valid as those that exclude an ironic perspective of the whole project in the dogmatic interest of "sincerity." Even Serrão's sincere critical statements

have an added depth when read with the irony I believe is there. His introduction contains a sub-heading entitled “A POESIA HETERÓNIMA É TÃO SINCERA QUANTO A ORTÓNIMA” [THE HETERONYMIC POEMS ARE AS SINCERE AS THOSE BY FERNANDO PESSOA ‘ORTÓNIMO’]. Of course they are; but what about Fernando Pessoa, “ortónimo”?

Jacinto Prado Coelho argues the other end of the debate in one of his earlier works on Pessoa. He found in the poet’s varied writings, among clear claims to the contrary, a pervasive unity among the heteronyms. In his book *Diversidade e Unidade em Fernando Pessoa* [*Diversity and Unity in Fernando Pessoa*] Coelho begins by briefly acknowledging the diverse characteristics—biographical, physiological, stylistic, and topical—of each of the major heteronyms—Caeiro, Reis, Campos, “ortónimo,” and Bernardo Soares—and such an approach to reading Pessoa has since become the most common. However, Coelho dedicates most of his analysis to revealing the unifying elements—stylistic, topical, semantic, and syntactic—found throughout the works of the heteronyms that undermine the poet’s avid assertions that the heteronymic project was something beyond his control. The author’s preface begins,

[...] Fernando Pessoa concebeu o projecto de se ocultar na criação voluntária, *fingindo* indivíduos independentes dele—os heterónimos—, e inculcando-os como produtos dum imperativo alheio à sua vontade: eles o teriam forçado a escrever, na atitude submissa do *medium*, a poesia heterónima. Mas *como esconder um homem?* Esta pergunta, atribuída por Valéry a Cervantes, tem aqui plena oportunidade. Um homem da estirpe de Pessoa, ao esconder-se, revela-se; põe a nu a complexidade exemplar

da sua vida profunda. E que interesse palpitante não assumir a *descoberta* dum homem assim!

[(...) Fernando Pessoa conceived the project of concealing himself in voluntary creation—*feigning* individuals independent of himself—the heteronyms—, and inculcating them as products of an imperative beyond his will: they would have forced him to write, in the submissive attitude of a *medium*, the heteronymic poetry. But *how does one hide a man?* This question, attributed through Valéry to Cervantes, has absolute application here. A man of Pessoa's stock, in hiding himself, reveals himself; laying bare the exemplary complexity of his profound life. And what palpitating interest is not peaked by the *discovery* of a man such as this!]

Coelho's work admonishes Pessoa scholars not to believe everything they read, including and especially what Pessoa has written outside the generally perceived realm of "literature." He reminds readers that Caetano, Reis, Campos and the others, although diverse, are undoubtedly all one person. Coelho, however, also falls short of recognizing Pessoa's genius by denying the heteronyms the reality Pessoa is able to establish for them. The unity of their works may reveal one man composed them, but even syntactic, semantic, and topical unity does not account for the diversity of possible "life views" presented by the heteronyms, nor can such unity lead to the "discovery," in the traditional sense, of their creator. Building on Coelho's claims of Pessoa's "feigned" feebleness of will, but taking that "feigning" in a different direction, and similarly building on the

seriousness with which Pessoa created and presented his heteronyms and their respective views, I seek to show how Pessoa playfully redirects and misdirects his readers in a spiral game of infinite deferral of identity, culminating in the ultimate indefinite masking and unmasking of his own.

Wayne Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony* lays out clues and strategies for identifying and reconstructing rhetorical irony. One of Booth's main arguments involves the necessity of authorial intention for accurately reading irony. Booth writes, "No matter how firmly I am convinced that a statement is absurd or illogical or just plain false, I must somehow determine whether what I reject is also rejected by the author, and whether he has reason to expect my concurrence" (11). Fully aware of the "intentional fallacy," Booth makes a distinction between the author and the implied author and between the intentions of the works themselves. Paramount throughout his presentation is the relationship between the implied author and the implied reader, and the more the reader knows about the author and his other works, the more certain the reader can be when venturing to declare an irony. Thus he advocates for Pessoa's literal sincerity claim that personal correspondence and "journalistic" auto-interpretive confessionals validate the earnest nature of their author, while others, not wanting to be trumped by Pessoa, will argue they occupy a place beside him and a share in the mockery of those who do not understand.

Fernando Pessoa's works, however, are not easily circumscribed by the notion of an implied author simply because of the multiple authorship implicit in Pessoa's very name. Booth's techniques are limited when applied to Pessoa for there is more at stake in Pessoa's world than finding an irony and reconstructing it so that privileged ironic readers can sit with the author on his higher plane looking down on the victims that are

not privy to the humor involved.⁶ To claim that one poem, or a few poems, or a part of a certain poem or certain number of poems is ironic, and then to analyze the dimensions and implications of such a claim might function quite well with any other poet. Pessoa resists such an exclusionary analysis of irony. That ironic instances are found in many, if not all, of Pessoa's heteronyms and their respective works indicates a larger ironic project that is Pessoa's heteronymic system itself and the presentation of a poetic reality based on sustained distance and the play that goes on within that space, a project more involved than what is encompassed by Booth's seminal study.

Enormous risks are involved when labeling something "ironic," especially when what is termed ironic extends from literary excerpts to an entire existence, for it could potentially destabilize any straightforward reading of anything, receding into an infinity of ironies with no hope of ever determining from what specific platform the ironic inversion first originated. Yet merely mentioning the name Fernando Pessoa begs for critical clarification—Pessoa "ortónimo," Pessoa the critic, Pessoa/Campos, or Pessoa the Puppeteer who sits above them all? With so many Pessoas at large, albeit in a very controlled space, I maintain that the excitement comes not only from profiling and chasing each one, it also is present when recognizing we are tracking merely shadows of an elusive genius. The game is one of resisted definition, of infinite openness, an openness made possible only by irony and distance. Alongside Kierkegaard's "irony" and "faith," and preceding Jacques Derrida's "hospitality" and "gift," Fernando Pessoa's heteronymic project posits that selfhood is intangible, indefinable and just as infinitely open as is the irony upon which the entire project is based.

⁶ See Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony*, especially chapters 1 and 2.

In offering a very late re-reading of Pessoa, I take advantage of postmodern literary and critical developments of the concept of irony to open possibilities heretofore under-explored that may constitute meaningful insights into Portugal's now most celebrated modern poet. Alan Wilde writes of the postmodern-ironic connection:

Postmodernity therefore reveals itself as an ironic notion communicating indirectly, by way of circumlocution, configuration, and bafflement, the necessity and impossibility of discussing the status of modernity in a straightforward and meaningful manner. Postmodernity, in its twisted posture, seems to be the awareness of this paradox, and consequently of the status of modernity, in a somersaulting fashion (4-5).

Convinced his purpose was to usher in a new era of Portuguese imperial, cultural domination, and aware of his anachronistic modernity, Fernando Pessoa configured and baffled in a paradoxical attempt to address and avoid his role as a midwife of a post-modern post-modernity.

Chapter one is devoted to analysis of the interaction of the ironic rhetoric employed in the poems, internal irony, with what I call irony from without, or external irony, meaning the irony found in Pessoa's prose, whether literary, critical or personal, and how that interaction allows for the establishment of fictional subjects. Chapter two discusses the necessary element of *eros* as it is identified with irony, specifically in the case of the heteronyms, to provide the corporeality and physicality that gives them their reality. In chapter three, the issues of realness and actuality are approached from the perspective of Pessoa's, or rather Bernardo Soares's, unfinished novel, *O Livro do Desassossego* and Kierkegaard's "dialectic of imagination," as David J. Gouwens calls it.

Finally, chapter four is an exploration of how irony is integral to understanding both Kierkegaardian and Pessoaan philosophies of selfhood, with specific treatment of Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms.

In researching for this paper, I cannot claim to have exhausted prior scholarship of Pessoa, Kierkegaard, and irony. In fact, I arguably have made incursions into these areas too miniscule even to be notable. The obvious dangers of such limitations are inevitable gaps, gaps that further research might fill with supportive elements or widen with contradictory proof. I cannot beg excuse from these limitations, but if my insights can spark any discourse at all, negative or positive, I will consider them contributive, if even in the smallest sense of the word.

Toward the end of Kierkegaard's dissertation he praises the individual who succeeds in "poetically composing" himself through irony, praise of which Pessoa, whose name means "persona" or "mask," is most certainly worthy.

What takes the ironist's time, however, is the solicitude he employs in dressing himself in the costume proper to the poetic character he has poetically composed for himself. Here the ironist is very well informed and consequently has a considerable selection of masquerade costumes from which to choose. At times he walks around with the proud air of a Roman patrician wrapped in a bordered toga, or he sits in the *sella curulis* with imposing Roman earnestness; at times he conceals himself in the humble costume of a penitent pilgrim; then again he sits with his legs crossed like a Turkish pasha in his harem; at times he flutters about as light and free as a bird in the role of an amorous zither player. This is

what the ironist means when he says that one should live poetically; this is what he achieves by poetically composing himself. (282-83)

In donning his masquerade costumes and giving his creations vitality, Fernando Pessoa raises his fictional selves to his own level of actuality, simultaneously transforming his own life into an immortal poem. One of Pessoa's "inéditas:"

Sou um evadido.

Logo que nasci

Fecharam-me em mim,

Ah, mas eu fugi.

Se a gente se cansa

Do mesmo lugar,

Do mesmo ser

Por que não se cansar?

Minha alma procura-me

Mas eu ando a monte.

Oxalá que ela

Nunca me encontre.

Ser um é cadeia,

Ser eu é não ser.

Viverei fugindo

Mas vivo a valer. (*Obra Poética* [711]; hereafter cited as OP)

[I'm a runaway.

When I was born

They shut me up

Inside myself.

Ah, but I ran away.

If people get sick

Of living in

The same old place,

Why not of living

In the same old skin?

My soul is on

The lookout for me,

But I lie low.

Will it ever find me?

Never, I hope!

Being myself only

Means being pinned down

And no one at all.

I'll live on the run,

And really live!] (*Poems of Fernando Pessoa* 160)

Sabendo, como sabemos, que a ironia é um dos traços fundamentais da personalidade de Pessoa [...].

Joel Serrão

The more irony is present, the more freely and poetically the poet floats above his artistic work. Therefore, irony is not present at some particular point of the poem but is omnipresent in it, so that the irony visible in the poem is in turn ironically controlled. Therefore irony simultaneously makes the poem and the poet free. But in order for this to happen, the poet himself must be master over the irony.

Søren Kierkegaard

There is something extremely vile in the modern mind; people who tolerate every kind of unworthy lie in real life, and all kinds of unworthy realities, will not tolerate the existence of the fable. And that is what Pessoa's *oeuvre* is: a fable, a fiction. To forget that Caeiro, Reis and Campos are poetic creations is to forget too much. Like all creation, these poets were born of play. Art is play—and other things. But without play there is no art.

Octavio Paz

Poetry is the establishing of being by means of the word.

Martin Heidegger

Chapter One

Interacting Irony: The Poetic Heteronyms

“Controlled Irony”

One need only read selections of Fernando Pessoa’s poetry to find oneself included in the “us” of Joel Serrão, the “us” that acknowledges, with almost disdainful obviousness, a personality prone to irony. It should not surprise “us” then that irony is the very device by which Pessoa establishes his multiple literary personalities and through which he succeeds in negating his own subjectivity. The prose pieces attributed to the poetic heteronyms are an integral part of the literary irony found throughout their poems and must not be excluded when considering the poetry. In very general terms, and at the risk of being overly simplistic, I make the distinction between the irony found within the poetry of the heteronyms and the irony surrounding their prose pieces by labeling them respectively internal and external irony. These terms are somewhat misleading since the prose is certainly not external to Pessoa’s literary opus. It is, interestingly, often considered a secondary part, if considered a part at all, of the “complete works” of the poetic heteronyms. Most important, however, is that readers maintain open enough intellectual space in their imaginations to remember that despite the names, biographies, and psychologies evidenced in the poetry and prose they read, one “P”essoa composed them all. For as Octavio Paz has observed, to forget that the heteronyms are poetic creations is to forget too much.

These two authorial removals—poetry assigned to a personality other than its author’s and prose about the poetry of that “other” assigned to yet another personality—

compound the irony at play raising it to a higher level. The distances resulting from each removal are the arenas of ironic play and are the spaces from which has emerged the general acceptance of Pessoa's fictional personalities within historical actuality. Darlene Sadlier calls Pessoa's project a "verbal game" while admitting, "[...] Pessoa was not one author but many, each of whom deserves a place in modern literary history" (1).

Through his exponential use of irony Pessoa has managed what no other has, to occupy multiple spaces on the list of historical literary contributors. Is that not the most ironic feature of all—that we have followed Pessoa's lead and grounded, honored even, fictional people in historical actuality? Perhaps Pessoa does deserve multiple recognition for such an accomplishment. Before presenting the implications of selfhood inherent in the interaction of internal and external ironies in Pessoa's heteronyms's works, an appeal to Kierkegaard and his understanding of the role of irony in poetics and life might serve to clarify the distinctions I have made.

The last six pages of *The Concept of Irony* are devoted to the development of what Kierkegaard calls "controlled irony." It is when irony is brought under "control," explains Richard M. Summers, that Kierkegaard reveals an early development of his theory of self, a theory that certainly has application to Pessoa and the process of establishing his heteronymns. Controlled irony is Kierkegaard's ethical response to the wild and harmful effects of romantic irony. Throughout his dissertation Kierkegaard maintains that irony, inasmuch as Socrates is irony and is a negative concept, is a historically justified form of subjectivity but not subjectivity itself, which is a positive concept. Departing from Hegel who holds that Socrates was subjectivity, Kierkegaard argues Socrates "had the idea as boundary," (*The Concept of Irony* 169; hereafter cited as

CI) and was therefore completely negative and negatively free. Socrates did have some positivity because he represented something new, but that positivity remained as potential and was never brought to actuality. Socrates as a midwife, and as irony, ushered in the new principle, which, according to Kierkegaard, was subjectivity and ideality (CI 297). Kierkegaard's complaint of romantic irony was that in its freedom, reality was abandoned for a "self-created actuality," which was an "exaggerated subjectivity" (CI 275) exemplified in Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* and the works of Tieck. Although he feels Solger is duped by Hegel's positive system, Kierkegaard recognizes that Solger, as evidenced in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, manages to understand that irony frees the artist from subjective bias and personal interest allowing the artist to achieve a state of "indifference" and "objectivity" (Summers 303-04). This background sets the tone for Kierkegaard's theory of the self, for selfhood is achieved through the objectivity made possible by "controlled" irony.

Kierkegaard opens his discussion of controlled irony by referring to Shakespeare, praising him for relating himself ironically to his creations and doing so, "precisely in order to let the objective dominate" (CI 324). Paraphrasing Kierkegaard, Summers explains how irony can allow the objective to dominate.

Within the work [irony] enables the right balance to be achieved between the disparate elements and here, as Kierkegaard notes, the greater the contrasts involved, the greater the need there is for irony to master them (CI, 324). But irony also needs to be present in the relation between the artistic work and its creator, where its task is to set the poet free from his creation, letting him float above it in Kierkegaard's image (CI, 324). [...]

The task of the literary artist, according to Kierkegaard, is to achieve in his creation a presentation of the particular subject matter that is free of any traces of the author's "subjectivity" in the form of personal opinions and predilections that have no place in the economy of the work he is creating. (304-05)

Thus irony must be present not only in the artistic work itself, but the artist's relation to that work must be sustained by irony as well. Kierkegaard then praises Goethe for his exemplary use of controlled irony. He writes, "On the one hand the individual poem rounds itself off in itself by means of the irony in it; on the other hand, the individual poetic work emerges as an element, and thereby the whole poet-existence rounds itself off by means of irony" (CI 325). That for which Kierkegaard praises Goethe is what I will show Pessoa achieves just as skillfully.

Mastering the irony from within and outside one's poetry, Kierkegaard warns, "does not always mean that just because a poet manages to be master over the irony at the time of writing he is master over it in the actuality to which he himself belongs" (CI 324). Here Kierkegaard begins his transition into his theory of self. The problems inherent in romantic irony resurface. Historical actuality, Kierkegaard explains, "stands in twofold relation to the subject: partly as a gift that refuses to be rejected, partly as a task that wants to be fulfilled" (CI 276), and cannot be ignored or abandoned for the imaginary as did the romantic ironists. Being grounded in actuality is particularly important for the poet, Summers explains, because "it is also a response to the situation of modernity, [...] in which the poet has to operate in a fragmented world, with no underlying unified worldview which he can simply take over. He is compelled rather to develop his own

view, to discover for himself the possibilities and limits of the historical context” (309). The transition from the “self-created actuality” of the romantic ironists to the historically grounded controlled irony, Summers points out, is the moment at which the self emerges because “the ironic subject itself becomes the object of irony” (310). In an 1837 entry in his journal Kierkegaard writes,

[I]rony is first surmounted when the individual, elevated above everything and looking down from this position, is finally elevated beyond himself and from this dizzy height sees himself in his nothingness, and thereby he finds his true elevation. [...] The ironical position is essentially: *nil admirari*; but irony, when it slays itself, has *disdained* everything with humor, itself included (*Journals and Papers* 2:1688).

Instead of fleeing the world in search of the ideal like the romantic ironist, the self of controlled irony recognizes the need to bring ideality to its own actuality. The issue of controlling irony is paradoxical for it would seem if irony is mastered, it ceases to be irony, which is negative freedom. However, once irony has come under control and helped to establish the self, its task is not complete. Summers says, “The task of irony is now to set people free from illusions, pretensions, fixed ideas and unconscious motivations, all of which it exposes. [...] Thus controlled irony actively acknowledges our need for others. It presupposes a community” (312-13). Furthermore, in a footnote Summers makes the connection between Kierkegaard’s controlled irony and Handwerk’s (*Irony and Ethics*) ethical irony in which Handwerk proposes the subject’s necessity for interaction with others in order to realize his own identity (313).

Hopefully the implications these philosophical developments have for a more profound understanding of Fernando Pessoa already have begun to take shape. Often it has been argued that Pessoa created his own world filling it with ideas and people of his own making. On closer scrutiny, Pessoa did not create a separate world; he merely brought his creations into his own. Among the major poetic heteronyms, Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos, there is often a fourth, Fernando Pessoa, sometimes designated as “ele-mesmo,” “só,” or “ortónimo.” These individuals comment upon each other and engage one another in critical exchanges and discourse. Álvaro de Campos, the only heteronym to acknowledge the works and person of Fernando Pessoa, is particularly critical of the poetry of Pessoa “ortónimo” and his impersonal approach to relationships. After consulting with the stars,¹ Pessoa’s heteronyms were born within a few years of himself and lived in the areas including and surrounding Lisbon, where Pessoa spent his entire adult life. Although Fernando Pessoa (“ele-mesmo”?) was a part of his own poetic community, it was the task of his creations to set him free from them, and his own task to remove from them any trace of his own subjectivity. In this manner, Pessoa controls the irony, internally and externally, and through it all a self emerges to discover it is floating above his own nothingness.

The Poetic Community

Fernando Pessoa “ortónimo”

The personality with the name Fernando Pessoa “ortónimo” above all serves as a method for grounding the other heteronyms in historical actuality. As a heteronym,

¹ Pessoa was fascinated with astrology and the occult, and many documents evidence he drew up horoscopes for his heteronyms, specifically Caeiro and Reis (*Obras em Prosa* 90-91).

Pessoa “ortónimo” is more elusive than the others. Perhaps the elusiveness comes in deciding whether or not Pessoa “ortónimo” refers to the genuine biographical Pessoa, if there is in fact a determinable and captured group of characteristics that we can call the real Pessoa, or if the “ortónimo” is simply another creation in the cast of dramatists. As mentioned above, Álvaro de Campos is the only heteronym to refer to Fernando Pessoa as if he knew him personally as well as professionally. In fact, Álvaro de Campos writes a poem about *O Marinheiro*, a drama Pessoa published under his own name in the first volume of *Orpheu*, a Lisbon-based literary journal Pessoa helped to organize.² The poem is entitled “To Fernando Pessoa” with a subscript: “Depois de ler o seu drama estático *O Marinheiro em Orpheu I*” [After reading your static drama *O Marinheiro in Orpheu I*].

The text is as follows:

Depois de doze minutos
Do seu drama *O Marinheiro*,
Em que os mais ágeis e astutos
Se sentem com sono e brutos,
E de sentido nem cheiro,
Diz uma das veladoras
Com langorosa magia:

De eterno e belo há apenas o sonho.

Por que estamos nós falando ainda?

Ora isso mesmo é que eu ia

Perguntar a essas senhoras...(OP [444])

² The drama is dated “11/12 Outubro, 1913” appearing in the 1915 edition of *Orpheu* subtitled “Drama Estático em um Quadro.” It is exactly that, static and unmoving, undoubtedly fulfilling its intended aesthetic purpose.

[After twelve minutes
Of your drama *O Marinheiro*,
In which the most agile and astute
Find themselves sleepy and sluggish,
Almost completely senseless,
One of the mourners says
With languid fascination:

Of the eternal and beautiful there is only the dream

Why are we still talking?

Well this is exactly what I was going

To ask these women...]

Also, in Campos' *Posfácio: Notas para a Recordação de meu mestre Caeiro* [Postscript: Notes for the Remembrance of my master Caeiro], Campos laments that he was not present at Caeiro's feet when his master passed away. He writes he was in England, and that Ricardo Reis was back in Brazil. Fernando Pessoa, Campos admits, was in Lisbon, "mas é como se não estivesse. O Fernando Pessoa sente as coisas mas não se mexe, nem mesmo por dentro" (OP 249) [but it was the same as if he had not been (in Lisbon). Fernando Pessoa feels things but does not stir himself, not even inside]. Interestingly, Ophélia Queiroz recalls that Pessoa admitted the very same thing to her about himself verbatim (*Cartas de Amor* 40). Even in his personal correspondence, Fernando Pessoa had to distinguish "himself." Immediately after writing the thirty or so poems that make up the core of Alberto Caeiro's *Guardador de Rebanhos*, Pessoa tells Casais Monteiro, he took out another piece of paper and wrote the six poems that make up *Chuva Obliqua*

by Fernando Pessoa. Of this experience he says, “Foi o regresso de Fernando Pessoa Alberto Caeiro a Fernando Pessoa elle só. Ou, melhor, foi a reacção de Fernando Pessoa contra a sua inexistência como Alberto Caeiro” (Monteiro 233). [It was the return of Fernando Pessoa Alberto Caeiro to Fernando Pessoa himself alone. Or, better, it was Fernando Pessoa’s reaction against his nonexistence as Alberto Caeiro.] Earlier in the letter, Pessoa remarks that he intended to publish some of his works from which he would have to exclude works by the other three poetic heteronyms for the sake of publishing work written under his own name. The poetry of the others, Caeiro, Reis, and Campos, he confesses, would have to wait for publication “quando me fôr dado o Prémio Nobel” (Monteiro 233) [when I am awarded the Nobel Prize]. Whether the name Fernando Pessoa “ele só” represents all, some, or none of the poet, Pessoa certainly used his own name to establish an identity that he planned to challenge and enhance later with all the other identities he had invited into his community. He did not need a Nobel Prize to accomplish his designs, just a premature death and an unresolved mystery of identity.

Since the poems written under his own name were to be what would spread Pessoa’s fame from Portugal to Sweden and then to the world, *Cancioneiro* is much more difficult to categorize thematically than the poems of the other heteronyms. One is unable to detect in *Cancioneiro* the pedagogical persuasions of Caeiro, the dogmatic assertions of Reis, or the unrestrained passion of Campos. Instead, because of these poems, Pessoa is often considered a poet-philosopher. Regardless, there is enough from within the body of the works attributed to himself as well as from without that resonates with an echo that betrays ironic distancing. Unlike the other heteronyms with which irony appears in the interaction of what they and Pessoa claim them to be and what they

really are, Pessoa “ortónimo” is playing a game with all the poets of the past and future, with poetic immortality, and with his role in the world as poet, philosopher, and creator. This is how Pessoa grounds “ele-mesmo” in his own actuality.

Since the advent of poetry the poet has tried to define himself and his role in the great historical process. Commenting on the poetry of Hölderlin, Martin Heidegger has written:

Who accomplishes this naming of the gods? Who lays hold of something permanent in ravenous time and fixes it in the world? Hölderlin tells us with the sure simplicity of the poet. [...] In this way the essence of poetry is joined onto the laws of the signs of the gods and of the voice of the people, laws which tend toward and away from each other. The poet himself stands between the former—the gods, and the latter—the people. He is the one who has been cast out—out into that *Between*, between gods and men. (Heidegger 761,764)

As the philosophers discover new ways to define the historical process, the poet stands in a space isolated from time and place, situated, perhaps as Heidegger suggests, between the gods and the people. Fernando Pessoa delighted in this isolation and frequently retired to the space within which he enjoyed the company and critical discussions of his creations. Pessoa certainly knew of his own genius and imagined his role as that of Portugal’s preeminent poet and the harbinger of a new era of glory. He envisioned himself as inspiring the motivating hope needed to usher in a new age of Portuguese cultural dominance, what he called “O Quinto Império” [The Fifth Empire]. By noting the imperialistic tone of *Mensagem*, a poem that rivals Camões’s Renaissance epic *Os*

Lusíadas in proclaiming Portugal's glory, and by his self-designation as a "supra-Camões," we can attribute to Pessoa a premonitory understanding of his vast and influential role as poet.

I hesitate to extract single poems from the body of *Cancioneiro* because each piece has its own tone and timbre and shines light on a different facet of the Poet of Personae, and what is only a part of the body should not be understood as making up the whole. With that in mind, of Pessoa's many self-discovery poems in the *Cancioneiro*, two in particular address quite explicitly the role of the poet, and by the very title "Autopsicografia" we know that "poet" is another name Pessoa "ele-mesmo" claims for himself, unlike Alberto Caeiro who eschews the designation. The role of the poet according to "Autopsicografia" is that he can control irony. "O Poeta é um fingidor," [The Poet is a pretender] the poem opens. He is not merely an amateur "fingidor," but "[f]inge tão completamente / Que chega a fingir que é dor / A dor que deveras sente" (OP [143]). [His pretending seems so real / That he will fake the ache / Which he can really feel.] To Anne Cruz, an American scholar who specializes in Spanish literature but has written about Pessoa, "Autopsicografia" is another example of one of Fernando Pessoa's masks, and this time it is rhetoric that is doing the masking. For her analysis of the poem, Cruz uses Richard Lanham's model of two contrasting types of life, the rhetorical ideal of life and the philosophical life. Cruz places Pessoa among the rhetoricians, the actors whose mode of being is insincerity. She says, "The [rhetorical] poet's language renders significance and form to the chaotic reality around him, only to lose its signifying quality and revert to pure playfulness," and in moving toward pure playfulness the reader is motivated to find meaning in the poet's words (56). "Autopsicografia" is situated amidst

the tension between play and purpose. Cruz extrapolates from the text that the poet pretends to feel nothing in order to move the reader, because in feeling nothing the poet can connect better with the reader's intellect. The poet uses his poem to inspire the reader's emotions, but all for the purpose of entertaining the reader's "razão." Not only is the poet manipulative, but also he is ostentatious, celebrating in his powers of creation—the creation of fictional emotions and experiences through verbal play.

Pessoa can certainly be called playful and even rhetorical. However, if "rhetorical" is, as Lanham claims, the opposite of philosophical, it might be inappropriately applied to Pessoa's work and self. In fact, we do not have to go too far to find among the influential philosophers of the late nineteenth century sentiments quite similar to those of our pretending poet. A study by Jorge de Sena presented in Brazil in 1959 links the ideas presented in "Autopsicografia" with strands of Nietzschean thought. Among Nietzsche's poetic works Sena discovers three seemingly simple lines that apply well to Pessoa's art. Nietzsche's poem is as follows:

Die Bösen

Der Dichter, der lügen kann

Wissentlich, willentlich,

Der kann allein Wahrheit reden.

Jorge de Sena's translation:

Os Maus

O poeta capaz de mentir

Conscientemente, voluntariamente,

Só ele é capaz de dizer a Verdade.

[The Bad Ones

The poet who can lie

Consciously, voluntarily,

Only he can tell the Truth.]

According to Nietzsche, then, in order for a poet to be able to relate truth, he must be able to lie consciously and voluntarily. Sena explains that this “mentir” [ability to lie] entails much more than “criar ficções” [to invent fictions] or even more than “fingir” [to pretend], rather the poet’s voluntary and conscious lie refers “à ordem da *expressão autêntica* de um conhecimento do Mundo” [to the order of *authentic expression* of Worldly knowledge] because “só ele [o poeta] será *capaz* de atingir, tão mais perto quanto possível, uma *verdade* não perturbada pelas circunstâncias factuais da criação” (Sena 120) [only he (the poet) will be able to attain, as closely as possible, a *truth* impenetrable by the actual circumstances of creation]. Here we find ourselves entering the space of the poet, the space that allows him to mediate, perhaps between the language of the gods and the voice of the people, in order to communicate truth. This space, the space through which truth is received and then transmitted, is opened by the capacity to deceive consciously and willfully.

As for Pessoa the “fingidor,” at first glance one might dismiss an application of Nietzsche’s lines completely, for Pessoa outright admits that the poet *engages* his capacity for pretending in order to persuade his readers, whereas Nietzsche’s poet draws his power from the *potential* to pretend, situated in the impregnated space wherein truth

and falsehood, for a moment, are the same. However, in Pessoa's poem "Isto," we find reconciliation. The first stanza:

Dizem que finjo ou minto
Tudo que escrevo. Não.
Eu simplesmente sinto
Com a imaginação.
Não uso o coração. (OP [144])

[They say I fake or lie
All I write. Not a bit.
It is simply that I
Feel with my mind and wit.
No heart comes into it.] (*Centenary Pessoa* 43)

In juxtaposing these two poems, "Autopsicografia" and "Isto," Pessoa first affirms that the poet does indeed have the capacity to fake pain, love, and joy, and to deceive, making the reader feel what he himself never felt. However, the poet responds with quiet assurance that although he has the capacity to "fingir" or "mentir" he subscribes to neither, gathering his feelings solely from his imagination. The paradox lies in the contradiction between the real and the imagined, something I discuss at length below.³ Appealing to Nietzsche, in Jorge de Sena's Portuguese, "...sem o reconhecimento das ficções lógicas, sem uma comparação da realidade com o mundo puramente *imaginado* do absoluto e do imutável...o homem não poderia viver" (Sena 122) [without recognizing logical fictions, without a comparison of reality with the purely *imagined* world of the

³ See chapter three.

absolute and immutable...man could not live]. Pessoa as poet does not deceive, pretend, fake, or lie when he writes from the imagination. On the contrary he is mediator between the gods and the people because it is precisely knowledge and understanding of worlds imagined that brings reality and truth to light. He can secure the permanent in ravenous time. The poet Pessoa continues in the second stanza of “Isto”:

Tudo o que sonho ou passo,
O que me falha ou finda,
É como que um terraço
Sobre outra coisa ainda.
Essa coisa é que é linda.

[All that I dream or suffer,
That hurts, hastens my end,
Is like a ledge above a
Beauty that lies beyond.

To this I am constrained.] (*Centenary Pessoa* 43)

The image of the terrace or ledge describes the poet’s removal from that which is around him, from the reality of the world, and elevates him to a space, the space of imagination, “mentira,” and controlled irony that prepares him to commune with the gods. This is the beautiful, the aesthetic, and from this space, from his potential to pretend, the poet can see differently since he is both within and above his historical actuality seeing both himself and his own nothingness. The poet is a “fingidor,” he has to be, but he neither “finge” nor “mente” rather he simply stands in Between. For, as Álvaro de Campos later

says, “Fingir é conhecer-se” (*Páginas de Doutrina* 169) [To pretend is to know oneself]. By pretending and misdirecting, by becoming one person only to become yet another, Fernando Pessoa left a mystery of actual identity that has proven irresistible.

Alberto Caeiro

The metaphysical proposals of the poems printed under the name of Alberto Caeiro together with the prose praise given him by Pessoa and the other heteronyms offers perhaps the most blatant instantiation of interacting irony. Born in 1889 and an orphan at an early age, Caeiro spent his short life (he died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-six) with an elderly aunt in the countryside, availing himself of little formal education and following no profession (Monteiro 234). Physically fragile, of medium height and fair-skinned with blue eyes, the simple Caeiro is named the “mestre” of the poetic heteronyms including Fernando Pessoa “ele-mesmo.” Caeiro’s “philosophy” is a rejection of all attempts at philosophy and ideas. His is a world where truth is readily accessible through pure appreciation of nature, and where trees are vastly more important than ideas. He writes, “É preciso também não ter filosofia nenhuma. / Com filosofia não há árvores: há idéias apenas” (OP [261]). [It is necessary as well not to have any philosophy. / With philosophy there are no trees: there are only ideas.] Since ideas are inconsequential to Caeiro, it is no surprise that many of his poems exhort readers not to think, for thinking is superfluous to the superior sense of sight: “O essencial é saber ver, / Saber ver sem estar a pensar, / Saber ver quando se vê, / E nem pensar quando se vê / Nem ver quando se pensa” (OP [229]). [The essential is to know how to see, / To know how to see without being about to think, / To know how to see when seeing, / Neither thinking when seeing / Nor seeing when thinking.] In celebrating sight, however, Caeiro

complicates his anti-philosophy philosophy. Beginning with Plato and continuing through the development of Western philosophy, seeing has been identified with understanding, understanding with reasoning, and reasoning with thinking. Rich with irony, Caeiro exhorts his readers not to think, but to see only, stripping traditional thought of its sense of vision, and subsequently its historical identity.

Alberto Caeiro's personal style and simple syntax quickly and easily convince readers that they just might be able to achieve the supreme state of pure seeing without thinking. However, the inherent contradictions in all of Caeiro's assertions are too blatant for readers to be able to sustain the game for long. In fact, Caeiro is unable himself not to think and to see things only as they really are on a consistent basis. Four short poems found in the midst of Caeiro's presentation of empiricism and pure visual appreciation are surprisingly full of metaphors and personifications. Perhaps the most outrageous of the four is "No meu prato que mistura de Natureza!" (OP [222]). [What a mixture of Nature is on my plate!] Here Caeiro is consistent with his appreciation of nature, but he takes it to a distorted extreme. The plants are our sisters, and oh how unconsciously we eat them! Without thinking, we devour the most delicious salad greens, when in truth they are our earliest siblings! After all the doctrine Caeiro has been offering readers to this point, it is nearly impossible to miss the humor of his elaborate frame for modest mockery. Caeiro has an explanation for his lapse into "literariness," and in fact warns the reader early that the poems that follow are "natural" yet contrary to what he feels and what he is, simply because he wrote them while he was sick. He rationalizes, "estando doente devo pensar o contrário / Do que penso quando estou são. /

(Senão não estaria doente)” (OP [220]). [When I’m sick I must think the opposite / Of what I think when I am well. / (Otherwise I wouldn’t be sick.)] (*Poems* 17).

In an ideal world free from the natural consequences of human weakness, everything, Caeiro asserts, must be understood for exactly what it is and must resist metaphor, hyperbole, or any attempt at literary interpretation. For what more could “o luar através dos altos ramos” be other than “o luar através dos altos ramos” (OP [240])!⁴ Periodically, however, the reader gets a sneak peek at particularly “pessoan” influences that seem to indicate something silly is afoot, as in the first few lines of “Li hoje quase duas páginas” (OP [233]).

Li hoje quase duas páginas
Do livro dum poeta místico,
E ri como quem tem chorado muito.

Os poetas místicos são filósofos doentes,
E os filósofos são homens doidos.

[Today I read nearly two pages

In a book by a mystic poet,

⁴ The poem is number XXXV of *Guardador de Rebanhos*.

O Luar através dos altos ramos,	[The moonlight behind the tall branches
Dizem os poetas todos que ele é mais	The poets all say is more
Que o luar através dos altos ramos.	Than the moonlight behind the tall branches.

Mas para mim, que não sei o que penso,	But for me, who do not know what I think—
O que o luar através dos altos ramos	What the moonlight behind the tall branches
É, além de ser	Is, beyond its being
O luar através dos altos ramos,	The moonlight behind the tall branches,
É não ser mais	Is its not being more
Que o luar através dos altos ramos.	Than the moonlight behind the tall branches] (<i>Poems</i> 21)

And I laughed like someone who'd been weeping and weeping.

Mystic poets are sick philosophers,

And philosophers are madmen.] (*Poems* 19)

Pessoa himself was very interested in the occult and in mysticism, and many of the poems that make up *Cancioneiro* deal with the ineffable and intangible essences of life and the universe. The metaphysical and philosophical ideals expressed in the poetry attributed to Fernando Pessoa are in stark contrast to those expressed by Alberto Caeiro, and in the poem above, Caeiro is setting his creator free by denying any philosophical connection to him. Pessoa, in turn, creates a Caeiro completely void of any trace of his personal predilections and ideas. Because Pessoa has invited Caeiro into his own community, however, even further ironic distance is required, for Fernando Pessoa is both “ortónimo” and ironic creator. Thus, with the same pen-stroke that he admits to creating Caeiro, Pessoa acknowledges he has found his master. To Adolfo Casais Monteiro, in the letter “less sincere than literary,”⁵ Pessoa writes, “Descuple-me o absurdo da frase: aparecera em mim o meu mestre. Foi essa a sensação imediata que tive” (Monteiro 232-233). [Excuse the absurdity of the phrase: my master appeared in me. This was the immediate sensation I had.] All at once the irony is surmounted and Pessoa floats above his heteronyms, including himself, and peers down on his own nothingness.

⁵ Joel Serrão argues the letter to Casais Monteiro is “menos sincera e mais ‘literária’” (Serrão 18).

Ricardo Reis

Because Caeiro was the first of the major poetic heteronyms to come into existence and because of the “ecstatic” circumstances surrounding his conception,⁶ it may not be surprising that the subsequent heteronym is somewhat more of a deliberate creation. Such is the case with Ricardo Reis. Born in Porto in 1887, one year before Pessoa own birth and two years before Caeiro’s supposed birth, Ricardo Reis, shorter, stronger and “drier” than Caeiro, was educated by Jesuits, became a physician, and frequently traveled to Brazil, finally moving there in 1919 in self-imposed exile because of his monarchist political views (Monteiro 234). The circumstances of his conception, however, are interlaced with the creation of Alberto Caeiro. Pessoa relates that following the rush of inspiration resulting in Caeiro’s *Guardador de Rebanhos*, instinctively Pessoa discovered disciples. He writes to Casais Monteiro, “Arranquei do seu [Caeiro’s] falso paganismo o Ricardo Reis latente, descobri-lhe o nome, e ajustei-o a si mesmo, porque nessa altura já o *via*” (233). [I pulled the latent Ricardo Reis from (Caeiro’s) false paganism, came up with his name, and adjusted it to him, for at that point, I was already *seeing* him] (Sadlier 89). Reis later composed over 125 odes in classical style with classical themes.

Reis’s neoclassical, pagan agenda resounds with propaganda. Reis’s paganism is more than a style, for the reader is quickly and consistently inundated by a body of works saturated with a desperate attempt to revive the religion(s) of antiquity, and to convince the world that the pagan gods western civilization has resigned to “mythology” are instead its reality. Reis’s attempts at reviving the lifestyle engendered by the religions of

⁶ In the letter to Casais Monteiro, Pessoa describes Caeiro’s conception as occurring “numa espécie de êxtase cuja natureza não conseguirei definir” (Monteiro 232) [in a kind of ecstasy whose nature I can’t define] (Sadlier 76).

the past are a blatant critique of his and Pessoa's own historical social reality.

Throughout his poetry and prose Reis frequently addresses the limitations of Christianity and how Christian thought has polluted the classical, pure way of living.

O Deus Pã não morreu,
Cada campo que mostra
Aos sorrisos de Apolo
Os peitos nus de Ceres—
Cedo ou tarde vereis
Por lá aparecer
O deus Pã, o immortal.

Não matou outros deuses
O triste deus cristão.
Cristo é um deus a mias,
Talvez um que faltava.
Pã continua a dar
Os sons da sua flauta
Aos ouvidos de Ceres
Recumbente nos campos.

Os deuses são os mesmos,
Sempre claros e calmos,
Cheios de eternidade

E desprezo por nós,
Trazendo o dia e a noite
E as colheitas douradas
Sem ser para nos nos dar
O dia e a noite e o trigo
Mas por outro e divino
Propósito casual. (OP [313])

[Pan the God did not expire,
Every field that
To Apollo sends a smile
Through naked breast of Ceres—
Soon or late shall see
A visit make thereto
The god, immortal Pan.

The melancholy Christian god
Killed not the other gods.
Christ is just one more,
Perhaps the one that lacked.
Pan continues fluted notes to send
Unto the ears of Ceres
Lying recumbent in the fields.

The gods are still the same,
Clear and calm as always,
Full of immortality—
For us, full of contempt,
Bringing on the day and night—
Not for us—the day and night and grain—
But for some other godly
Accidental goal.] (C.Lund)

In opposition to Christian doctrines of altruism, Reis insists on stoicism and indifference as the method for true appreciation of the fated life we are allotted. Reis's prose is similarly pessimistic about Christianity and about his historical actuality. In what was to be a preface to Caeiro's poetry, Reis writes,

O paganismo morreu. O cristianismo, que por decadência e degeneração descende dele, substituindo-[o] definitivamente. Está envenenada para sempre a alma humana. Não há recurso ou apelo senão para a indiferença ou para o desdém, se valesse a pena o esforço doloroso de sinceramente desdenhar. (*Obras em Prosa* 113)

[Paganism died. Christianity, which through decadence and degeneration, descended from it, definitively substituted [it]. The human soul is permanently poisoned. There is no other recourse except to indifference or disdain, if it is even worth the painful effort to scorn sincerely.]

Also:

Ao pagão moderno, exilado e casual no meio de uma civilização inimiga, só pode convir uma das formas últimas da especulação pagã—ou o estoicismo, ou o epicurismo. [...] Por mim, se em mim posso falar, quero ser ao mesmo tempo epicurista e estóico, certo que estou da inutilidade de toda a ação num mundo onde o modo de pensar se esqueceu. (*Obras em Prosa* 114)

[For modern pagans, as exiles in the midst of an enemy civilization, the only feasible course is to embrace one of the last two schools of pagan thought: Stoicism or Epicureanism...I (if I may speak of myself) have chosen to be both an Epicurean and a Stoic, convinced as I am of the uselessness of every action in a world where action has gone awry, and of every thought in a world that has forgotten how to think.] (*Selected Prose* 153)

Indifference is often a dramatic theme of Reis's odes:

Ouvi contar que outrora, quando a Pérsia
Tinha não sei qual guerra,
Quando a invasão ardia na Cidade
E as mulheres gritavam,
Dois jogadores de xadrez jogavam
O seu jogo continuo.

[...]

Imitemos os persas desta história,
E, enquanto lá fora,
Ou perto ou longe, a guerra e a pátria e a vida
Chamam por nós, deixemos
Que em vão nos chamem, cada um de nós
Sob as sombras amigas
Sonhando, ele os parceiros, e o xadrez
A sua indiferença. (OP [337])

[I heard it told that once when Persia
Had I don't know which war,
Houses were burning, walls
And archways being sacked,
Women raped and propped
Against the fallen walls,
Children pierced with lances,
Lying bloody in the streets...
But where they sat, near the City,
And far from all the tumult,
The chess players were playing
Their game of chess.

[...]

Let us be like the Persians in this tale,

And if somewhere out there,
Nearby or far away, we're summoned
By war, by country, by life,
Let them summon in vain, and let
Each, under some friendly shade,
Dream of his opponent,
And the chess game, of its indifference.] (*Poems* 111, 113)

Far more important than the social commentary presented in the odes of Ricard Reis, however, the language and syntax are what truly make up Reis's remarkable poetic identity. By stretching Portuguese to its linguistic limits Pessoa achieves a Latinate beauty that rivals Horace himself. Fate, the Roman gods, and advocacy of moderation and simple living serve as background to the soothing power of ingenious poetry. An ode to Reis's master, Caeiro:

Mestre, são plácidas
Todas as horas
Que nós perdemos,
Se no perdê-las,
Qual numa jarra,
Nós pomos flores.

Não há tristezas
New alegrias
Na nossa vida.

Assim saibamos,
Sábios incautos,
Não a viver,

Mas decorrê-la,
Tranqüilos, plácidos,
Tendo as crianças
Por nossas mestras,
E os olhos cheios
De Natureza...

[...]

Colhamos flores.
Molhemos leves
As nossas mãos
Nos rios calmos,
Para aprendermos
Calma também.

Girassóis sempre
Fitando o sol,
Da vida iremos
Tranqüilos, tendo
Nem o remorse

De ter vivido. (OP [310])

[Master, placid are

All the hours

We lose,

If, in losing them,

We place them

Like flowers

In a vase.

There are neither sorrows

Nor joys

In our lives.

So let us,

Wisely innocent,

Learn not to live,

But to abide our course,

Tranquil, placid,

With children

For our tutors,

And our eyes filled

With nature...

(...)
But flowers let us pick
May we gently
Wet our hands
In rivers calm,
And learn the
Calm as well.

Sunflowers we,
With focus on the sun,
From life shall pass
Serene,
Without remorse
For having lived.] (C.Lund)

Reis's neoclassical poetic style and his treatment of classical themes keep him grounded in Pessoa's historical reality. His appeals to moderation, finding pleasure in simplicity and peace in nature, and the passivity of existence as it yields to the higher powers of the gods and Fates are features reminiscent of eighteenth-century *arcadismo*, or Portuguese neoclassicism, exemplified in the poetry of Tomás Antônio Gonzaga and Manuel Maria Barbosa du Bocage (Sadlier 92). More explicitly Pessoa uses Ricard Reis to engage his contemporaries in an artistic game of literary intellectualism. The following is what Fernando Pessoa wrote concerning Reis's "birth," found on a fragment dated 1914:

O Dr. Ricardo Reis nasceu dentro da minha alma no dia 29 de Janeiro de 1914, pelas 11 horas da noite. Eu estivera ouvindo no dia anterior uma discussão extensa sobre os excessos, especialmente de realização, da arte moderna. Segundo o meu processo de sentir as cousas sem as sentir, fui-me deixando ir na onda dessa reação momentânea. Quando reparei em que estava pensando, vi que tinha erguido uma teoria neoclássica, e que a ia desenvolvendo. Anchei-a bela e calculei interessante se a desenvolvesse segundo princípios que não adoto nem aceito. Ocorreu-me a idéia de a tornar um neoclassicismo “científico” [...] reagir contra duas correntes—tanto contra o romanticismo moderno, como contra o neoclassicismo à Maurras. (*Obras em Prosa* 139)

[Dr. Ricardo Reis was born in my soul on the 29th of January in 1914, around eleven o'clock at night. The day before, I had been listening to an extensive discussion on the excesses, especially in the formation, of modern art. In keeping with my process of feeling things without being aware of feeling them, I allowed myself to ride the wave of this momentary reaction. When I noticed what I was thinking about, I saw that I had constructed a neoclassic theory and was continuing to develop it. I found it beautiful and thought it interesting if I developed it according to principles that I myself neither adopt nor accept. The idea occurred to me to make it a “scientific” neoclassicism...reacting against two currents—as

much against modern romanticism as against neoclassicism in the manner of Maurras.] (Sadler 90)

From his inception, the purpose Reis and his majestic odes were to serve was a poetic and philosophical balance between the more extreme modernist literary trends of the time exemplified in the “revolutionary classicism” of Charles Maurras and the fiery modern “romanticism” of Marinetti. Ricardo Reis’s neoclassical odes are void of the polemics characteristic of Maurras and similarly bereft of any hint of the emotion of romanticism, and thus a successful exercise for Pessoa in controlling irony for creation.

Álvaro de Campos

Álvaro de Campos was conceived in much the same way as Ricardo Reis. Like Reis, who was invented as a disciple for Alberto Caeiro, Campos was similarly created to be Caeiro’s student but in direct opposition to Ricardo Reis. In fact, Álvaro de Campos and his poem *Ode Triumphant* appeared to/in Pessoa simultaneously. According to Pessoa, Campos was born in Tavira on October 15, 1890 and chose for his profession naval engineering. Although he studied in Glasgow, at the time of Pessoa’s letter to Casais Monteiro, Campos was in Lisbon in “inactividade.” Endowed with stature, “(1^m, 75 de altura—mais 2 cm do que eu [Pessoa])” Campos had coloring “typical of a Portuguese Jew,” wore his straight hair parted to the side, and used a monocle (233). Campos is often considered a Futurist, and Pessoa himself designated Campos as a “Sensacionista.” The emotion and energy characteristic of Campos contrasts vividly with the simple control of Caeiro and the calm indifference of Reis. Despite overt and highly constructed differences between the heteronyms, one characteristic they all share, in

varying qualities and quantities, is the tendency toward negation. More than a tendency, each of the major heteronyms negates in order to affirm, much like Socrates's declaration of ignorance after having been divinely selected as the wisest of men. Even more like Socrates, through the distanced, negative voices of his "others," Pessoa is able to assert his own genius. Much more than the other heteronyms, the irony surrounding Álvaro de Campos is based in the negation-affirmation dialectic.

Søren Kierkegaard's ironic reading of Socrates and Socratic irony provides a model for Pessoa's establishment of Campos' subjectivity through negation. An aspect of Socratic irony is revealed in Socrates's deceptively simple assertion to the Sophists and to his pupils that he knew nothing. Of course, in claiming he knew nothing Socrates set out to demonstrate to the self-proclaimed wise just how little they actually knew. As stated above, according to Kierkegaard, Socrates, through his irony and because he "had the idea as boundary," was wholly negative. He implied the opposite of what he knew to be true only to reveal to others that the truth was in the opposite of what they believed. Kierkegaard writes, "In oratory, for example, there frequently appears a figure of speech with the name of irony and the characteristic of saying the opposite of what is meant. Already here we have a quality that permeates all irony—namely, that the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence" (CI 247). He continues a few sentences later, "If I next consider the speaking subject, I once again have a qualification that permeates all irony—namely, the subject is negatively free" (CI 247). Socrates as subject remained negatively free because he was not the new principle, but merely the potential for that new principle which is subjectivity and ideality (CI 297). Although not the principle itself, Socrates performed his obstetrical duties by delivering to others the

means to acquire wisdom not through the mandates, dictates, and statutes of the collective state, but by thinking on their own, a process of “inwardness, which reflects upon itself and in its relation to itself detaches and volatilizes the established [*Bestaaende*] in the flood of thought that surges over it and carries it away while it itself recedes again into thought” (CI 163). By having the idea as boundary, Socrates remained negatively free through irony meanwhile ushering in the subjectivity that set his pupils free from the constraints of Athenian collective thinking.

In the spirit of Socrates who only knew that he knew nothing, the following are the opening lines of Álvaro de Campos’ *Tabacaria* [Tabacco Shop] (OP [456]).

Não sou nada.

Nunca serei nada.

Não posso querer ser nada.

À parte isso, tenho em mim todos os sonhos do mundo.

[I am nothing.

I shall never be anything.

I cannot even wish to be anything.

Apart from this, I have within me all the dreams in the world.] (*Sixty* 115)

Instead of proclaiming his ignorance, as does Socrates, Campos negates his very existence past, present, and future. However, by the fourth line Campos already reveals that the “phenomenon is actually the opposite of the essence.” He is nothing, yet he is full of all of the dreams of the world. Like Socrates whose positivity is inherent in his knowing at least what knowledge is but is similarly, according to Kierkegaard, a

positivity never brought to actuality (CI 170), Campos too contains the potential for a positivity he is unable to live. Later in the poem Campos qualifies his potential.

Tenho sonhado mais que o que Napoleão fez.

Tenho apertado ao peito hipotético mais humanidades do que Cristo.

Tenho feito filosofias em segredo que nenhum Kant escreveu.

Mas sou, e talvez serei sempre, o da mansarda,

Ainda que não more nela;

Serei sempre *o que não nasceu para isso*;

Serei sempre só *o que tinha qualidades*;

[I have dreamed more than Napoleon ever achieved.

I have clasped to a hypothetical breast more humanity than Christ did,

I have secretly thought out philosophies that no Kant has written down.

But I am and perhaps I will always be the one in the attic,

Even if I do not live in it;

I will always be *the one who was not born for it*;

I will always be only *the one who had possibilities*;] (*Sixty* 119)

Campos not only compares himself to Napoleon, Kant, and Christ, but he claims to surpass them in their spheres. He is able to make such audacious assertions because through irony he is negatively free. By establishing early that he considers himself nothing, and that he will always be nothing, he is trying to convey in extreme and bold terms that he is the opposite of the essence. The oracle proclaimed Socrates the wisest

man, and he proved his wisdom by declaring his ignorance. Campos asserts his greatness similarly, by negating the worth of his existence.

Another example can be found in “Cruz na porta da tabacaria,” [I passed by the door of the tobacco shop] (OP [479]). In this poem Campos laments the death of Alves, the owner of the tobacco shop. The result of the death of this man is that, “[d]esde ontem a cidade mudou” [since yesterday the city has changed]. However, the last few lines of the poem reveal that Campos is not writing about Alves the tobacco shop owner, but about himself since he is more preoccupied with the fact that the city will not change at all when *he* is gone: “Ele era fixo, eu, o que vou, / Se morrer, não falto, e ninguém diria: / Desde ontem a cidade mudou.” [He was fixed, yet I, who fly, / If I die, I cause no lack, and no one will say: / Since yesterday the city is changed.] Again, it is the “opposite of the essence” that is truly at stake here, and by asserting a quiet disappearance from the world of mortality for his Campos, Pessoa is assuring and reassuring his own certainty of poetical immortality.

Just as the subjectivity Socrates brought to life in others stemmed from inward reflection, similarly Campos relishes in self-analysis and self-separation from the world of collective thinking. These reflections are presented with the same negative masking that characterizes Campos’ self-definition. He says, “Quando olho para mim não me percebo” (OP [437]). [When I look at myself I don’t perceive me.] And:

Começo a conhecer-me. Não existo.

Sou o intervalo entre o que desejo ser e os outros me fizeram,

Ou metade desse intervalo, porque também há vida...

Sou isso, enfim...

Apague a luz, feche a porta e deixe de ter barulhos de chinelos no
corredor.

Fique eu no quarto só com o grande sossego de mim mesmo.

É um universo barato. (OP [529])

[I'm beginning to know myself. I don't exist.

I'm the space between what I'd like to be and what others made of me.

Or half that space, because there's life there too...

So that's what I finally am...

Turn off the light, close the door, stop shuffling your slippers out there in

The hall.

Just let me be at ease and all by myself in my room.

It's a cheap world.] (*Poems* 100)

Campos is ultimately unable to realize the positive potential he is certain he possesses and his poetry and prose are rich with the angst of frustration. Locked within his own irony and the controlling irony of his creator, Campos's destiny is not to establish his own subjectivity but to bring it out of others, namely Fernando Pessoa. Kierkegaard writes, "The negative has, namely, a double function—it infinitizes the finite and finitizes the infinite"(CI 310), and Fernando Pessoa does just that with Álvaro de Campos. He infinitizes himself through Campos's finitizing of the unreachable, uttering of the unutterable, and replacing of the "essence of the phenomenon" with its opposite.

In conclusion, one final appeal to Heidegger:

But when the gods are named originally and the essence of things receives a name, so that things for the first time shine out, human existence is brought into a firm relation and given a basis. The speech of the poet is establishment not only in the sense of the free act of giving, but at the same time in the sense of the firm basing of human existence in its foundation. (Heidegger 762)

Pessoa poetically constituted his literary personalities first through the words he attributed to them then through words he composed about them. His irony and his speech have given the heteronyms a remarkable foundation of human existence.

One might possibly call [Socrates] a seducer, for he deceived the youth and awakened longings which he never satisfied, allowed them to become inflamed by the subtle pleasures of anticipation yet never gave them solid and nourishing food. He deceived them all in the same way as he deceived Alcibiades, who, as previously mentioned, observes that instead of the lover, Socrates becomes the beloved. S. Kierkegaard

Does writing in pleasure guarantee—guarantee me, the writer—my reader’s pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader (must “cruise” him) *without knowing where he is*. A site of bliss is then created. It is not the reader’s “person” that is necessary to me, it is this site: the possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an *unpredictability* of bliss: the bets are not placed, there can still be a game. Roland Barthes

Chapter Two

Eros: The Embodiment of Irony

Whereas Socratic irony, in Kierkegaard's "view," dominates as the defining characteristic of the Greek philosopher in *The Concept of Irony*, Socratic *eros* as well holds certain significance for Kierkegaard in understanding Socrates's unique role in world history. Already seeds of an identification of irony with *eros* have been sown in the notion of Socrates, and by my extension, Pessoa, as midwives of a modern subjectivity. Even the notion of "mastering" or "controlling" irony has erotic connotations especially since the "phenomenon," in this case the "concept" of irony, is designated by Kierkegaard himself in the opening paragraph of his dissertation as "always *foeminini generis* [of the feminine gender]" (9). Although Kierkegaard reminds his readers that Socrates as eroticist should not be restricted to only a sensual interpretation, recent studies have investigated the references in Kierkegaard's dissertation that portray the ironist as eroticist. Such a distinction allows for a simultaneous and interchangeable exploration of the theories and uses of irony and *eros*. I am thinking specifically of John Vignaux Smyth's *A Question of Eros: Irony in Sterne, Kierkegaard, and Barthes* in which the erotic perspective serves to clarify various rhetorical and conceptual aspects of the ironic writings of his three chosen authors. Sylvia Walsh also takes up the same topic by way of a brief but concise article developing the necessary identification of Socratic *eros* with Socratic irony in Kierkegaard's dissertation. Both have been instrumental in staging an application of Socratic-ironic-*eros* to an application of Fernando Pessoa's works.

Both Smyth and Walsh's approaches to Socratic *eros* in *The Concept of Irony* are similar in that they follow Kierkegaard's analysis of the three views of Socrates and show how respectively Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes portray Socrates as ironist and as eroticist. I will take an inverse approach to Fernando Pessoa since instead of three people's perspectives of one man I am dealing with one man's multiple perspectives on his multiple selves. Aristophanes views Socratic *eros*-irony in a comic light as a personality representative of an ideal (Walsh 132) and might, as Smyth speculates, serve as a critique of "an *eros* that is neither conjugal and procreative nor even properly cognizant of the social or political 'woman issue' as such, and that therefore deserves the fate of being confused with the utterly sexless" (205). Xenophon in whom Kierkegaard says "there is not one trace of irony" (CI 25), is unable to see Socrates as anything but a pederast who brags about the love potions he uses to draw young men to him. Such a view, Kierkegaard observes, makes readers "just as disgusted with him as with an aged coquette who still believes herself capable of captivating—indeed, we are even more disgusted, because we cannot perceive the possibility of Socrates' ever having been capable of it" (CI 24). Xenophon comes close to describing the "real" Socrates, however, in that Socrates's relation to *eros* is a negative one (Smyth 208). In contrast to Xenophon's sensual portrayal of Socrates, Plato's works, divided into the early dialectical and the later "mythical" dialogues, reveal an "intellectual" eroticism. Walsh says Plato's perception of Socratic midwifery is love in the form of "spiritual pederasty" by which "young men are awakened to spiritual development through their relationships with Socrates" (127). Kierkegaard separates the Platonic dialogues as mentioned above into categories of the dialectical, identified with the ironic, and the mythical or

speculative, having the idea in its fullness (CI 46-47). The dialectical Socratic method, Kierkegaard explains, by moving from the concrete into abstraction provides for a negative and abstract definition of love based on desire for that which one is wanting (CI 45). For Kierkegaard, a negative abstract definition is no definition at all because it is empty. To define love as a desire to possess what one does not have is therefore to give it an ironic definition; in Walsh's words, "erotic love is defined here as ironic love, the opposite of what love is in its fullness or positive definition" (128).

The *Symposium* and *Phaedo* are of particular interest to the notion of Socratic irony as *eros* in which life is viewed respectively as erotic longing and a longing for death, two views that are reconciled, according to Kierkegaard, by irony (Smyth 194). Also, in these, the later, mythical dialogues, which Kierkegaard argues do not belong to Socrates but to Plato in his recreation of Socrates (CI 104), prevails and tends to a more positive definition of love as evidenced specifically in Diotima's speech which "seeks 'to maintain something that actually is not' [CI 106] in the form of an ideal reality concocted by the imagination" (Walsh 131). Socrates, however, in the negativity of his irony and his dialectical method, carries the abstract inversion into his personal life particularly in relation to his disciples, in whom he inspires an intellectual longing that is not completely free from sensuality. Alcibiades's speech exemplifies such a relationship since he is able to grasp the idea "with immediate certainty" due to his intoxicated state, for in coming into contact with Socrates, Alcibiades finds that Socrates becomes the beloved instead of the lover, and one who repeatedly rejects the advances of his admirer (CI 47,49). Kierkegaard explains that Socrates become the beloved because he was irony, and that his pederasty in relation to his pupils is a metaphor for an intellectual love of possibility,

for “in his enthusiasm the ironist never accomplishes anything, for he never goes beyond the category of possibility” (CI 192). Thus just as Socrates in constituting negatively free irony is not subjectivity but merely the “idea as boundary” or the possibility of subjectivity, so is his negative ironic love only a possibility of love (Walsh 136). Walsh further extrapolates that Kierkegaard calls for a mastering of irony that must extend from poetics to the personal realm in which erotic longing will give place to the healthy love that results from acknowledging and embracing one’s actuality (136). Socrates was unable to control irony enough to make it the “serving spirit” in his personal life because “[f]or him, the whole given actuality had entirely lost its validity; he had become alien to the actuality of the whole substantial world” (CI 264). “Too personally isolated” and “too loosely joined” in his relations, Socrates’s inability to develop profound and fulfilling relationships with others was a product of his place and role in world history (CI 182). Consequently, Walsh argues, “[f]ar from embracing Socratic irony and eros, then, as some interpreters would have it, the concluding irony of *The Concept of Irony* is the negation of both in their unmitigated negativity toward actuality and complete self-isolation from others” (136).

By way of introducing an “amorist interpretation” of Pessoaan irony-*eros* and at the risk of completely contradicting what I sought to demonstrate in the previous chapter as evidence of Pessoa’s ability to control irony by grounding his heteronyms in his own literary actuality, here I hope to show the limitations, by Kierkegaardian standards, such an ironic existence held for Pessoa who, like Socrates, was unable to extend his control of irony to his personal life. The evidence for such a claim is provided in a series of love letters exchanged between Fernando Pessoa and Ophélia Queiroz, once an employee at

the same firm as Pessoa's cousin whom Pessoa often helped with commercial translations (*Cartas de Amor* 18). Although excerpts from some of the letters were published by Carlos Queiroz in an issue of *Presença* following the poet's death and dedicated especially to his memory, their integral publication was resisted for some years by the said Queiroz's maternal aunt, Ophélia, to whom the letters were written. Finally in 1990, for reasons still undisclosed, Ophélia Queiroz agreed to provide for the public what editor David Mourão-Ferreira claims is of "primeiríssima importância" (10).

The love affair, if it even can be called so, was fraught with frustration and characterized by a tense distance Pessoa seemed unable to traverse. The affair lasted less than one year, from the beginning of March 1920 through the end of November, and was revived nine years later in September of 1929 only to end again in January of the next year. They worked in the same office for little over a month, after which Pessoa would meet Ophélia after work at her subsequent places of employment and accompany her home, never entering her parents' home because he thought it "vulgar," and because he wanted no one to know of their involvement. Many times Pessoa would tell Ophélia, "Não digas a ninguém que nos 'namoramos', é ridículo. Amamo-nos" (*Cartas de Amor* 32; ; hereafter cited as *Amor*) [Don't tell anyone that we are 'dating,' it's ridiculous. We love each other]. Little of the time they spent together was time spent alone, especially when they began seeing each other again in 1929. Ophélia was living in the home of the family of her nephew, the poet Carlos Queiroz, and Pessoa's visits always involved the three of them and were characterized by talk of poetry, books, and friends from literary circles (*Amor* 42).

Their involvement, however, was not devoid of passion or at least the occasional passionate moment. Once, when the power went out in the office, Pessoa placed a note next to the candle he delivered to Ophélia's desk asking her to stay a few minutes after everyone left. Suspecting Pessoa's interest in her and because she was interested herself, she stayed. When he came into her office Pessoa immediately began to declare his love for her, like Hamlet, she says, declared himself to Ophelia, saying, "Oh, querida Ofélia! Meço mal os meus versos; careço de arte para medir os meus suspiros; mas amo-te em extremo. Oh! Até do ultimo extremo, acredita! (*Amor* 23). [Oh my dear Ofélia! I measure my verses; I lack the art for measuring my sighs; but I love you extremely. Oh! To the greatest extreme, believe me!] As she turned to leave, Pessoa grabbed her and kissed her passionately. Another time, but in public, Pessoa stopped her as they were walking and enveloped her in a passionate kiss. If their physical intimacy progressed past these sporadic moments of passion, Ophélia does not say. In Richard Zenith's words, "[I]t is probable, though not provable, that he [Pessoa] died a virgin" (Zenith xiv). Maintaining the secrecy of their involvement became a kind of game that often caused Pessoa and Ophélia occasion to laugh at themselves.

Whether or not the Pessoa that paid amorous attention to Ophélia was simply another of his dramatic personae trying to experience a different facet of existence, Ophélia was certainly convinced of his sincerity. She writes, "Estava realmente muito apaixonado por mim, posso dizê-lo, e tinha uma necessidade enorme da minha companhia, da minha presença. Dizia-me numa carta: '...Não imaginas as saudades que de ti sinto nestas ocasiões de doença, de abatimento e de tristeza...'" (*Amor* 36). [He was truly very much in love with me, I can say, and he depended enormously on my

company, my presence. He said once to me in a letter: “You cannot imagine the longing that I feel for you during these occasions of sickness, of depression and of sadness.”] The content of Pessoa’s letters and the nature of the relationship, however, reveal a strained separation that Pessoa was either intentionally or unintentionally maintaining. His first letter, a response to Ophélia’s own letter inquiring as to his feelings for her, opens in an accusatory tone:

Para me mostrar o seu desprezo, ou, pelo menos, a sua indiferença real, não era preciso o disfarce transparente de um discurso tão cumpido, nem da serie de “razões” tão pouco sinceras como convincentes, que me escreveu. Bastava dizer-m’o. Assim, entendo da mesma maneira, mas doe-me mais. [...] Quem ama verdadeiramente não escreve cartas que parecem requerimentos de advogado. (*Amor* 49)

[To show me your dislike, or at least, your real indifference, the transparent disguise of such an elaborate discourse was unnecessary, as were the series of “reasons,” as insincere as they were unconvincing, that you wrote me. All you had to do was tell me. This way I understand in the same way but it hurts me more. [...] One who loves truly does not write letters that resemble requirements listed by an attorney.]

The subsequent letters express more tenderness, but there is still evidence of barriers, emotional and psychological, between the two lovers. For example, Ophélia remarks that sometimes Pessoa acted “confusedly,” especially, she says, when he presented himself as Álvaro de Campos. On these occasions he would act “de uma maneira totalmente diferente. Destrambelhado, dizendo coisas sem nexos” (*Amor* 38) [in

a completely different manner. High strung, speaking incoherently]. Once Pessoa as Campos said, according to Ophélia, “Trago uma incumbência, minha Senhora, é a de deitar a fisionomia abjecta desse Fernando Pessoa, de cabeça para baixo num balde cheio de água.” [I carry an incumbency, madame, which is to lay aside the abject physiognomy of this Fernando Pessoa and place it face down in a bucket full of water.] When Ophélia responded, “—Detesto esse Álvaro de Campos. Só gosto do Fernando Pessoa,” [I hate this Álvaro de Campos. I like only Fernando Pessoa], Pessoa retorted, “Não sei porque” (*Amor* 38). [I don’t know why.]

Often Pessoa would confide that he could not believe Ophélia could sincerely care for someone like him. He wrote once in a letter, “Se não podes gostar de mim a valer, finge, mas finge tão bem que eu não perceba” (38). [If you are unable to like me for who I am, pretend, but do it so well that I don’t notice you’re pretending.] Still later, when the romance was rekindled in 1929, Pessoa was different, physically as well as in his manner of being (*Amor* 41-42). Ophélia writes of him, “Sempre nervoso, vivia obcecado com a sua obra. Muitas vezes me dizia que tinha medo de não me fazer feliz, devido ao tempo que tinha de dedicar a essa obra” (*Amor* 42). [Always nervous, he lived obsessed with his work. Many times he would tell me that he was afraid of not being able to make me happy because of all the time he had to dedicate to this work.] Whether because of his own insecurities or his “obsessive” dedication to his work, Pessoa maintained a tense distance with his lover, unable to fulfill the desires that resulted and were raised exactly because of that distance. Although Ophélia later married, Pessoa died a bachelor, providing an appropriate closure to such an open-ended relationship.¹

¹ Coincidentally generic parallels can be drawn with Pessoa’s love affair and that of Søren Kierkegaard with Regine Olsen.

Pessoa's fear that he was unable to show "adequate" love for Ophélie because of the time he dedicated to his work brings up an interesting economy present in the relationship between "work" and "play," an "erotic economy" developed as such at length by John Vignaux Smyth. The economic aspect of the relationship is inherent in the seeming diametric opposition between work and play and in their necessary symbiosis.

If the aim of *play* is posited as pleasure, for example, and the aim of *work* as "power" (or any aim not pleasurable in itself), then the unity of *work* and *play* is characteristically achieved by portraying *work* as a deferral or investment of pleasure, which nevertheless has pleasure as its ultimate object. *Play*, on the other hand, can correspondingly be conceived after the manner of games of skill and competition, as a less consequential variety of *work* that nevertheless requires effort if the maximum sum of pleasure is to be reaped. (171)

Because Socratic irony is neither work nor play but rather betrays a "higher madness" that presupposes their union, Smyth calls the "resulting predicament" *workplay*. He qualifies his neologism, "*Workplay* is thus intended first and foremost to describe the realm of human action that falls outside—or at any rate, at the very limit—of the opposition between *work* and *play*, but which is nevertheless affected by volitional acts" (176). The overcoming of *work* and *play* in *workplay*, Smyth argues, appeals either to "the irony of the Divine Will" or affords a "relapse into the nonvolitional process of nature," and thus the two themes of *eros* and death, which relate uniquely to both the divine and the natural, supply the space wherein "*working* determination and *playful*

indetermination are most inseparably conjoined” (176-77). Smyth later extends this economy to include the writings of Roland Barthes, especially as they relate to irony and the exchange that takes place between a reader and a text. As stated above, according to Kierkegaard, irony unites erotic longing and the longing for death, the two themes both divine and natural that give place to *workplay*, and it is in fact *eros* that consequently provides irony with the corporality necessary to sustain itself in actuality. Thus in the erotic economy between reader and text, irony-*eros* opens the space wherein *workplay* occurs between the reader whose desire is to understand the game, and the author who simultaneously desires to conceal and reveal that same game, for “[t]he ironic figure of speech has...a certain superiority deriving from its not wanting to be understood immediately, even though it wants to be understood” (CI 248). Consistent with the Socratic-ironic-negative definition of love, Kierkegaard acknowledges that “irony is the negation of love; it is love’s incitement” (CI 51). In extending his irony to the overall heteronymic project, Fernando Pessoa, through the necessary erotic element, provides places for *workplay* and physical aspects for his fictional friends.

Erotic love in Pessoa’s poetic world is woven through his heteronymic personalities with uncharacteristic consistency, revealing both intellectual and sensual, divine and natural, dimensions. Akin to Socratic midwifery of the intellect, Pessoa pictured himself as the harbinger of a new kind of love, love that is spiritual, intellectual and beyond the corruption of carnal sensuality. Pessoa had planned to write a poem entitled, “Anteros,” named for the younger brother of Eros. Whereas Anteros is generally understood as representative of the avenger of unrequited love, according to Richard Zenith, notes in Pessoa’s archive indicate that to Pessoa, contrary to the instinctive and

sensually derived love of Eros, Anteros represented dispassionate, intellectual love of transcending value. The transcendent, spiritual love of Anteros was to mark the advent of the Fifth Empire in which Portugal would reign as culturally and artistically preeminent (*Selected Prose* 160). The always coming Fifth Empire and its transcendent love recall the “Messianic hope,” a concept further developed in recent years by Jacques Derrida.² It is the distance between the now and the future that maintains the hope of a Messiah, for, as soon as the Messiah arrives and the hope is fulfilled, it is simultaneously annihilated. Rather than an actual Fifth Empire or the actual arrival of an era of spiritual love, the essence of the “empire” is embodied in the waiting, hoping, and desiring of its arrival. From within the poems of the individual heteronyms, from the comments made from without, and from the overall economy between author, Fernando Pessoa, and his reader, irony is embodied in desire.

Alberto Caeiro, being the most “simple” of the heteronyms, has an equally simple view of love and its nature. For him, in his normal state of mind, to think is to be sick. However, in six short poems under the title *O Pastor Amoroso*, he is not in his normal state of mind because he is in love. The object of Caeiro’s love remains unnamed, being identified only as “ela,” and described only in a vague reference to her “figura.” Her characteristics and attributes are similarly unarticulated, and all the reader knows about “her” is how Caeiro’s love for her affects *him*. Consistent with the portrait Pessoa has created of Caeiro from within and without, Caeiro’s love is markedly pure. He admits, “E eu gosto tanto dela que eu não sei como a desejar” (OP [257]) [I like her so much that I do not know how to desire her]. Caeiro’s love is presented in his poems through a self-analysis and deeper self-understanding and is self-relegated to his thoughts and his

² See *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* especially chapter 6.

dreams where he can exercise more control over his feelings, as exemplified in “Passei toda a noite, sem dormir, vendo, sem espaço, a figura dela” [I spent the whole night without sleep, seeing, without space, her figure] (OP [259]), and the lines:

Tenho alegria e pena porque perco o que sonho

E posso estar na realidade onde está o que sonho.

[...] Quero que ele me diga qualquer coisa para eu acordar de novo. (OP [260])

[I have joy and pain because I lose what I dream

And I can be in the reality that is what I dream

(...) I want her to tell me something, anything, so that I can wake up
again.]

Though Caetano's love may be pure from unleashed passion, it necessarily passes through the scrutiny of the mind which Pessoa, on more than one heteronymic occasion, will assert is exactly what secures the transcendental quality of “anteros,” the always unattainable love.

Ricardo Reis presents the reader with the most intellectually structured perspective of love of all the poetic heteronyms. As stated above, Reis imaginatively embodies Pessoa's game with contemporary literary trends and was particularly crafted to contradict current romantic extravagances. Several of Reis's poems are addressed to certain women whose names such as Lídia, Neera, and Cloe help to indicate their roles as muses or some other type of spiritual companion or guide and are stoically non-erotic. Like Caetano, there is a purity evident in Reis's amorous language, but a purity more rigid

and philosophical than Caetano's desire simply to "think" about his love. Reis emphasizes the innocence of the love he both gives and receives, insisting that he and his partner are mere children: "Nem fomos mais do que crianças" (OP [315]) [We were nothing more than children]; or an ethereal "nothing:" "Hoje, Neera, não nos escondamos, / Nada nos falta, porque nada somos" (OP [316]) [Today, Neera, let us not hide ourselves / We lack nothing, because we are nothing]. Most prevalent, however, is the essence of Pessoa's transcendent, erotic *telos* evident in Reis' search for a higher, more spiritual union that rises above the desires of the body and goes beyond the momentary here and now, for example in "Vem sentar-te comigo, Lídia, à beira do rio" (OP [315]) [Lydia, come and sit with me, by the riverside] (*Sixty* 75). Controlled and intellectual, Reis prefers to sit with his Lydia watching the river run by rather than trade kisses, embraces, and tender touches. Ricardo Reis, along with his master Alberto Caetano, presents a love as emotionless, intellectual, and spiritual as possible. The view becomes clearer when we can step back from the arena and recognize that the only union possible for Reis and Caetano is a spiritual or intellectual one that can only be consummated through the momentary bliss of the reader.

Álvaro de Campos became the persona for Pessoa's experimentation with "sensationalist" poetry, something Pessoa and his contemporaries³ of the *Nova Renascença* movement proclaimed was a fusion of the psyche of the Renaissance, or reality centered in the soul, with the psyche of romanticism, or reality centered in nature.⁴ Campos is frequently identified with Walt Whitman because of his insatiable desire to experience everything, and because of his homage "Saudação a Walt Whitman" (OP [443]). The

³ José Régio, Adolfo Casais Monteiro, Alberto de Serpa, and Marques Matias are named specifically by Pessoa.

⁴ See "Uma réplica ao senhor Dr. Coelho" in *Obras de Prosa*, 397.

“sensationist” agenda as embodied in the works of Campos plays upon the more pleasurable and sensual aspects of *eros* although even Campos, whether in a drug-induced frenzy, under the spell of futuristic worship of mechanical movement, or in deep, nostalgic reflexivity and self-analysis, maintains a certain intellectual control over his emotions. In fact, he cannot escape the logic of his intellect.

Álvaro de Campos’s erotic episodes differ markedly in content from those of the other heteronyms. Like Whitman’s, Campos’s writings are homoerotic, and the focus of Campos’s desire is sensation. Although Caeiro and Reis intellectualize and philosophize their desire while Campos “sensualizes” it, most certainly they all center their respective subjectivities in what effects their never-to-be-fulfilled desires have on them, whether they are increased vision, access to moment of eternity, or sensual ecstasy. Even Campos exhibits a desire for intellectual or spiritual eroticism. In the following passage from “Ode Triunfal,” Campos’s speaker reveals a rapturous relationship with an arsenal of warfare technology.⁵ Rather, the rapture results from the potential power latent in the destructive weapons.

Eh, cimento armado, beton de cimento, novos processos!
Progressos dos armamentos gloriosamente moríferos!
Couraças, canhões, metralhadoras, submarinos, aeroplanos!

Amo-vos a todos, a tudo, como uma fera.
Amo-vos carnivoramente,
Pervertidamente e enroscando a minha vista

⁵ Darlene Sadlier sites these same passages and others to point out where Campos and Whitman agree and where Campos deviates from Whitmanian content and style. See especially chapter 6.

Em vós, ó coisas grandes, banais, úteis, inúteis,
Ó coisas todas modernas,
Ó minhas contemporâneas, forma actual e próxima
Do sistema imediato do Universo!
Nova Revelação metálica e dinâmica de Deus!

[Hey, reinforced concrete,⁶ cement mixer, new processes!
Progress of gloriously deadly armaments!
Armor-plate, cannons, machine guns, submarines, airplanes!

I love you, I love everything like a wild animal.
I love you carnivorously,
Pervertedly, coiling my sight
Around you, oh large, banal, useful and useless things,
Oh all modern things,
Oh my contemporaries, present and future form
Of the immediate system of the Universe!
New, metallic and dynamic Revelation of God!] (Sadlier 107)

Often Campos' erotic images are masochistic and violent. In "Ode Marítima" Campos embarks on a sea voyage in which he experiences, as Sadlier puts it, "a kind of infinite wet dream" (107). The prospect of the voyage "seduces" him into an obsession; the dock and the sea air "penetrate" him "physically." The erotic images become more explicit as the dream-voyage progresses and Campos encounters a group of pirates.

⁶ I have modified Sadlier's translation of "cimento armado" as "armed ciment" to "reinforced concrete."

Beside the possible association between pirates, sodomy, and homoerotic fantasy, no sooner has the poet met with the pirates than he lapses into a fantasy wherein he is tortured and raped repeatedly by them.

Ó meus peludos e rudes heróis da aventura e do crime!
Minhas marítimas feras, maridos da minha imaginação!
Amantes casuais da obliquidade das minhas sensações!
Queria ser Aquela que vos esperasse nos portos,
A vós, odiados amados do seu sangue de pirata nos sonhos!

[...]

O bárbaros do antigo mar!
Rasgai-me e feri-me!
De leste a oeste de meu corpo
Riscai de sangue a minha carne!

[...]

Fazei de mim qualquer coisa como se eu fosse
Arrastado—ó prazer, ó beijada dor!—
Arrastado à cauda de cavalos chicoteados por vós...
Mas isto no mar, isto no ma-a-ar, isto no MA-A-A-AR!
Eh-eh-eh-eh-eh! Eh-eh-eh-eh-eh-eh! EH-EH-EH-EH-
EH-EH-EH! No MA-A-A-A-AR!

[Oh, my rough and hairy heroes of adventure and crime!
My maritime beasts, husbands of my imagination!

Casual lovers of the obliquity of my sensations!
I wanted to be She who waited for you on the docks,
For you, hateful lovers, with your pirate blood in dreams!

[...]

Oh barbarians of the ancient sea!
Rip me open, wound me!
Mark from east to west
The flesh of my body with blood!

[...]

Make of me anything as if I were
A wretch—oh pleasure, oh, kissed pain!—
Dragged by the tail of horses whipped by you...
But on the sea, on the sea, on the SE-A-A-A-A!
Ha-ha -ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! HA-HA-HA-HA-
HA-HA-HA! On the SE-A-A-A-A!] (Sadlier 109)

Masked in carnal sensuality and imagery, especially in the above passage, Campos is still able to convey his desire for a higher, more ethereal union. The pirates of his dream are described as “husbands of [his] imagination” and “casual lovers of the obliquity of [his] sensations.” In “Saudação a Walt Whitman” (OP [443]), Campos describes the sensual effect of thinking of the “concupina ferosa” [fiery concubine] and “grande pederasta” [great pederast] as “[u]ma erecção abstracta e indirecta no fundo da minha alma” [(a)n abstract and indirect erection in the depth of my soul] (Sadlier 110). Even in the midst of

emotion and a celebration of sensation, Pessoa/Campos still promotes a metaphysical and distant *eros*.

Characteristic of the symbolist or decadent agenda of “sensationist” poetry⁷ is the desperate longing for that which is unattainable, and it is found throughout Campos’s work. Melancholy and resigned, Campos often laments his inability to live as simply and truly as others appear to live. In “Tabacaria” he writes:

(Come chocolates, pequena:

Come chocolates!

[...]

Pudesse eu comer chocolates com a mesma verdade com que comes!

Mas eu penso e, ao tirar o papel de prata, que é de fôlha de estanho,

Deito tudo para o chão, como tenho deitado a vida.) (OP [456])

[(Eat your chocolates, little girl;

Eat your chocolates!

[...]

I wish I could eat chocolates with the same truth with which you eat them!

But I think, and when I unwrap the silver paper which is just tinfoil,

I drop everything on the ground just as I have dropped life.)]

⁷ In a short critical piece entitled “Os Sensacionistas Portugueses,” Pessoa identifies sensationists as the descendents from the decadent and symbolist movements (*Obras em Prosa* 454).

Trapped by his own wealth of knowledge he cannot return to simplicity or to the innocence of youth,⁸ but it is this longing, this unfulfilled and unfulfillable desire that sustains Campos, both as a poet and as a poetic creation.

Campos is not the only heteronym to explore the sensual, and homoerotic, side of irony-*eros*. Two of Pessoa “ortónimo’s” English poems are explicitly erotic. “Epithalamium” revels in the joys of heterosexual love whereas “Antinous” presents not only an erotic space for *workplay*, but fuses death and *eros*, the two types of longing unified by irony. The poem describes Emperor Hadrian’s fatal mourning for the death of his beloved Antinous. As Hadrian studies the lifeless body of his young love Pessoa writes of Hadrian’s longing for a love extinguished:

Even as he thinks, the lust that is no more
Than a memory of lust revives and takes
His senses by the hand, his felt flesh wakes,
And all becomes again what ‘twas before.
The dead body on the bed starts up and lives
And comes to lie with him, close, closer, and
A creeping love-wise and invisible hand
At every body-entrance to his lust
Whispers caresses which flit off yet just
Remain enough to bleed his last nerve’s strand,
O sweet and cruel Parthian fugitives! (OP [875])

The final lines of the poem see Hadrian’s longing for love turn to a longing for death.

His hurting breath was all his sense could know.

⁸ See, for example, “Aniversário” (OP [473]).

Out of the falling darkness the wind rose
And fell; a voice swooned in the courts below;
And the Emperor slept.

Pessoa “ortónimo’s” Portuguese poems, especially those in *Cancioneiro*, reveal the more intellectual side of desire and engage in the game of straining for the unattainable. The approximately 150 poems that make up *Cancioneiro* are more heterogeneous in style and theme as compared with the other heteronyms, but they often are described generally as treating the interstices of poetry and philosophy. Poems dealing with that which is “beyond God,” the interval between speech and speechlessness (OP [58.5]), or a world that has neither ground nor covering clouds and winds, “Onde nada se mostra haver or ser” (OP [50]) [Where nothing seems to have been or to be], litter the pages of the collection Pessoa claims for himself. The first of the five poems of “Além-Deus” [Beyond God], entitled “Abismo,” (OP [58.1]) is as follows:

Olho o Tejo, e de tal arte
Que me esquece olhar olhando,
E súbito isto me bate
De encontro ao devaneando—
O que é ser-rio, e correr?
O que é está-lo eu a ver?

Sinto de repente pouco,
Vácuo, o momento, o lugar,
Tudo de repente é oco—

Mesmo o meu estar a pensar.

Tudo—eu e o mundo em redor—

Fica mais que exterior.

Perde tudo o ser, ficar,

E do pensar se me some.

Fico sem poder ligar

Ser, idéia, alma de nome

A mim, à terra e aos cues...

E súbito encontro Deus.

[I watch the Tagus in such a way

That my watching forgets I'm watching

And suddenly this strikes me

Against my daydreaming—

What is it, river-being flowing?

What is it, my-being-here and watching?

I feel almost nothing suddenly,

Time and place both emptied,

Everything gone hollow suddenly—

Even my being here and thinking.

Everything—myself, the world around me—
Remains more than external.

In everything the being and remaining, lost,
And vanishing from my thinking.
I am powerless to link
Being, idea, soul, by name
To myself, the earth, the heavens...

And suddenly face God.] (*Poems* 136)

Not only do the poems of the *Cancioneiro* reveal an eternal longing for what is never to be known, poems like “Natal” [Nativity] betray a clear understanding of the impossibility of the task.

Nasce um deus. Outros morrem. A Verdade
Nem veio nem se foi: o Erro mudou.
Temos agora uma outra Eternidade,
E era sempre melhor o que passou.

Cega, a Ciência a inútil gleba lavra.
Louca, a Fé vive o sonho do seu culto.
Um novo deus é só uma palavra.
Não procures sem creias: tudo é oculto.

[One God is born. Others die. Truth

Did not come or go. Error changed.

Eternity is different now.

What happened was better always.

Blind Science plows the useless sod.

Fool Faith lives the dream of its observance.

A new God is but a word.

Search not, nor believe. All is hidden.] (Honig 142)

It is not surprising that the search for the “beyond,” the “unknown,” and the “hidden” find explicit articulation in some of “Fernando Pessoa’s” poems, for that same search, that same game, is what defines his entire multiple existence. Even Bernardo Soares, the heteronymic author of what was to become *O Livro do Desassossego*, fills his “book” with passages that argue the impossibility of one person ever fully possessing another in physical union. Instead, Soares views two-dimensional lovers, those depicted in stained glass or on Chinese tea cups, as superior, for their love, their desire, is never fulfilled but is an eternal longing (Zenith xiv).

As with the other heteronyms, the distance of unfulfilled desire helps to maintain the space necessary for ironic play, for it is a similar kind of desire that works on any reader of Pessoa. Each poem flirts with the reader’s intellect while each heteronym teases the reader’s willingness to believe. Meanwhile from without, Pessoa tries to distract us with false biographies and critical commentary, committing to nothing but the reality of his imagination. Between every author and his reader there is an exchange that

takes place, and in agreement with Barthes, with Pessoa the exchange is charged with desire, with *eros*. It is a confidence game and Pessoa is the confidence man, the ultimate *ieron*, flirting and teasing with contradictory and yet equally earnest assertions. For the game to function, the confidence man must be certain his true intentions remain concealed. The seduction is subtle, and some will fall victim to his spell, as many have, and find they are no longer suspending disbelief but have plunged head first into a fictional, empty world with only fleeting glimpses of non-existent identities. When this happens, Pessoa, like Socrates, instead of the lover becomes the beloved, because he lets us “flare up in the thrilling joy of contact but never [gives us] strong and nourishing food” (CI 188). Still fewer will recognize the economy at play and will submit to the game while holding on to the trump card of actuality, the same card that Pessoa, from his own actuality, waves over the heads of his heteronyms and the readers that fall in love with them.

[T]o spare himself the trouble of organizing and publishing the richest part of his prose, Pessoa invented *The Book of Disquiet*, which never existed, strictly speaking, and can never exist. What we have here isn't a book but its subversion and negation: the ingredients of a book whose recipe is to keep sifting, the mutant germ of a book and its weirdly lush ramifications, the rooms and windows to build a book but no floor plan and no floor, a compendium of many potential books and many others already in ruins. What we have in these pages is an anti-literature, a kind of primitive, verbal CAT scan of one man's anguished soul.

Richard Zenith

As a rule, imagination [*Phantasien*] is the medium for the process of infinitizing [*det Uendeliggjørendes Medium*]; it is not a capacity, as are the others—if one wishes to speak in those terms, it is the capacity *instar omnium* [for all capacities]. When all is said and done, whatever of feeling, knowing, and willing a person has depends upon what imagination he has, upon how that person reflects himself—that is, upon imagination. Imagination is infinitizing reflection [*den uendeliggjørende Reflexion*], and therefore the elder Fichte quite correctly assumed that even in relation to knowledge the categories derive from the imagination. The self is reflection, and the imagination is reflection, is the rendition of the self as the self's possibility. The imagination is the possibility of any and all reflection, and the intensity of this medium is the possibility of the intensity of the self.

Anti-Climacus, *The Sickness Unto Death*

Chapter Three

Imagined Reality and the Irony of Bernardo Soares's

Livro do Dessassosego

In 1915, just one year after the birth of the poetic heteronyms, Pessoa began the prose project that would occupy the rest of his life, a project that until his death in 1935 amounted to hundreds of literary and literal fragments found gathered haphazardly in a large envelope designated to be part of the *Livro do Desassossego*. Although more than half of what was to be included in the prose masterpiece was written in the last six years of Pessoa's life, the *Livro* passed through various stages of style and content ranging from passages with new-symbolist and "sensationalist" tones to analytical personal confessions and finally to emotion-filled impressions. The *Livro* even changed authors three times, attributed first to Fernando Pessoa then to Vicente Guedes and finally to Bernardo Soares (Zenith xi,xx). Pessoa himself seemed unclear as to the direction in which he wanted to take his book, and many of the fragments were marked ambiguously as pertaining to the "L do D" and/or the works of "A de C," meaning Álvaro de Campos. Pessoa even labeled a copy of a letter written to his own mother with the "L do D" logo (Zenith xv). Aside from all of the appealing circumstances surrounding the process of its composition, the *Livro do Desassossego* itself, the book that never was and never can be, exploits the poetic possibilities of Portuguese prose to offer a sublime mode of existence in which one lives simultaneously within the reality of one's imagination and that of one's actuality.

Bernardo Soares and Fernando Pessoa

Bernardo Soares holds a special place in the heteronymic realm because he is not a full-fledged heteronym with a personality distinct and separate from his creator. In the letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro about the genesis and characteristics of the heteronyms, Pessoa says of the final author of the *Livro do Desassossego*:

O meu semi-heterônimo Bernardo Soares, que aliás em muitas coisas se parece com Álvaro de Campos, aparece sempre que estou cansado ou sonolento, de sorte que tenha um pouco suspensas as qualidades de raciocínio e inibição; aquela prosa é um constante devaneio. É um semi-heterônimo porque, não sendo a personalidade a minha, é, não diferente da minha, mas uma simples mutilação dela. Sou eu menos o raciocínio e a afetividade. (235)

[My semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares, who although in many ways resembles Álvaro de Campos, appears always when I am tired or sleepy so that his qualities of ratiocination and inhibition are somewhat suspended; that prose is a constant dream. He is a semi-heteronym because his personality, although not my own, does not differ from my own but is a mere mutilation of it. It is me without rationality and affectivity.]

In an earlier letter to João Gaspar Simões, Pessoa writes that Bernardo Soares was not a heteronym but a literary persona (*Cartas a João G. Simoes* 91). From a “personalidade literária” to a “semi-heterônimo,” Soares was one character whose fictionality Pessoa

seemed determined to qualify. Pessoa is clearly complicating that fictionality, however, by maintaining that Soares's personality is not his own, and yet not different. Soares, a "mutilation" of Pessoa, was not always the destined author of Pessoa's fragments of disquietude. In a 1913 publication of the literary journal *A Águia*, Pessoa makes reference to a text called "Na Floresta do Alheamento" [In the Forest of Alienation] which he claims was to be included in a larger work "em preparação," meaning the *Livro do Desassossego*. To this he signed his own name. Not two years later Pessoa had already attributed the work to Vicente Guedes, another heteronym, and ultimately, nearly a decade later, the *Livro* came under the authorship of Bernardo Soares (Neves 36). It is intriguing that it mattered so much to Pessoa which name he signed to a text.¹ That over time the *Livro* was moving in directions Pessoa perhaps felt were beyond or outside of himself, and then that even one of his creations was unable to persist with the evolution of the *Livro* indicates how constrained Pessoa himself was by his own creations and creativity.

If shaped by the thoughts revealed in the *Livro*, Soares's character at times seems to have Caeiro-like instincts. There are traces of Reisian classicist and Epicurean beliefs throughout. Not surprisingly, Soares muses about imaginary sea voyages, mentions engineering, and complains of his creative impotence, his nothingness, much like Álvaro de Campos. There are numerous instances wherein Soares writes of plurality and otherness, that he is both and neither, which speaks to what we know of Pessoa the creator. It is easy to be seduced by the fragments, only some of which are dated, all of which were left unorganized and scattered about the treasure chest that held Pessoa's

¹ In light of modern literary criticism, it may be difficult to resist the impulse to declare that publishing the work under either or all names would be insignificant to its overall impact. What Pessoa's "authorships" offer to the modern debate of the role of the author is worth exploring but outside the scope of this paper.

writings, and it is easy to forget the elaborate frame of deferred authorship provided by Pessoa and slip into a reverie of discovery that just might be an autobiographical window. Fragments like “Cada um de nós é vários, é muitos, é uma prolixidade de si mesmos” (*Livro do Desassossego* [20]; hereafter cited as LD) [Each of us is various, is many, a prolixity of ourselves], “Dar a cada emoção uma personalidade, a cada estado de alma uma alma” (LD [29]) [Give to each emotion a personality, to each state of mind a soul], and “[F]elizmente para a humanidade, cada homem é só quem é, sendo dado ao génio, apenas, o ser mais alguns outros” (LD [56]) [Fortunately for humanity, each man is only who he is. Only the genius is given the ability to be others as well]; these and similar statements seem to reveal more of Pessoa than of his semi-heteronym, a distinction Pessoa repeatedly complicates.

In 1991 Richard Zenith in cooperation with Carcanet published an English translation of the largest compilation of fragments intended for the *Livro* that existed in any language at the time. In his introduction, Zenith urges readers not to confuse Pessoa with Soares nor Soares with Pessoa. Citing Pessoa’s own declaration that Soares was a mutilation of himself, a literary personality that lacked his own “raciocínio” and “afetividade,” Zenith’s argument is founded on the distancing external conditions. For example, that Soares has no sense of humor marks a stark contrast with Pessoa since he, Zenith states, was endowed with both personality and humor. Whereas Soares belittles himself and his literary efforts, Zenith claims Pessoa never did. The other differences refer to location and differing professions. Such superficial distinctions, however, are dissatisfying. Zenith’s treatment of the internal aspects of the creator and his semi-heteronym is equally unconvincing. He writes:

As for their respective inner lives, Soares takes his progenitor's for a model: 'I've created various personalities within. [...] I've so externalized myself on the inside that I don't exist there except externally. I'm the living stage where various actors act out various plays' (f.308). But we have no evidence that these various actors really (or *unreally*, I should say) existed in Bernardo Soares. We have only his word to go on. Pessoa, as we know, gave literary substance to dozens of derivative personalities, not least among them being the disquieted assistant bookkeeper.

(*Centenary Pessoa* 165)

Here the difference between the two authors of the *Livro do Desassossego* lies in the fact that Pessoa did indeed produce a literary coterie of personalities whereas Soares only tells the reader he has done so. If we believe all that Fernando Pessoa says about Bernardo Soares, however, why would we not believe what Pessoa writes that Soares writes about himself? Perhaps we do believe that Soares has created poets and dramatists that have their own styles and works. Has he then risen to the level of and become equal to, synonymous with, as Zenith states it, his progenitor? It appears Zenith became aware of such incongruities since he modifies his argument in the introduction to his most recent translation of the *Livro* published in 2001. Whereas Zenith still argues Soares's inner life is modeled after Pessoa's and cites the same passage from the *Livro*, he presents a series of questions and finally determines that Soares is describing Pessoa's dramatic existence, at least in the passage Zenith uses.

Coming from Soares, this [Soares's confession of his own "multiplicity"] is a strange declaration. Are we supposed to believe that the assistant

bookkeeper, one of the actors who played on the stage of Pessoa's life, had his own troupe of heteronyms? If so, should we then suppose that these subheteronyms had sub-subheteronyms? The notion of an endless heteronymic lineage might have amused Pessoa, but the reason for his alter egos was to explain and express himself, and perhaps provide a bit of reflective company. Soares, in the passage cited, is describing Pessoa's own dramatic method of survival. (xii)

There is, however, at least one explanation for Pessoa's unwillingness to separate Soares entirely from, and conversely to identify Soares completely with, himself, and it is consistent with Pessoa's own method of indirect communication.

The juxtaposition of Pessoa's actuality with his heteronym's imagined reality, or the conjunction of details of Fernando Pessoa's actual biographical life with similar details of the fictional Bernardo Soares's imagined life, imagined through Fernando Pessoa, reveals a locus for ironic play. As mentioned above, the similarities are striking and seductive, and if the reader makes a small supposition here and creates a tiny tie there, it is possible to see Soares's mother's passing away when he was only one year old as Pessoa's own father's early death, Soares's commercial bookkeeping as a reflection of Pessoa's commercial correspondence, and Soares's office as Pessoa's own. However tempting it might be to draw parallels and then conclusions in order to understand the work better and know the author(s) more fully, the distance inherent in the semblance of verisimilitude must not be overlooked. There are certainly autobiographical elements found throughout the text of the *Livro do Desassossego*, and they are based on Pessoa's

claim that Soares is not completely different from himself. These similarities are precisely what maintain the distances opened by the irony that is Pessoa's entire project.

Deception through verisimilitude is an ironic instantiation exploited by Kierkegaard as well. In his discussion specifically of Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, Roger Poole calls attention to the obvious parallels between the young man in the story and Kierkegaard's own life regarding his engagement to Regine Olsen, parallels Poole deems "deliberately mendacious" (64). As over time scholars have missed the distance and attempted to glean from *Repetition* any juicy details regarding Kierkegaard's tragic love affair, Poole argues they often have missed the irony of the text itself while trying to identify it. Poole mentions Niels Thulstrup's claim that amidst jumbled and deliberately confusing statements about repetition he finds "genuine" repetition considered only twice in Kierkegaard's work. Here Thulstrup cites two direct instances when "repetition" is explicitly exposed. Poole writes, "Thulstrup's inability to read irony here becomes a seriously disabling matter for his ability to read at all. The two cases are not repetitions just because someone in the text says they are; the two cases are in any case examples of opposites, not similarities" (73). In this instance, too literal of a reading might prove not to be truly reading at all, and such is often the case when we believe everything Fernando Pessoa, self admittedly prone to "artistic lying," might say about his heteronyms and what they say about themselves.

The end of Poole's analysis of *Repetition* and the premise of his entire book is that Kierkegaard's indirect communication indicates the inability to assimilate certain concepts into a system, as the Danish Hegelian scholars were so wont to do. He calls it "moral luck" that news of Regine Olsen's engagement sent Kierkegaard to the press to

rip out ten or so pages from the end of the ready-to-be-published *Repetition*. In their place Kierkegaard added, in Poole's words, "some new, falsely veridical or truly mendacious pages" that failed to save his work from ruin. Instead the last pages are "all too personal" and therefore grossly out of place in the conceptual game initially established. The result of this case of "moral luck," says Poole, is that "the basic category of repetition remains successfully undefined until the very last. Right to the end, the reader is held in the ignominious position of not being allowed to choose. The term *repetition* never ceases to oscillate in its valency for the whole length of the text. Paul de Man could never have wished for a more perfect case of aporia. There is, therefore, no Kierkegaardian doctrine of repetition" (82). At the risk of drawing similarities where there might be more differences, and perhaps not daring to label it "moral luck," Pessoa's inability to or insistence on an unfinished novel leaves traces of an "all too personal" involvement with the *Livro do Dessassosego*. Zenith articulates the personal connections to the *Livro* as follows:

Soares's project is essentially a scaled-down version of Pessoa's, and within the trunk of multifarious writings we now know as the Pessoa archives, *The Book of Disquietude* is like a smaller trunk, full of long and short, divergent and frequently contradictory fragments written throughout Pessoa's adult life. *O Livro* is a depository not only for Soares's 'lucid diary' (f.211) and 'haphazard musings' (f.14) but for Fernando Pessoa's prose poems, literary fragments and occasional writings that had no other home. (*Centenary Pessoa* 163)

In the 2001 translation of Soares's book *Zenith* writes of the similar parallels the progress of the *Livro* came to have to Pessoa's person:

In this respect, that of perpetual fragmentation, the author and his *Book* were forever faithful to their principles. If Pessoa split himself into dozens of literary characters who contradicted each other and even themselves, *The Book of Disquiet* likewise multiplied without ceasing, being first one book and then another, told by this voice then that voice, then another, still others, all swirling and uncertain, like the cigarette smoke through which Pessoa, sitting in a café or next to his window, watched life go by.

[...]

[T]he more he 'prepared' it, the more unfinished it became. Unfinished and unfinishable. Without a plot or plan to follow, but as disquiet as a literary work can be, it kept growing even as its borders became ever more indefinite and its existence as a book ever less viable—like the existence of Fernando Pessoa as a citizen in this world. (x-xi)

Whether deliberately unfinished or not, and whether the *Livro* was deliberately left fragmentary, contradictory, similar to and different from his own life, Fernando Pessoa's life is tied to Soares's *Livro* both thematically and structurally. What the all too personal connections show, however, is that there is no system, no key that unlocks the understanding, no mold that encapsulates the roving self and non-selves that is Fernando Pessoa. Whereas Caeiro, Reis, Campos, and others have biographies, personalities, and philosophies, and all are an intellectual part of Pessoa, Soares, on the other hand, is a

fragment of Pessoa just as Pessoa fragments himself through Soares. It is an all too personal Soares that writes,

Assim organizar a nossa vida que ella seja para os outros um mysterio, que quem melhor nos conheça, apenas nos desconheça de mais perto que os outros. Eu assim talhei a minha vida, quasi que sem pensar n'isso, mas tanta arte instinctiva puz em faze-lo que para mim próprio me tornei uma não de todo clara e nitida individualidade minha. (LD [202])

[One's life should be so arranged that it remains a mystery to other people, so that those who know one best in fact know one as little as anyone else, only from a slightly nearer vantage point. That is how, almost without thinking, I have designed my life, but such was the instinctive art I put into it that even to myself my individuality is not entirely clear-cut or precise. (BD [134])

We must remember this is Soares writing, not Pessoa, but certainly part of Pessoa..

While any part of Pessoa has the pen, we can revel in similarities but we cannot forget the ironic distance of verisimilitude. As in Poole's example of Thulstrup's reading of explicit references of *repetition*, the overt allusions to similarities Soares might have with his "progenitor" are based on difference, fundamental, yet subtle. The difference between Pessoa and Soares is the difference between reality and imagination, and just as one man is the imaginary mutilation of the other man, so too is the imaginary a mutilation of reality. Just as Pessoa has earnestly been trying to convince his readers of the reality

of his imaginary heteronyms, he, through Bernardo Soares's the *Livro do Desassossego*, demonstrates just how "actual" the imaginary can be.

Kierkegaard and Imagination

In order to avoid an accusation of "multiple redefinition of terms,"² the word imagination must be qualified. It is precisely the fact that Bernardo Soares rearticulates the role the imagination has in actual life that gives Kierkegaardian "control" and "actuality" to the irony in the *Livro do Dessassosego*. In his work entitled *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of the Imagination*, David J. Gouwens similarly acknowledges the importance of qualifying the meaning of imagination as the romantics and Kierkegaard treat it in their respective writings. After a brief analysis of the development of the concept of romantic imagination and before addressing Kierkegaard's attack in his dissertation of romantic irony, Gouwens asserts an essential equivalency of semantic interpretation. romantic imagination, Gouwens claims, is just as much under attack in *The Concept of Irony* as is romantic irony, because they are virtually inseparable concepts. He bases his entire analysis of Kierkegaard's "dialectic of imagination" on this connection.

In the course of this critique [*The Concept of Irony*] of irony, Kierkegaard indirectly judges the Romantic notion of imagination as well. Just as he claims that the term "irony" is equivalent to the term "Romantic," (*CI* 292n) so too, from our analysis of the shape of the Romantic movement, in which "irony" and "imagination" are so closely intertwined, any critique of "Romantic irony" is also a critique of the Romantic

² Roger Poole describes what Kierkegaard in his dissertation does with Hegelian terms as "multiple redefinition of terms." The issue is discussed at length in chapter four of this paper.

imagination. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's references to the imagination in *The Concept of Irony* exhibit his clear awareness that irony is a form of imaginative life. (54)

If Gowens is correct, not only is Kierkegaard's critique of romantic irony also a critique of romantic imagination, but his solution for overcoming the failings of romantic irony, namely "controlled irony," is similarly a solution for bypassing the shortcomings of romantic imagination.

Kierkegaard's disagreement is with the romantic tendency to neglect the actual while celebrating the fantastic, and indeed this discussion occupies the bulk of part two of his dissertation. He writes:

Who would be so inhuman as not to be able to enjoy the free play of fantasy, but that does not imply that all of life should be abandoned to imaginative intuition. When fantasy alone gains the upper hand in this way, it exhausts and anesthetizes the soul, robs it of all moral tension, makes life a dream. (CI 292n)

In the earlier Lee Capel translation the Danish word *phantasie* is rendered as "imagination."

Now who is such a monster that he is unable to delight in the free play of the imagination? But it does not follow from this that the whole of life should be given over to imagination. When the imagination is allowed to rule in this way it prostrates and anesthetizes the soul, robs it of all moral tension, and makes of life a dream. (CI Capel 308n)

romantic irony, imagination, or fantasy exhausts and anesthetizes the soul and makes of life a dream because it denies the finite in search of the infinite. Controlled irony, however, “limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields balance and consistency” (CI 326). Gouwens comments, “Irony can now function to return one to actuality, that is, to permeate the finite with the sense of the infinite in contrast to the Romantic flight into imagination” (74). A poet, Kierkegaard argues, “lives poetically only when he himself is oriented and thus integrated in the age in which he lives, is positively free in the actuality to which he belongs” (CI 326). Again, the freedom to which he refers is in stark contrast to the “freedom” exemplified by the romantics, or at least that freedom which they claimed to have, in which mood and whim reigned supreme. Without grounding in the actual, feeling is only moodiness, and while mood governs, imagination becomes passive and freedom is cancelled. Thus, according to Gouwens, “Kierkegaard’s case for actuality is that it provides a ground for feeling and freedom. The gift and task of actuality allow feeling and freedom the proper atmosphere in which to flourish. Imagination by itself cannot provide this atmosphere” (63). Imagination, albeit “controlled,” mixed with a deep sense of actuality is necessary for real feeling and positive freedom.

Although critical of romantic escapism made possible through irony and imagination, from the above citation it is clear that Kierkegaard does not discredit the importance of imagination, merely its subordination of the actual as a way of living. In fact, imagination is essential to cognition and to the realization of one’s potential as a self. In *The Sickness Unto Death* Kierkegaard, under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, defines imagination as “the medium for the process of infinitizing” and “the capacity

instar omnium [for all capacities]” (31). Through the imagination one has the capacity for abstract thinking and can acquire objective knowledge. Imagination plays a significant role in the “aesthetic” stage of existence as well, for it provides the ideal possibilities from which one must choose to actualize, thereby achieving one’s selfhood.³ One of the problems Kierkegaard found in Hegelian speculative philosophy was that instead of recognizing the possibilities created in the imagination as such, the thinker lived in that possibility thereby casting himself into the fantastic (Gowens 145). However, in Kierkegaard’s view, the thinker must acknowledge that the possibilities engendered in the imagination are hypothetical and abstract, reality identifying with immediacy and ideality with mediacy (Gowens 147). Extended to the “aesthetic” stage of existence, Gowens explains,

Possibility gains an added significance, for no longer is possibility concerned only with the realm of ideality, with the possible in general, but with possibility for the person. And imagination gains an added significance, for no longer is it employed simply as the instrument that posits the ideal, but it is engaged in the processes attending a person’s subjectivity. (156)

The Sickness Unto Death is largely concerned with the maladies of imagination. At the foundation of his (Kierkegaard’s and/or Anti-Climacus’s) discussion is the imbalance of “the infinite and possibility as products of the imagination and [...] the finite and necessary elements of existence” (Gowens 160). This imbalance is divided into four forms of despair: the despair of infinitude, in which the imagination produces only

³ Chapter four of this essay deals more profoundly with possibility as necessary for the establishment of selfhood.

dreams; possibility, in which one recognizes the need to actualize the possibility but despairs over which possibility to choose; finitude, in which one is wholly unable to free oneself from the limits of the finite world; and necessity, in which one must deal with the loss of possibility (Gowens 163-66). The task of the self, then, is to balance the finite with the infinite by gathering the necessary possibilities generated by the imagination and actualizing one, making the ideal and “mediate” into the real and “immediate.” Although Gowens mentions Kierkegaard’s A’s Johannes in “Diary of a Seducer” as one who “strives for a complete triumph of the imagination over the actual,” he does so in order to prove that “for all its powers, the imagination cannot give wholeness” (176-78). His study then proceeds to the ethico-religious context for the imagination and its ability to endow one with “wholeness.” For the purposes of this paper, however, the failings of imagination in “Diary of a Seducer” will provide a perfect transition into the role of imagination in Bernardo Soares’s own “diary,” the *Livro do Desassossego*.

Soares and Imagination

For the disquiet bookkeeper his imagination provides more than an escape from the tedium of his quotidian reality; rather his dreams are creations of an alternate reality, an ideality able to be controlled and manipulated, but left to occupy the abstract realm of imagination because it is from this ideality that Soares derives more satisfaction. Unlike the romantics criticized for their rejection of their actuality for a fantastic super-reality, Soares does not deny his actuality nor does he dismiss it as dissatisfying. He penetrates his daily existence with such poignancy that it would be impossible to escape his reality even if he wanted to. In his word, he “interexists.” Soares writes of the ambiguity

inherent in such an existence that straddles the real and the imagined, “E regresso às duas cousas nullas em que estou certo, de nullo tambem que sou—à minha vida quotidiana de transeunte incognito, e aos meus sonhos como insomnias de acordado” (LD [400]).

[And, being myself a nonentity, I return to the two negatives of which I am certain—my daily life as an anonymous passer-by and the waking insomnia of my dreams] (BD [77]).

His grasp of the imaginative is similarly poignant and therefore, because he feels them both so freely, Soares argues that his imagined reality, the ideal, is truer than his actual one. For Soares, “é não só melhor, senão mais verdadeiro, o sonhar com Bordeus do que desembarcar em Bordeus” (LD [388]). [(T)he dream of Bordeaux is not only better, but truer, than actually to arrive in Bordeaux] (BD [75]). He does not challenge the reality of his actuality, but merely challenges the dismissive assumption that dreams are not “real.” More in an attitude of reverie than one of rejection or escape, he confesses to himself that he is unable to distinguish between existent reality and the non-existent reality of dreams, and unable to discount the realness and vitality of what he imagines:

Douro-me de poentes suppostos, mas o supposto é vivo na suposição.

Alegro-me de brisas imaginaries mas o imaginario vive quando se imagina. Tenho alma por hypotheses varias, mas essas hypotheses teem alma propria, e me dão portanto a que teem. Não ha problema senão o da realidade, e esse é insolavel e vivo. Que sei eu da diferença entre uma arvore e um sonho? Posso tocar na arvore; sei que tenho o sonho. Que é isto, na sua verdade? (LD [171])

I clothe myself in the gold of imagined sunsets, but what is imagined lives on in the imagination. I gladden myself with imaginary breezes, but the imaginary lives when it is imagined. Various hypotheses furnish me with a soul and since each hypothesis has its own soul, each gives me the soul it possesses. There is only one problem: reality, and that is insoluble and alive. What do I know about the difference between a tree and a dream? I can touch the tree; I know I have the dream. What does that really mean?
(BD [126])

The substance of his dreams is no more insubstantial than the substance of his reality, though substantially different, and whereas objects and people make up real life, they have life in the imagination as well. Again, Soares favors his imaginary relationships with people to those of his “real” life. He writes, “As figuras imaginarias teem mais revelo e verdade que as reaes. O meu mundo imaginario foi sempre o unico mundo verdadeiro para mim. Nunca tive amores tão reaes, tão cheios de verve de sangue como os que tive com figuras que eu próprio criei” (LD [367]). [Imaginary figures have more substance and truth than real ones. My imaginary world has always been the only true world for me. I never knew loves so real, so full of passion and life as I did with the characters I myself created] (BD [198]). Soares describes the elements that make up his imagination as “truer” than their counterparts in reality. Quite aware of his consciousness of both realms or states of mind, Soares says of himself that “[s]uccede commigo que teem equal revelo as duas realidades a que attendo. Nisto consiste a minha originalidade. Nisto, talvez, consiste a minha tragedia, e a comedia d’ella” (LD [118]). [The two realities I attend to have equal weight. In that lies my originality. In that, perhaps lies

my tragedy and the comedy it is] (BD [14]). The point at which thinking and listening overlap, the meeting of thoughts from within and from without, becomes the playground of the imagined real. What greater description of not only art in general, but of Pessoa's original contribution to art and literature as well! Richard Zenith comments on Soares's/Pessoa's "imaginative" way of life:

The only way to survive in this world is by keeping alive our dream, without ever fulfilling it, since the fulfillment never measures up to what we imagine—this was the closest thing to a message that Pessoa left, and he gave us Bernardo Soares to show us how it's done.

How is it done? By not doing. By dreaming insistently. By performing our daily duties but *living*, simultaneously, in the imagination. Traveling far and wide, in the geography of our minds. Conquering like Caesar, amid the blaring trumpets of our reverie. Experiencing intense sexual pleasure, in the privacy of our fantasy. Feeling everything in every way, not in the flesh, which always tires, but in the imagination. (xxiii)

Soares and Irony

The introduction, sometimes called the preface, to the *Livro do Desassossego* sets the tone for ironic indirect communication. Signed by Fernando Pessoa, the introduction gives a physical and conceptual description of Soares and supplies a series of fictional reminiscences of interactions between the two. This short presentation reveals again the genius of Pessoa's creation. The setting, atmosphere and character description complete with internal musings and observations made by Pessoa, omniscient in the scene, all

speak to Pessoa's tendency to poetic dramatization. Yet there is a reality to the introduction that penetrates the reader's knowledge that the encounters described never occurred in actuality but certainly and vividly took place in Pessoa's imagination. Suddenly the reader's perception of reality is challenged, and the journey into Soares's complete and Pessoa's "semi" disquietude begins.

It is quite easy to read Soares's ideas and feelings as if they reflected Pessoa's own inner world, and admittedly, not wrong to do so. Yes, Soares is Pessoa's semi-heteronym, but he is also a "literary personality" as constructed and imaginary as the others. It is Soares, merely a part Pessoa, that favors so much the imagination, for his essence is exactly that substance for whose reality he advocates, and yet it was Pessoa's persistent hand that actually pushed the pen or touched the type of Soares's confessions and arguments, and it is Pessoa who found in his imagination the relationships that so eluded him in his actual life. This irony perpetuates Soares's existence by giving him substance. In the introduction we learn of Soares's external reality and in the *Livro* we learn of his inner reality, all the while maintaining awareness that that reality, an arsenal of heartfelt confessions meant to persuade the reader why imagined reality is truer than the real one behind it, is in truth imagined.

Soares himself explicitly addresses the role of irony in positing subjectivity. Of the two passages Pessoa chose to publish from his collection of disquiet musings, the following is an excerpt from the second. He writes:

O homem superior difere do homem inferior, e dos animais irmãos deste, pela simples qualidade da ironia. A ironia é o primeiro indício de que a consciência se tornou consciente. E a ironia atravessa dois estádios: o

estádio marcado por Sócrates, quando disse “sei só que nada sei,” e o estádio marcado por Sanches, quando disse “nem sei se nada sei.” O primeiro passo chega áquele ponto em que duvidamos de nós dogmáticamente, e todo homem superior o dá atinge. O Segundo passo chega áquele ponto em que duvidamos do nós e da nossa dúvida, e poucos homens o têm atingido na curta extensão já tão longa do tempo que, humanidade, temos visto o sol e a noite sôbre a vária superfície da terra. (LD [479])

[What distinguishes the superior man from the inferior man and from the latter’s animal brothers is the simple quality of irony. Irony is the first indication that consciousness has become conscious and it passes through two stages: the stage reached by Socrates when he said ‘I only know that I know nothing,’ and the stage reached by Sanches when he said “I do not even know that I know nothing.’ The first stage is that point at which we dogmatically doubt ourselves and it’s a point that every superior man will reach. The second stage is the point at which we doubt both ourselves and our doubt and, in the brief yet long curve of time during which we, as humans, have watched the sun rise and the night fall over the varied surface of the earth, that is a stage very few men have reached.] (BD [248])

The above paragraph is part of a larger discussion about the definition of man and for Soares, the defining characteristic of a truly superior man is one who succeeds in

doubting not only himself and his own knowledge, but his doubt as well. The vehicle for this process is irony, an irony, however, that surpasses that as laid out by Socrates, or rather by Socrates's life. Although superior, Socrates's irony is merely the first stage through which one must pass in order to reach consciousness of one's consciousness. Socrates gives way to the irony of Portuguese humanist and philosopher Francisco Sanches, whose ideas anticipated later Cartesian thinking.⁴ If, as Soares suggests, Socratic irony as negative freedom is negated in the irony of Sanches, the negation of a negative might posit then an affirmation, and as stated before, negation in Pessoa/Campos/Soares is often a sign of affirmation. The above excerpt leaves little doubt that Pessoa was quite certain he, master of irony, was one of those "poucos" that had ascended to the second stage of superior irony. Soares, in fact, initiates the discussion of irony with a positive definition when he says irony is the first indication that the consciousness has become conscious. The Kierkegaardian equivalent of such a statement might be that through irony the subject establishes his positive subjectivity. Whereas Socrates, according to Kierkegaard, brought the subjective self into existence in response to external conditions such as state pressure for communal thought, Soares, according to Pessoa, soars above his immediate surroundings, even his corporeal grounding, and leaps into the realm of the intangible, the imagination. Dreams, consciousness, imagined realities, these are what make up the bookkeeper's existence, and rightfully so, since he himself is a dream, an imagined personality that has taken on a reality in actuality, an instantiation of a poet's conscious consciousness. Soares elaborates:

⁴ Franciscvs Sanchez c.1551-1623 published the *Tractatus de multam nobili et prima universali scientia quod nihil scitur*, his major work, in Lugduni: Ant. Gryphium, 1581.

Conhecer-se é errar, e o oráculo que disse “Conhece-te” propôs uma tarefa maior que as de Hércules e um enigma mais negro que o da Esfinge.

Desconhecer-se conscientemente, eis o caminho. E desconhecer-se conscientemente é o emprego activo da ironia. Nem conheço coisa maior, nem mais própria do homem que é deveras grande, que a análise paciente e expressive dos modos de nos desconhecermos, o registro consciente da inconsciência das nossas consciências, a metafísica das sombras autónomas, a poesia do crepúsculo da desilusão. (LD [479])

[To know oneself is to err, and the oracle who said ‘Know thyself’ proposed a task greater than all of Hercules’ labors and an enigma even more obscure than that of the Sphinx. To unknow oneself consciously, that is the right path to follow. And to unknow oneself consciously is the active task of irony. I know no greater nor more proper task for the truly great man than the patient, expressive analysis of ways of unknowing ourselves, the conscious registering of the unconsciousness of our consciousnesses, the metaphysics of the autonomous shadows, the poetry of the twilight of disillusion.] (BD [248])

In *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard establishes Socrates’s negativity by arguing the phrase γνῶδι σαυτόν [know yourself] has been misunderstood because it has been removed from the context in which the command is given. Determined to explain what the phrase meant to Socrates, Kierkegaard writes:

Now it is certainly true that the phrase γνώδι σαυτόν can designate subjectivity in its fullness, inwardness in its utterly infinite wealth, but for Socrates this self-knowledge was not so copious; it actually contained nothing more than the separating, the singling out, of what later became the object of knowledge. The phrase “know yourself” means: *separate yourself from the other*. Precisely because this self did not exist prior to Socrates, it was once again an oracular pronouncement corresponding to Socrates’ consciousness that commanded him to know himself. But it was reserved for a later age to go deeply into this self-knowledge. (177-178 my emphasis)

Even Kierkegaard, with Socrates as his model and front, was setting the stage for a modern understanding of self-consciousness and self-knowledge. Perhaps the brooding Dane never imagined just how far Fernando Pessoa would go to separate himself from the others that made up his subjectivity, but he was certainly aware that self-knowledge would advance beyond, although built upon, Socrates’s ironic negative subjectivity. Again, in the above excerpt from the *Livro do Dessassosego* Soares plays with negation and affirmation, although this time he begins with a negation and progresses by negating with a positive: “Conhecer é errar,” and then, “desconhecer-se conscientemente eis o caminho.” Kierkegaard, too, argues that in relation to “Greek substantiality” Socrates’s charge and attempt to know himself and help others to do so had a completely negative effect.

This principle “know yourself,” is entirely congruous with the ignorance previously described. The reason he [Socrates] could continue to insist

upon this negative point is the same as before, because his life and task were to affirm it—not speculatively, for then he would have had to go further, but to affirm it practically against every single human being. Therefore he placed individuals under his dialectical vacuum pump, pumped away the atmospheric air they were accustomed to breathing, and left them standing there. For them, everything was now lost, except to the extent that they were able to breathe ethereal air. (CI 178)

Kierkegaard links the principle of self-knowledge with that of Socrates' ignorance—that he only knew that he knew nothing. By affirming his ignorance, by unknowing himself, he was able to affirm his subjectivity and self-knowledge and able to separate himself from the others. Able to arrive “at the definition of knowledge that made the individual alien to the immediacy in which he had previously lived” Socrates, the vacuum, helped others to see and experience beyond the actual to the ethereal, to consciousness, and the intangible, the world of Bernardo Soares. Socrates's pupils were left alone and empty because Socrates was negativity, but he left in them the ability to “breathe ethereal air” or establish their own subjectivity.

Soares, however, seems to invert the process of ironic Socratic dialectic. Instead of negative freedom giving rise to positive subjectivity as evidenced in Socrates's relationship with his pupils, a doubly negated irony made positive by doubting even one's doubt gives rise to a negative subjectivity, the ability to “un-know” oneself. This negative subjectivity finds its substance in the realm of the imagined, which is a reflection, a possibility, of its positive actuality. Soares does not need Socrates to strip his life bare of immediacy and even corporeality in order to get him to breathe ethereal

air. Instead, Soares is already quite literally half in the immediate, the real, and half in the “mediate,” the imagined since he is half Fernando Pessoa and half himself. Soares leaps from imagined sunset to imagined love, asserting a reality he (and Pessoa) knows he does not have. In this way he (and Pessoa) consciously unknows himself, reveling in the “poetry of the twilight of disillusion” (BD [479]).

Pseudonymity [and heteronymity?] is not itself indirection. Pseudonymity [and heteronymity?] is part of a larger aesthetic design, which itself is half of a more widely conceived indirect communication.

Roger Poole

But this is my limitation—I am a pseudonym. Fervently, incitingly, I present the ideal, and when the listener or reader is moved to tears, then I still have one job left: to say, “I am not that, my life is not like that.”

Søren Kierkegaard.

Eu não escrevo em Português. Escrevo eu mesmo.

Fernando Pessoa

And what was flesh became word.

Richard Zenith

The ironist is a priori unassimilable to any System.

Roger Poole

Chapter Four

Multiple Redefinings

“Multiple Redefinition of Terms”

One of the more enlightening results of recent re-readings of Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Irony* is the realization that the purpose of Kierkegaard’s use of Hegelian terms and logic was to demonstrate or “actualize” the concept of irony instead of merely “speculating” about it. Kierkegaard’s dissertation was just as much a game with the Danish Hegelian scholarship of his time and with Hegelianism itself as it was an analysis of Socratic, romantic, and Hegelian irony. Kierkegaard’s seeming attacks on Hegel’s conception of objectivity and infinite negativity were more directly critical of contemporary Danish thought, specifically that which he received as a student under Hegel scholars such as Hans Lassen Martensen and others at the University of Copenhagen in the 1830s.¹ That Martensen refused to appear at Kierkegaard’s scheduled defense indicates the professor had not missed the irony that ridiculed his own longstanding interpretations of Hegelian philosophy. Roger Poole compares Kierkegaard’s use of Hegelian terms to Legos and claims that throughout *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard deliberately and continuously redefines terms laden with Hegelian context in order to fit them together to form different concluding images. He writes:

The Hegelian machinery was used, yet the Hegelian terminology was emptied of all substance. Kierkegaard also carried out a kind of harrying,

¹ Poole argues, “The Danish Hegelians, rather than Hegel himself, were the target [of Kierkegaard’s wit]. The early ‘indirect’ texts, then—pseudonymous, ‘aesthetic,’ Romantic-ironic, mocking, titillating, provocative—were all cast in the mode of a kind of pseudoHegelianism, in which the fashionable Hegelian terminology and layout were used while, at the same time, every term in the Hegelian terminology was subverted, deprived of meaning, and emptied of content” (2).

hectoring, guerilla praxis with the terms themselves, playing with them in such a way as they were deployed in a pattern of self-canceling oxymoron. Such terms as *positive* and *negative*, *finite* and *infinite*, *subjective* and *objective*, were obviously an endless resource for parodic intent. (3)

This “multiple redefinition of terms” is the vehicle for Kierkegaard’s ironic jabs at Martensen and others who believed themselves in full understanding of Hegel’s phenomenology and convinced of the comprehensiveness of Hegel’s world historical system. The aim and object of Kierkegaard’s multiple redefinition of terms, Poole argues, is to drive constantly toward creating an aporia (49). Socrates as ironist, and irony itself are unassimilable to any System, even and especially to Hegel’s. Later in his aesthetic works, Kierkegaard designates other concepts such as angst, the leap, faith, the absurd, and the moment as incompatible and incommensurable entities. Irony in particular is not only unassimilable, but is itself a gesture of refusal to any System whatsoever (Poole 45-46).

Add to this tendency toward redefinition of terms and concepts a tendency toward redefinition of personae. Ironically, scholars attempting to understand and interpret Kierkegaard’s works and personal writings largely have overlooked his use of pseudonyms. Until 1846 with the publication of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard based his method of indirect communication in irony both within his writings and in authorial relation to them. The pseudonyms were not the indirect communication itself but merely a way to achieve authorial distance necessary to give irony a place to play. After 1846 Kierkegaard bid farewell to the pseudonyms and to ironic indirect communication. At the end of *Postscript* in an appendix-like declaration

entitled “A First and Last Explanation,” Kierkegaard acknowledges that he is indeed the author of the works signed under the names Victor Eremita, Johannes de Silentio, Constantin Constantius, Hilarius Bookbinder and the others, “something,” he writes, “that really can scarcely be of interest to anyone to *know*” (*Postscript* [625]). He then pleads with his readers to distinguish between the pseudonyms and not to confuse the views of one pseudonym with another and most importantly not to confuse those views with Kierkegaard’s own. Kierkegaard’s insistence that his role in writing the pseudonymous texts was little more than that of a “*souffleur* [prompter]” and his argument that the pseudonyms must stand alone in relation to their texts calls to mind Pessoa’s neologism, “heteronym,” which might be suitably applied to Kierkegaard’s “authors.” Most Kierkegaardian scholarship, however, until recently has disregarded Kierkegaard’s plea and ignored the distance he placed between himself and his pseudonyms (Poole 84). Perhaps it is another twist of irony that for decades while Kierkegaard’s early works were being read in earnest, the last few pages of his, rather Johannes Climacus’s, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* were not. A possible explanation for this trend in scholarship is the *Corsair* affair.

On December 22, 1845 J.P. Møller published an article critiquing Kierkegaard’s (Hilarius Bookbinder’s, William Afham’s, the Judge’s and Frater Taciturnus’s) *Stages on Life’s Way*. The article was superficially favorable, but it was obvious its author had entirely missed the point of Kierkegaard’s treatise. Kierkegaard responded with two articles of his own that not only sought to set Møller straight but also to discredit him since Kierkegaard viewed him as opportunistic. Møller was seeking a position at the university but was secretly publishing his articles in the *Corsair*. Kierkegaard’s articles

prompted a backlash that resulted in a series of personal attacks that tainted the Danish philosopher's image forever. The *Corsair* began publishing degrading cartoons depicting a brooding, hunchbacked, silly Kierkegaard by caricaturing his appearance and his habits. Accustomed to taking long walks along the streets of Copenhagen among the people, the populace soon recognized Kierkegaard only for the images and cartoons found repeatedly in the *Corsair*. Although a very public individual, Kierkegaard found himself subject to ridicule even by the children on the streets. Not only did the cartoons play off of Kierkegaard's personal characteristics, but those of his pseudonyms as well, blurring any corporeal distinctions between the author and pseudo-authors. After such a personal attack, particularly an attack to the body, Kierkegaard was stripped of the ironic distance that sustained the pseudonyms. Poole writes of the affair, "The works of the pseudonyms had been permeated by irony, which distances the speaker from what he says. That ironic cover had been blown. Now, in the cartoons of *The Corsair*, the works of all the pseudonyms were directly attributed to Kierkegaard himself, and his editors and characters ransacked for spicy illustrations" (16). The master of irony was compelled to relinquish his staff. In a journal entry in September 1846 after the effects of the entire affair were fully realized, Kierkegaard wrote:

It was really ironic of me to live so much on the streets and avenues while I was writing the pseudonymous works. The irony consisted of belonging to a completely different sphere *qua* author and spending so much time on the streets and in the markets. The irony was directed at the intellectual, affected Hegelian forces we have, or had, here at home. But as soon as there is an attempt from another corner, by literary rabble barbarism, to

make it seem that I really belong on the street, then the irony quite properly disappears and I take exception to the forum. (*Journals and Papers* 5:5937)

The consequences of the *Corsair* affair might explain why Kierkegaard had to turn from the use of irony as his method of indirect communication or at least show why a return to ironic communication was thereafter impossible, but it was also the beginning of a historical tradition only now beginning to be challenged of identifying Kierkegaard with his pseudonyms and their views despite his request to the contrary.

Fernando Pessoa has not had nearly as much trouble convincing his readers to separate him from his heteronyms. Although Pessoa certainly took his insistence of distance to higher levels than did Kierkegaard, Pessoa's success may have resulted from little more than the playing out of history. Unsatisfied with merely different names to match varying views, Pessoa ensured his heteronyms had individual biographies and varying physical appearances and stimulated an internal circular dialogue in which they affirm one another's actuality. Pessoa's masquerade infiltrated every aspect of his life. Those who worked closely with Pessoa shared in the charade of multiplicity by meeting, on occasion, Álvaro de Campos, when the mood struck Pessoa so to introduce "himself." Once the poet Alfredo Pedro Guisado played a joke on his friend Antônio Ferro. Ferro had never been informed of Pessoa's heteronyms and their writings, and Guisado determined to convince Ferro that Alberto Caeiro was a poet rising in contemporary popularity. Pessoa recounts the story in a 1914 letter to Côrtes-Rodrigues.

O Guisado encontrou o Ferro acompanhado de um amigo, caixeiro-viajante, aliás. E começou a falar no Caeiro, como tendo-lhe sido

apresentado, e tendo trocado duas palavras apenas com ele. “Se calhar é qualquer lepidopteron,” disse o Ferro. “Nunca ouvi falar nele...” E, de repente, soa, inesperada, a voz do caixeiro-viajante: “*Eu já ouvi falar nesse poeta, e até me parece que já li alugures uns versos dele.*” Hein? Para o caso de tirar todas as possíveis suspeitas futuras ao Ferro não se podia exigir melhor. O Guisado ia ficando doente de riso reprimido, mas conseguiu continuar a ouvir. E não voltou ao assunto, visto o caixeiro-viajante ter feito tudo o que era necessário. (37-38)

[Guisado met up with Ferro, who was accompanied by a friend, who was a traveling salesman. And Guisado started talking about Caeiro, about having been introduced to him and their having exchanged a few words. “I’ll bet he’s some fly-brained fellow,” said Ferro. “I’ve never even heard of him...” Suddenly and unexpectedly, the traveling salesman piped up: “*I’ve heard of this poet and it even seems to me that I’ve read some of his verses.*” What? One couldn’t have asked for anything better to allay any possible future doubt Ferro might have. Guisado nearly got sick from holding back his laughter, but he managed to go on listening. He never broached the subject again because the salesman had done everything that was necessary.] (Sadlier 75)

Pessoa’s personal correspondence with colleagues is also seasoned with explanations of the genesis of the heteronyms and references to their individual works. The overall tone of Pessoa’s letters and that of commentaries made by those of his literary circle is markedly different from the passion and zeal with which the poet markets his *oeuvre*

from within its own verses. For his fellow-poets at the *Presença* office, Pessoa maintained dignified composure, playing the eccentric innovator in order to convince his colleagues of the serious “workplay” of his multiplicity. Aside from the few with whom the poet corresponded and the few poems he published in his lifetime, he held a rather limited readership that paralleled a relatively secluded life. The subsequent mystery surrounding Fernando Pessoa’s person is perhaps the reason he has posthumously been able to convince his readers to separate him from his heteronyms, for it was only until after his death, after his body was no more alive than those of his creations, that Pessoa’s readership expanded to the public-at-large.

*Role of the Reader*²

The role of the reader is a crucial one for the playing out of the irony that suspends both Pessoa and Kierkegaard’s use of literary personalities. Irony certainly creates the distance necessary for these authors to poetically create themselves and their pseudo/heteronyms, but irony also requires a reader in order to initiate the chase for meaning and understanding. Poole says of the crucial need for a reader of the indirect texts:

The aim of the early indirect communication is to involve the reader [...] for little of the work of Wolfgang Iser and his followers is new to the pseudonymous Kierkegaardian authors of the 1840s. The reader has to be gathered in as a potential ally, seduced and intrigued by the typographical and rhetorical waylayings of the text, and then involved in a kind of

² Much of the progress of my argument relies heavily on the layout of Mark C. Taylor’s division of chapter two entitled “B. Socratic Midwifery: Method and Intention of the Authorship” comprising of pages 51-62.

detective work, up to that point where (under ideal conditions) there is no unadorned instruction or doctrine or objective fact to be had, but only the mutually shared experience of perplexity. (9-10)

For Mark Taylor, however, the pseudonymous works have another more ethical fulfillment for their readers as well as that of the “shared experience of perplexity.” According to Kierkegaard, the pseudonyms were more embodiments of their ideas and ideals rather than “real” or “actual” people, the extent to which Pessoa will take his heteronyms only a generation later. In *The First and Last Explanation* Kierkegaard designates the pseudonyms as “poetically actual subjective thinker[s]” (*Postscript* [626]). Their purpose is to “poetically” or indirectly represent different points of view, different “life-views” [*Livs-Anskuelse*] or ideal possibilities, which the reader may analyze and then adapt into her life depending on whether or not, in her opinion, it will help her in the process of becoming, of shaping her selfhood. According to Mark C. Taylor, Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms and the ideals represented are not merely a game of choices for the reader, but an ethically guided pathway toward truth. For this reason, Kierkegaard needed the distance of irony to keep his own views and personality as far away from his pseudonyms as possible in order to allow the reader to see her own stage of existence and not his. It is Kierkegaard’s attempt at Socratic midwifery.³ In the preface to *Stages on Life’s Way*, Kierkegaard observes of his pseudonymous writings, “Such works are mirrors: when a monkey peers into them, no Apostle can be seen looking out” (8), a quote Kierkegaard attributes to Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. The works of the

³ Mark C. Taylor calls Kierkegaard’s use of pseudonyms to present the reader with possible “life-views” “Socratic Midwifery.” The presentation to the reader of possibilities and the reader’s will to actualize demonstrate an aspect of Kierkegaard’s method of “indirect communication” and “double reflection” through which he proves that truth is subjectivity. See Taylor’s chapter two.

pseudonyms, although, as Taylor will argue, ultimately directed toward an ethical becoming of a Christian Self,⁴ first act as mirrors through which the reader can see only herself and where she stands in the process of developing her own subjectivity, of becoming her true Self (57). Irony and distance keep Kierkegaard, the true author, out of the reflection of the reader that the pseudonyms offer. He writes in his journal, “When in reflection upon the communication the receiver is reflected upon, then we have ethical communication. The maieutic. The communicator disappears, as it were, makes himself serve only to help the other become.” (*Journals and Papers* 1:657)

Because Kierkegaard sees himself as the communicator whose purpose is to help the reader in the act of becoming, it should not be surprising that the pseudonymous works have an overall design. The dialogue and communication extend from between the pseudonyms and the reader to among the various pseudonyms themselves, a doubly dialectical method reminiscent of Socrates (Taylor 59). Taylor writes, “Not only do the pseudonymous authors attempt to draw the reader into the dialogue with each other, but they also attempt to draw the reader into the dialogue. If the pseudonymous works are properly understood, the reader becomes a participant in the dialogue, and Kierkegaard becomes a Socratic midwife who interrogates his interlocutor” (60). Kierkegaard later writes that the role of a Socratic midwife is the highest relationship one human being can offer another (*Philosophical Fragments* 10). Despite the argument that Kierkegaard designed his works to lead the reader to a certain mode of being, Kierkegaard himself regarded his role as “communicator” or “midwife” as one that produced, like Socrates, no concrete result but only a sting. In his journal he records:

⁴ Taylor writes, “Kierkegaard is not, of course, indifferent to which life-view his reader appropriates. [...] [T]he arrangement of the possibilities of existence is designed to lead the individual to genuine selfhood, which can be reached only through the Christian mode of existence” (58-59).

The fact that many of Plato's dialogues end without a result has a far deeper basis than I had thought earlier. They are a reproduction of Socrates' maieutic skill which makes the reader or hearer himself active, and therefore they do not end in a result but in a sting. This is an excellent parody of the modern rote-method which says everything the sooner the better and all at one time, which awakens no self-action but only leads the reader to rattle it off like a parrot. (*Journals* 4:4266)

Whether or not Kierkegaard intended to guide the reader's development and becoming to a certain end with the various possibilities offered by the pseudonyms, he certainly desired to cause the reader to reflect more upon her current stage of existence and sought to challenge that reader into a willful, active participation in constructing her self. The tools of Kierkegaard's subjective midwifery were the "poetic" pseudonyms and his method was the irony that distanced him from those tools.

As mentioned above in the discussion concerning Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, deception through verisimilitude is another form of irony frequently employed by the Danish *eiron*. Many episodes found throughout the pseudonymous works are replete with details that tantalizingly parallel instances in Kierkegaard's own life. Perhaps these parallels also served historically to identify Kierkegaard with his pseudonyms. All part of the chosen mode of communication, Kierkegaard simultaneously separated from and drew himself close to his pseudonyms. Poole insists, "But the pseudonyms themselves are fakes, the dummies that mime and simulate a drama of inwardness which is at once unendurable and inexpressible. The very similarity of their stories to Kierkegaard's is the trap. The nearer their suggestions come to looking like a statement of the biographical

truth, the richer the occasion for authorial inventiveness for hiding or distorting it” (11). However, once that “ironic” distance between Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms was destroyed, the verisimilitude became similitude and he had to abandon irony and turn to a different form of communication, one not quite as indirect.⁵

Multiple Redefinition of Self

Whether a result of or merely exacerbated by the consequences of the *Corsair* affair, Kierkegaard was historically doomed to repeated (and disregarded) explanations and justifications for his use of pseudonyms. With his image and body inseparably linked with the views and characteristics of his pseudonymous authors, Kierkegaard’s aspirations for Socratic midwifery through irony were severely inhibited. Fernando Pessoa was able to continue the work Kierkegaard began.⁶ Whereas Kierkegaard defined, manipulated, and mastered the use of irony, Pessoa lived it. Call it “moral luck”⁷ that the details of Pessoa’s private and relatively short life went just as unpublished as the majority of his works. The lack of referential facts clouds the distinction between real and imagined, biographical and “heteronymical,” so that Pessoa, unhindered, posthumously reveals and conceals the truth about himself by calling into question the very existence of such truth.

Pessoa’s success in engendering earnest acknowledgment of the “actual subjectivity” of his heteronym comes from the fact that he himself refuses to be defined

⁵ See Roger Poole’s argument in his introduction that after the *Corsair* affair and the abandonment of pseudonymous writing Kierkegaard’s indirect communication had to find a different methodology (although Kierkegaard’s journals seem to indicate that he was finished with the pseudonymous project even before the degrading pictures were published by the *Corsair*).

⁶ Although successful at maintaining a distance between himself and his “poetically actual subjective thinker[s]” in order to provide possibilities for the reader, something Kierkegaard was ultimately unable to sustain, Pessoa’s project does not involve an attempt to guide the reader to an ethical, Christian *telos*.

⁷ See chapter three of this paper for a contextual explanation of Roger Poole’s designation of “moral luck.”

or assimilated into even a vague biographically, theoretically characterized “System.” Instead he loses his own self in a multiple redefinition of that self that renders all possibilities exactly and only that—a possibility, but never an actuality.

Whereas Kierkegaard’s dissertation and subsequent pseudonymous works, through the vehicle of irony, mock specific Hegelian ideas and particular Hegelian scholars, Pessoa’s challenge is to the entire literary, psychological, and sociological world. The heteronyms, much like Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms, represent certain philosophies and psychologies, certain selves, and much like Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms, Pessoa’s selves offer possibilities. Instead of leading to an ethical development of a Christian self, however, the possibilities presented by the heteronyms are a demonstration of the complexity, even the multiplicity, of one’s self. Kierkegaard’s *objectivity* and *subjectivity* are Pessoa’s Alberto Caeiro and Álvaro de Campos; his *infinite* and *finite*, Pessoa’s “ortônimo” and Ricardo Reis; his *positive* and *negative*, Pessoa’s volatile Bernardo Soares and his counterpart the Baron de Teive.⁸ Just as Hegel’s system becomes a game of Legos in *The Concept of Irony* through constant redefinition of Hegel’s terms, Pessoa’s project remains suspended in ironic harmony through a constant redefinition of self. Just as Keirkegaard shows that certain concepts are unassimilable into any system, Pessoa posits that the self is similarly indefinable. Though countless studies have been published delineating the defining characteristics of each of the heteronyms, Pessoa trumps them all with his own, elusive, “self.” He is none and all of his heteronyms; he espouses some and none of their philosophies; he is multiple and yet

⁸ The Baron of Teive is yet another heteronym to whom is attributed only one “manuscript” entitled “A Educação do Estóico,” which was written on the eve of the Baron’s suicide. According to Zenith, many of the fragments contained in the envelope designated as material for Soares’s *Livro do Desassossego* had Teive’s name scribbled in the margins (xxi).

empty of personality. Pessoa existed in his writing and wrote his existence. The only information available about Fernando Pessoa the once living entity comes from his own writings and a few biographical tidbits from friends, colleagues, and a supposed lover. Thus scholars are left almost exclusively with Pessoa's treasure chest of writings in order to piece together the Portuguese genius of the twentieth century and are subsequently at the mercy of what Pessoa wants them to read, know, and think about him. "Moral luck," or a masterfully orchestrated checkmate?

Whereas Kierkegaard left his philosophical posterity with numerous clues and delineations of what has come to be known as his philosophy of self, Fernando Pessoa, forever masking and cloaking, not only embedded his "philosophy" in his literature, but he lived it as well, the material of his mask and cloak being fabricated of the nothingness of his irony. Tucked away in his trunk of posthumous glory was a small prose piece that was intended to be the preface of a to-be published collection of the works of his heteronyms. In it we seem to be confronted with a treatise written by the "real" Pessoa, but he smartly reminds us that his shadow is not so easily pinned down, and not only by referring to himself in the third (or perhaps the fourth or fifth) person. In a few paragraphs Pessoa takes his reader through a round of possibilities not unlike those ideas he offers through his heteronyms or that Kierkegaard presents through his pseudonyms. Rather than optional life-views, in his projected preface Pessoa offers the reader possible explanations for his (and by extension, perhaps, the reader's) multiplicity. Perhaps some might wonder if Fernando Pessoa suffered from an acute mental malady. In true non-committal fashion so typical of Pessoa he writes of this possibility:

Que esta qualidade [multiplicidade] no escritor seja uma forma da histeria, ou da chamada dissociação da personalidade, o autor destes livros nem o contesta, nem o apóia. De nada lhe serviriam, escravo como é da multiplicidade de si próprio, que concordasse com esta, ou com aquela, teoria, sobre os resultados escritos dessa multiplicidade. (*Prosa* 82)

[If this quality (of multiplicity) found in the writer is a form of hysteria, or what might be called disassociation of personality, the author of these books does not contest it nor support it. It serves no purpose to him, slave as he is to his own multiplicity, if he agrees with this or with that theory about the written results of this multiplicity.]

Others might suppose the circumstances surrounding Pessoa's professional, social, and love life led him to his reclusive tendencies. His project could be explained by a desire to escape his modern reality made repugnant because of some event or relationship in his childhood or later. To these socio-analytical and psychoanalytically bent readers Pessoa writes:

Com uma tal falta de literatura, como há hoje, que pode um homem de gênio fazer senão converter-se, ele só, em uma literatura? Com uma falta de gente coexistível, como há hoje, que pode um homem de sensibilidade fazer senão inventar os seus amigos, ou quando menos, os seus companheiros de espírito? (*Prosa* 83)

[With such a lack of literature as exists today, what can a man of genius do except convert himself, his self, into a literature? With such a lack of cohabitable people as exists today, what can a man of sensibility do except invent his friends, or more importantly, his soul mates?]

And also:

É possível que, mais tarde, outros indivíduos, deste mesmo gênero de verdadeira realidade, apareçam. Não sei; mas serão sempre bem-vindos à minha vida interior, onde convivem melhor comigo do que eu consigo viver com a realidade externa. (*Prosa* 83)

[It is possible that eventually other individuals of this same genre of true reality will appear. I don't know; but they will always be welcome to my interior life, where they live together better with me than I manage to live with external reality.]

Still there may be some readers that might interpret Pessoa's multiplicity as anxiety à la Harold Bloom, attributing his heteronymic drama to a characteristically modern attempt at subduing his literary predecessors in order to carve a space for himself amid the annals of canonized masterpieces. To these Pessoa offers, again, without committing:

Nem esta obra, nem as que lhe seguirão têm nada que ver com quem as escreve. Ele nem concorda com o que nelas vai escrito, nem discorda. Como se lhe fosse ditado, escreve. [...] O autor humano deste livros não conhece em si próprio personalidade nenhuma. Quando acaso sente uma personalidade emergir dentro de si, cedo vê que é um ente diferente do

que ele é, embora parecido; filho mental, talvez, e com qualidades herdadas, mas as diferenças de ser outrem. (*Prosa* 82)

[Neither this work nor those that will follow it have anything to do with who writes them. He does not agree with what is written in them, nor does he disagree. As if it had been dictated to him, he writes. (...) The human author of these books does not recognize in himself any personality at all. When by chance he feels a personality emerge from inside of him, he quickly sees that it is a creature quite different from what he is, though similar; a mental offspring, maybe, and with inherited qualities but the differences of being someone else.]

To those who try to wade through the heteronyms and their philosophies in a vain attempt at drawing the complete biographical figure of the “real,” “natural” Pessoa, he says:

Escuso de dizer que com partes das teorias deles [os heterónimos] concordo, e que não concordo com outras partes. Estas cousas são perfeitamente indiferentes. Se eles escrevem cousas belas, essas cousas são belas, independentemente de quaisquer considerações metafísicas sobre os autores ‘reais’ delas. Se nas suas filosofias, dizem quaisquer verdades—se verdades há num mundo que é o não haver nada—essas cousas são verdadeiras independentemente da intenção ou da ‘realidade’ de quem as disse. (*Prosa* 83)

[I take liberty to say that I agree with parts of their (the heteronyms') theories, and that I disagree with other parts. These things are completely inconsequential. If they write beautiful things, these things are beautiful independent of whatever metaphysical considerations might exist concerning their 'real' authors. If in their philosophies they utter any truths—if truths exist in a world that is “there being nothing”—these things are true independent of the intention or the 'reality' of who said them.]

Pessoa even addresses the possibility that some of his readers (the author of this paper included) might call the entire project an ingenious game that questions everything, not the least of which is the notion of reality or realness. To us he writes, calling himself the “apparent” author as opposed to the “real” one, “porque não sabemos o que seja a realidade” [because we do not know what reality might be],

Afirmar que estes homens todos diferentes, todos bem definidos, que lhe [o autor] passaram pela alma incorporadamente, não existem—não pode fazê-lo o autor destes livros; porque não sabe o que é existir, nem qual, Hamlet ou Shakespeare, é que é mais real, ou real na verdade. [...] Se me disserem que é absurdo falar assim de quem nunca existiu, respondo que também não tenho provas de que Lisboa tenha alguma vez existido, ou eu que escrevo, ou qualquer coisa que seja. (*Prosa* 82-83)

[The confirmation that these men—all different, all very defined, who emerged incorporally through his (the author's) soul—do not exist cannot

be made by the author of these books; because [he] does not know what it means to exist, nor who—Hamlet or Shakespeare—is more real, or really real. (...) If you tell me that it is absurd to speak this way of someone who never existed, I reply that I have no more proof that Lisbon, or I, who write, or any other thing has ever existed at some point in time.]

To complete the charade Pessoa ends his preface with the following paragraph:

Tenho, na minha visão a que chamo interior apenas porque chamo exterior a determinado ‘mundo,’ plenamente fixas, nítidas, conhecidas e distintas, as linhas fisionômicas, os traços de caráter, a vida, a ascendência, nalguns casos a morte, destas personagens. Alguns conheceram-se uns aos outros; outros não. A mim, pessoalmente, nenhum me conheceu, exceto Álvaro de Campos. Mas, se amanhã eu, viajando na América, encontrasse subitamente a pessoa física de Ricardo Reis, que, a meu ver, lá vive, nenhum gesto de pasmo me sairia da alma para o corpo; estava certo tudo, mas, antes disso já estava certo. O que é a vida? (*Prosa* 83-84)

[I have in my vision that I call interior—only because I call a certain ‘world’ exterior—determined, absolutely fixed, crisp, recognized and distinct, the physiognomic lines, the character traces, the life, the ascendance, and in some cases, the death of these people. Some met each other; others no. Me personally, none met me except Álvaro de Campos. But if tomorrow, traveling to America, I were to suddenly run into the physical person of Ricard Reis, who in my opinion lives there, no gasp of

surprise would escape from my soul; all was well, but before this all was already well. What is life?]

What could be more convincing than the author's own word that he actually met one of his imaginary heteronyms! Rather, what could be more convincing of a game at hand than such an earnest declaration! The last sentence playfully opens the heteronymic project it is prefacing with its non-conclusive finale: "What is life?"

What is life? What is reality? What is truth? These are the questions Pessoa raises throughout his poetry, prose, and correspondence. It is with his literary life, however, that he offers an array of possibilities that stimulate vital, real, and true contemplation.⁹ If by asserting that Pessoa, his works and literary self, is made up of and sustained by irony I have made any reference to his written words suspect, a few poems remain that might help that reader who grasps for any semblance of a stable platform. Pessoa's unedited poems were left unsigned and therefore are not attributed to any particular person in the dramatic project, including Pessoa "ortônimo." Perhaps, then, they bear the voice of the master unmasked, and perhaps not. Regardless, emerging from the poetic realm of fancy comes a fragmented "philosophy of self," of himself or his selves. After all, he is his literature and his literature is him:

Ah, sentir tudo de todos

os feitos!

Não ter substância—só modos

só desvios—

Alma vista de uma estrada

⁹ Kierkegaard would be pleased. See above the extract from Kierkegaard's journal praising Socrates's stimulation of true thought and Kierkegaard's disregard for learning by rote.

Que vira a esmo
Seja eu leitura variada
Para mim mesmo! (OP 677)

[Ah, to feel everything in all
possible ways!
To have no substance—only styles,
only strays—
A soul seen from a road
which turns awry;
May I, for varied readings
Of myself, stand by!]

Innocent as a child at play, Pessoa explains how simple his multiplicity actually is.

Brincava a criança
Com um carro de bois.
Sentiu-se brincando
E disse, eu sou dois!

Há um a brincar
E há outro a saber,
Um vê-me a brincar
E outro vê-me a ver. (OP [550])

[A child was playing
With a train and caboose.
He felt himself playing
And said, I am two!

There's the one at play
And the other just being,
One sees me playing
And one sees me seeing.]

Other poems defensively justify his mode of being many: “Deus não tem unidade, / Como terei eu?” [God has no unity, / How could I?] (OP [668]). Not immune to the vicissitudes of emotion, from some of the inedited poems it seems Pessoa might have been frustrated with his selves at times:

Gostaria, realmente,
De sentir com uma alma só,
Não ser eu só tanta gente
De muitos, meto-me dó.

Não ter lar, vá. Não ter calma
‘Stá bem, nem ter pertencer.
Mas eu, de ter tanta alma,
Nem minha alma chego a ter. (OP [665])

[I would really like
To feel with only one soul,
Not to be so many people
So many make me sad.

Not to have a home isn't bad. Not to have calm
Is fine, Nor to have to belong.
But me, having so many souls,
I somehow manage to not have my own.]

Perhaps he even questioned his own justifications: “Houve em mim várias almas sucessivas / Ou sou um só inconsciente ser?” [Were there really various successive souls in me / Or am I one unconscious being?] (OP [763]).

Yet throughout the elements of his poetic and prosaic corpus, Pessoa, while admitting and justifying his plurality of self, distances his biographical and corporeal self, sometimes through verisimilitude and certainly by examining the reality of his existence. Much like his semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares, Pessoa revels not so much in knowing himself, which is the first level of ironic being,¹⁰ but is more preoccupied with unknowing himself. He writes, “Que grande sonho / Ser quem não sabe quem é e sorri!” [What a great dream / To be someone who does not know who he is and still smiles!] (OP

¹⁰ Chapter three of this text discusses the explicit references to irony in Soares's *Livro do Desassossego*.

[655]). In another instance he writes, “Vou em mim como entre bosques, / Vou-me fazendo paisagem / Para me desconhecer.” [I travel inside of me as if among groves of trees, / I go making myself the landscape / In order to unknow me.] (OP [646]).

Elsewhere Pessoa proclaims, “Desconheço-me. Embrenha-me, futuro, / Nas veredas sombrias do que sonho.” [I unknow myself. Hide me, o future, / In the shady footpaths of what I dream.] (OP [575]). For all of the personalities to whom he gave life, it seems Pessoa’s aim might have been to lose his own in the crowd. Tauntingly he pens:

Fito-me frente a frente.

Conheço que estou louco.

Não me sinto doente.

Fito-me frente a frente.

[...]

Neste momento claro,

Abdique a alma bem!

Saber não ser é raro.

Quero ser raro e claro. (OP [652])

[I look at myself face to face.

I see that I am crazy.

I don’t feel crazy, though.

I look at myself face to face.

[...]

In this lucid moment,

My soul does well to abdicate!

To know how not to be is rare.

I want to be lucid and rare.]

Finally, the culmination of Fernando Pessoa's "philosophy of self" according to his unedited poems is a defiant challenge to the reader. He jeers:

Sabes quem sou? Eu não sei.

Outrora, onde o nada foi,

Fui o vassalo e o rei.

É dupla a dor que me dói.

Duas dores eu passei.

Fui tudo que pode haver.

Ninguém me quis esmolar;

E entre o pensar e o ser

Senti a vida passar

Como um rio sem correr. (OP [796])

[Do you know who I am? Even I don't know.

Long ago, when nothing existed,

I was both the vassal and the king.

The pain that pricks me is doubled.

I felt two pains.

I was everything there is to be.

No one wanted to offer me alms;

And between thinking and being

I felt life passing by

Like a river without a current.]

Fernando Pessoa is unassimilable. His mode of being cannot be explained within any system, for his poetic existence calls into question the definition of reality and fantasy, of being and especially non-being. As he raises his heteronyms to heights of actuality, Pessoa makes of his own actuality, his actual self, a possibility.

Gnomos do luar que faz selvas

As florestas sossegadas,

Que sois silêncios nas relvas,

E em áleas abandonadas

Fazeis sombras enganadas,

Que sempre se a gente olha

Acabastes de passar

E só um tremor de folha

Que o vento pode explicar

Fala de vós sem falar,

Levai-me no vosso rastro,

Que em minha alma quero ser

Como vosso corpo, um astro

Que só brilha quando houver

Quem o suponha sem ver.

Assim eu que canto ou choro

Quero velar-me a partir.

Lembrando o que não memoro,

Alguns me saibam sentir,

Mas ninguém me definir. (OP [676])

[Gnomes in the moonlight that makes jungles

Into tranquil forests,

Who are silent in the tall grass,

And in abandoned footpaths

Make illusory shadows,

Who, if people turn to look,

Have always just passed from sight,

Leaving behind only a rustling leaf

Which the wind might explain,

As it speaks of you without words,

Take me along your path,

For in my soul I long to be

As your bodies are, a star

That brightly burns only when appears

Someone who believes it there without seeing.

Similarly I, who sing or sob,

I want to watch me disappear.

Remembering that which I forget,

Some know how to feel me,

But none can define me.]

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