Fernando Pessoa
The Poet With Many Faces:
A Biography and Anthology

Hubert D. Jennings

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To F.E.G. Quintanilha

in memoriam
When I wanted to take off the mask,
It was glued to my face.
When I did get it off and looked at myself in the mirror,
I had become old.
I was drunk, and now I could not put on again
the domino I had taken off.
I threw away the mask and slept in the cloakroom
Like a dog tolerated by the management
Because it is harmless—
And I am now writing this story to show how sublime I am

Fernando Pessoa qua Álvaro de Campos

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a Translation by Jenning from “Tabacaria” (The Tobacco Shop).
Fernando Pessoa is not easy to get to know. Even during his lifetime his friends remarked on a certain quicksilver quality about him that made it appear as though he was always slipping through their hands. Pierre Hourcade, one of his earliest French admirers, has put on record that at one moment he and Fernando Pessoa would be chatting together in a café intimately and, at the next, Fernando had left him and seemed to have vanished into thin air.

For those of us who have come afterwards and can only know him through his work, it is still the same. There still remains the barrier of his reticences, his pudor and his sensitivity, and the constant retreat behind the masks by which he could both conceal and reveal. His voice seems to come to us from behind a curtain: sometimes so loud and clear (as in the “Triumphal Ode”) as to be almost deafening; at other times as faint, remote yet infinitely stirring as the music he puts into “Plenilunie”— “a flute that enchants | heard more in the mind | than in the actual tranquil hearing | as it wavers upon the air | and trembles into silence.” But each voice (and there are many others) is equally compelling. We have to follow. We join him in his search for self-identity. Perhaps because we feel it is a search for our own self-identity. Or it may be a game. Or a ritual. Or a religion.

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a See Hourcade, 2016.
b In Portuguese, “Ode Triunfal” (Pessoa, 1915b).
c “Plenilunio” is a short Portuguese poem originally published by Pessoa in 1917. Jennings notes, “This is only an approximation of the lovely but almost untranslatable poem.”
It can be any of these according to how the puckish spirit of Fernando Pessoa rules.

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Fernando Pessoa has only slowly come to be known since his death in 1935 and least of all in the English speaking world with which he has had so many clear associations. Edouard Roditi wrote an article, “The Several Names of Fernando Pessoa,” for the Chicago review Poetry in 1955, and in 1960 in South Africa, the country of Pessoa’s boyhood, appeared John M. Parker’s study of Pessoa in Three Portuguese Poets. Before this, another South African, Roy Campbell, had begun those exquisite translations of Pessoa’s lyrics of which he had, however, completed only three, when in 1957 death intervened. It was a chance remark of Roy Campbell’s (contained in a letter to a friend of both of us) that first brought the name Pessoa to my notice. “I have just discovered,” he wrote, “that Fernando Pessoa, the finest poet in any language in this half-century, also went to the Durban High School.”

Some two years later, I wrote, (at the suggestion of another South African poet, Uys Krige) to Armand Guibert in Paris, for more information about the Portuguese poet Roy Campbell regarded so highly, and received in return some of the studies and translations which the French writer had just published. I shall always be grateful to these three men and particularly to the last mentioned, whose limpid prose and verse have done

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a Jennings’s first book was The D. H. S. Story (Jennings, 1966), which was written for the centennial of Durban High School and included chapters on Pessoa and on Campbell, for both poets attended the school.

b This assertion is quoted, with a few variations, in multiple works by Jennings. As Campbell was more than a decade younger than Pessoa, their schooldays at D.H.S didn’t overlap; they never met, nor corresponded.

c See letters from Krige and Guibert to Jennings in Helgesson, 2015a.
so much towards establishing Pessoa’s reputation beyond the borders of his native land.

"Plenilunio" by Pessoa (1917a: 23)
Born in England in 1896, Hubert D. Jennings was eight years younger than Fernando Pessoa. Though they never met in person, both were deeply connected to Durban High School (D.H.S.), where each spent years of their lives.

Pessoa was first to arrive at D.H.S. Born in Lisbon in 1888, he moved to Durban in 1896. His father had died of tuberculosis in 1893, after which his mother remarried a Portuguese commandant who became the new consul of Portugal in Durban. Thus, after attending St. Joseph’s Convent School for three years, Pessoa found himself enrolled at D.H.S. in 1899, where he studied until 1904 (with an interruption to visit family in Portugal between 1901 and 1902).

For Jennings, World War I was the life-changing crossroads: after serving with His Majesty’s Armed Forces and losing one eye in the war, Jennings was part of a generation of British veterans who travelled to far corners of the world. In 1923, Hubert arrived in South Africa, taking a job as teacher at D.H.S., where he worked until 1935, then moving on to different schools in South Africa.

When D.H.S. was about to complete its first centennial, Hubert was invited to write a celebratory book, which would be published in 1966 as *The D.H.S. Story—1866-1966*. The volume is a unique chronicle of the school, with chapters on the lives of former pupils. Pessoa merited two of those chapters: one was the first biographical sketch of Pessoa in English, and the other, a lovely short story reimagining the young poet in his classroom—a remarkable piece of creative writing seldom seen in institutional works.
In 1966, Hubert took his earnings from the book and spent them on a visit to Portugal, accompanied by his wife Irene. It was then that he first met members of the Pessoa family: Fernando’s half-brother Luiz Miguel Nogueira Rosa (“Michael”), his wife Eve, Fernando’s half-sister Henriqueta Madalena Dias (“Teca”) and her husband, Col. Francisco Caetano Dias (“Chico”). Later, he would also meet Pessoa’s other half-brother, João Maria Nogueira Rosa (“John”), and his wife Eileen. They played a key role in securing a scholarship from the Gulbenkian Foundation for Hubert to spend eighteen months in Portugal, from 1968 to 1969.

In his seventies, Hubert took the grant as an opportunity to immerse himself both in the Portuguese language and in the tens of thousands of papers that Pessoa left. He was already corresponding with Armand Guibert, Alexandrino Severino, Maria da Encarnação Casquinho, Michael, Teca and Chico—but it was in Lisbon that he got to meet and collaborate with pioneering scholars and translators such as Georg Rudolf Lind, António Pina Coelho, Jacinto do Prado Coelho, Peter Rickard and F.E.G. Quintanilha. The result from Hubert’s time in Portugal was *Fernando Pessoa, The Poet with Many Faces*, which its author initially subtitled “a study and anthology”—perhaps intentionally downplaying the importance of the first biography of Pessoa in English.

Written in the early 1970s (probably completed by 1972), this biography was intended for publication in 1974, when the Carnation Revolution in Portugal interrupted the editorial plans. In an article published in the journal *Contrast* in 1979, Jennings describes the tortuous path of his work:

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a The first biography of the poet, *Vida e Obra de Fernando Pessoa*, was written in Portuguese by João Gaspar Simões (1952). A more recent biography, also in Portuguese, was authored by José Paulo Cavalcanti Filho (2011), with the title *Fernando Pessoa: Uma Quase Autobiografia* (A Quasi-Autobiography).
Like others, I wrote a book to 'explain' Pessoa but which got no farther than the rest. But I did not try to pin on to it any preconceived theories and, knowing the background better and falling upon some unpublished material, I was able to throw more light on Pessoa's stay in South Africa. Quintanilha thought highly of the book and tried hard to get it published by the Portuguese Institute of Higher Culture. His efforts were cut short by two unhappy events: first, I heard that he had committed suicide [...] and, secondly, the Portuguese revolution broke out and Quintanilha's friend, the vice-president of the Institute, lost his post. Attempts to publish it in England and South Africa failed, and I therefore decided to submit the part which seemed most worthwhile to preserve as a university thesis. [...] I sent it to Cardiff because Wales was my old university and because of Quintanilha, to whom I dedicated the work.

Jennings received his Master's degree at the age of 80. Though I have not located a copy of his thesis, it was, in all likelihood, developed into the two books Jennings would later publish about Pessoa's life in South Africa: Os Dois Exílios (1984), in Portuguese, and Pessoa in Durban (1986), an English version of the same book. It is clear that the seed for both his thesis and his books lies in Chapter 2 of The Poet with Many Faces, titled “Fernando Pessoa in South Africa.”

Though Jennings stated that he adapted, from The Poet with Many Faces, what “seemed most worthwhile to preserve as a university thesis,” it will hopefully become evident to any reader that the whole book should be known, because it constitutes the missing introduction to Fernando Pessoa in English. The adjective “missing” has more than one meaning,

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a In fact, Pessoa in Durban was initially written in English, but the Portuguese version—translated by António Sahler and revised by Jennings—happened to be published first.
suggesting not only the lack of such an introductory work, but also the fact that the typescript was considered lost until 2013. As Matthew Hart recounts in his tribute to Hubert Jennings:

in May 2013, [...] Peter Ibbotson, the husband of Hubert’s granddaughter, Jeannine, discovered a large box stowed in the rafters of his Johannesburg garage. The box contained an archive of Hubert’s papers and books, enough to fill a small trunk. That material fell into two quite different parts. One was a mass of literary papers, correspondence, and the typescript of an unpublished book about Pessoa [The Poet with Many Faces]. [...] The other part of the archive consisted of four hardcover notebooks [called A Cracked Record and numbered one to five in Roman numerals].

(Hart, 2015: 468-469)

In 2015, the Hubert Jennings archive was donated to Brown University to be housed at the John Hay Library. Since then, I have had the honor to work with its contents and study its deep relationship to the Fernando Pessoa archive held at the National Library of Portugal (Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, commonly abbreviated as BNP).a

Editing is always challenging. In the case of The Poet with Many Faces, there are two added layers of difficulties: 1) the fact that Jennings wrote this book almost half a century ago; and 2) the complexity of Pessoa’s work with its diverging transcriptions and translations.

The first challenge reveals two sides of a book written decades ago: how much it is dated and how much it is still-rele-

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a In 2015, the journal Pessoa Plural dedicated a special issue to the Jennings archive, which in 2016 was printed as the book People of the Archive: the contribution of Hubert Jennings to Pessoa studies (Gouvea-Brown). Also in 2016, Brown University held an international colloquium dedicated to Hubert Jennings.
vant. If this book had been published in the early 1970s, when it was written, it would have added immensely to the growing field of Pessoan studies, not only by introducing the poet’s life and work to the Anglophone world, but also by presenting dozens of previously unpublished documents. Curiously, some of those texts remain unpublished to date; some others, cited in the book, could not be located, since Jennings consulted Pessoa’s papers while they were still housed at the poet’s family home—i.e., before they were transferred to the BNP, where they would receive call numbers. Therefore, any document mentioned by Jennings is a needle in the haystack of more than thirty-five thousand papers.

On the other hand, there are aspects of the work—such as dated language and disproven conjectures—which would be revised if Jennings had the chance to do so today. If, as his editor, I could have a conversation with Hubert, this volume would certainly have less footnotes—which allowed me to expand on some passages. Whenever I spotted a factual mistake, I corrected it. Whenever a hypothesis raised by Jennings has been disproved by more recent scholarly work, I left a footnote directing the reader to those developments. Nevertheless, whenever a phrase just sounded dated, I left it as it was written, avoiding the temptation to erase the birthmarks of the book as a child of the 1970s. The same should be said about Jennings’s British expat perspective on the Anglo-Boer Wars, a conflict with very different names to a Boer or a Zulu (Hubert, as a British veteran, would have his own worldview, which should not be tampered with by an editor).

The second editorial challenge is perhaps more easily explained. Since the writing of The Poet with Many Faces, critical editions of Pessoa’s work have come to light—notably the collections published by Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda (INCM) and, more recently, by Tinta-da-china. In several
cases, these editions present a source text very different from
the one Hubert used for his translations—the 1965 edition of
Obra Poética de Fernando Pessoa organized by Maria Aliete Gal-
hoz. In other cases, Hubert used as sources the manuscripts
themselves accessed at Pessoa’s family home; but those were
sometimes taken as illegible or were mistranscribed by Jen-
nings. Therefore, some texts required occasional retranscrip-
tions and retranslations.

At last, the once-lost typescript is published: a biography in
ten chapters, followed by an anthology of thirty poems by Pes-
ssoa and his three main heteronyms. Anyone in search of an in-
troduction to Fernando Pessoa in English need look no further.

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Carlos Pittella*
Providence, September 2018
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### III. OTHER WORKS CITED


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THE POET
Fernando Pessoa (Lisbon, 1888-1935) is a trilingual author whose work in verse and prose is plural in nature. The 100+ fictional authors invented by him form a dramatic constellation unique in the history of literature. Pessoa deemed three of his fictitious authors—Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos—“heteronyms,” while reserving for himself the designation “ortonym.” He was the director of and a collaborator on numerous literary journals in Portugal, the author of Livro do Desassossego (Book of Disquiet) and, in the day-to-day, an international correspondent in various commercial firms. Pessoa left a universally acclaimed body of work written in Portuguese, English, and French that continues to be studied worldwide.

THE AUTHOR
Hubert Dudley Jennings (Hornsey, 1896-1991) was born in the County of Middlesex, now Greater London. After fighting in World War I, he moved to South Africa and worked as a teacher at Durban High School (D.H.S.), the same institution where the young Fernando Pessoa had studied two decades earlier. When invited to write a history of D.H.S., he became interested in the famous Portuguese poet who had attended the school. In his seventies, Jennings received a grant to study in Portugal, where he arrived in 1968 and stayed for eighteen months, learning Portuguese, researching Pessoa’s manuscripts and bearing witness to the downfall of Salazar. Jennings published three groundbreaking books for
Pessoa studies and left a literary estate important both in itself and in its relationship with Pessoa’s archives in Portugal. The Hubert Jennings papers, which include the original typescript of The Poet with Many Faces, are housed at Brown University Library.

THE EDITOR
Carlos Pittella (Rio de Janeiro, 1983) is a poet, researcher and educator, author of Civilizações Volume Dois (2005), co-author of Como Fernando Pessoa Pode Mudar a Sua Vida (2017) and editor of Pessoa’s Fausto (2018). He holds a master’s degree and doctorate in literature, both from PUC–Rio. In 2012 he received a grant from the Luso-American Development Foundation to research the Pessoa archive at the National Library of Portugal. During 2014–2015 he spent nine months traveling by land, from Portugal to Nepal. In 2015, Pittella guest-edited Pessoa Pural n.º 8, which was dedicated to Hubert Jennings and later printed as the book People of the Archive; the volume was launched in 2016, at a colloquium in honor of Jennings at Brown University. Pittella is a postdoctoral research associate at Brown University (Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies) and is affiliated with the University of Lisbon (Centre for Theatre Studies).