

Translating Pessoa: Agency, Creativity, Refraction

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Abstract

This article analyses the ways in which translations of the Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa into Italian enable us to rethink notions of the agency and creativity of the translator. It suggests that Pessoa is a writer in and of translation, a refracted writer who embodies the potential of translation to become a creative act. It focuses on the ways in which Pessoa is multiply refracted by the translator and writer Antonio Tabucchi through translation, scholarly essays and fictional reconstructions, suggesting that the way in which Tabucchi brings these multiple refractions into dialogue is especially important in highlighting the agency of the translator to (re)construct the reader's notion of author and text. It thus highlights the agency of the translator and their ability produce an image of the source text and author in a creative process which is in dialogue with other texts and agendas. This article argues that the fragmentary, multilingual and polyphonic nature of Pessoa's work renders Pessoa a writer who is especially open to being creatively re-written and re-constructed through translation.

Key words: translation, creativity, agency, Pessoa, Tabucchi

Fernando Pessoa is a translational writer. Before his works ever reach the desk of the translator, through the polyphonic and multilingual work penned via his 136 fictitious authors, he is already a writer living on the boundaries between languages, between cultures, between identities.¹ Yet through the translations of his work, he is also a writer who speaks to important questions about translation as a construct, and to the ability of the translator to produce an image of the source text and author, in a creative process carried out in dialogue with other texts and agendas. The particular nature of his work, fragmented and polyphonic, makes Pessoa especially open, as a writer, to be re-written and re-constructed in a such a creative process enacted through translation.

Pessoa's contributions to Modernism and a radicalising of conceptions of the self and identity are well known. The Italian author and scholar Antonio Tabucchi wrote that 'con Pessoa una delle grandi preoccupazioni della letteratura della nostra epoca, l'io, entra in scena e comincia a parlare di sé [...] forse in nessun'altra epoca come nella nostra l'uomo intelligente ha sospettato di essere tanti uomini' [with Pessoa one of the key concerns of our era, the self, comes to centre stage and begins to speak about itself [...] perhaps in no other era like our own has the intelligent man suspected that he is many men].² This essay suggests that in addition to influencing notions of the self, Pessoa's work can also make a significant contribution to the ways that we think about translation, the agency of the translator, and the potential of translation to be a creative act. As a case study, it concentrates on the way that Pessoa is multiply constructed by the Italian scholar and writer Antonio Tabucchi (1943-2012) and I will draw on André Lefevere's notion of refraction, of rewriting

¹ I will use the term 'heteronym' to refer to Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos, and 'fictitious author' to refer to the other identities.

² Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule pieno di gente: Scritti su Fernando Pessoa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000), p. 28. Where published English translations exist, I try to use the translated text to facilitate reading. Where there is no published translation, I include the source text and my own back translation.

in such a way as to shine new light on a text, to suggest that Pessoa is a writer in and of translation, a refracted writer who embodies the potential of translation to become a creative act.³ Tabucchi provides an insightful case study into the creativity and agency of the translator because his work goes beyond what Roman Jakobson termed ‘translation proper’ – that is beyond the interlingual translation of Pessoa’s poetry and prose.⁴ Tabucchi’s work is significant because of the range of ways in which he has translated and refracted Pessoa: through translation proper, through literary essays, through fictional representations of the character Pessoa, and through (re)interpretations of notions of heteronomy and multiplicity in his fiction. The ‘fictional turn’ in translation studies suggests that fiction can serve as a source for theorising about translation⁵, and indeed, with Pessoa, translation as reading can also be fictitious.⁶ In terms of creativity, Susan Bassnett forcefully makes the case for the creative nature of translation, writing that ‘it is absurd to see translation as anything other than a creative literary activity, for translators are all the time engaging with texts first as readers and then as rewriters, as recreators of that text in another language’.⁷ Clive Scott also emphasizes the creativity of the translator, arguing that the translator does not ‘record’ the source text in another language, but ‘reimagines’ its literariness.⁸ Tabucchi’s work provides a powerful case study because it enables us to use his fictional works in tandem with his other refractions to reflect on important questions of creativity and agency, where agency is understood as the translator’s power to create, as Lefevere argues, ‘the original’ for the target reader.⁹ The way in which Tabucchi brings these multiple refractions into dialogue is especially important in highlighting the agency of the translator to (re)construct the reader’s notion of author and text.

The essay firstly makes a case for the importance of Pessoa as a translational writer. It goes on to outline the critical frame of refraction, and apply it to the multiple ways in which Tabucchi translates and refracts Pessoa. This analysis focusses on the way that Tabucchi brings these different re-writings into dialogue with each other so that his construction of Pessoa becomes self-referential and self-reinforcing, thus highlighting the agency of the translator. The essay then investigates how the use of Pessoa as a character and the use of Pessoaan notions of heteronymy can be re-worked through Tabucchi’s fiction, highlighting the creative dimension of translation and the changing power dynamics between writer and translator, where the translator can (re)present the source author and take ownership of the source material.

Pessoa as a translational writer

³ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁴ Roman Jakobson, ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 138-43 (p. 139).

⁵ For a discussion of the fictional turn, see Else Vieira, ‘(In)visibilidades na tradução: Troca de olhares teóricos e ficcionais’, *Com Textos* 6 (1995), pp. 50-58; and Adriana Pagano, ‘Translation as Testimony: On Official Histories and Subversive Pedagogies in Cortázar’, in *Translation and Power*, ed. by Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), pp. 80-98.

⁶ See <http://bibliotecaparticular.casafernandopessoa.pt/index/assinaturas.htm> for an outline of Pessoa’s personal library, in which some books are signed by Alexander Search, a brother of the fictitious author Charles James Search.

⁷ Susan Bassnett, ‘Writing and Translation’, in *The Translator as Writer*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 173-83 (p. 174).

⁸ Clive Scott, ‘Translating the Literary: Genetic Criticism, Text Theory, and Poetry’, in *The Translator as Writer*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 106-18 (p. 106).

⁹ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and The Manipulation of Literary Fame*, p.1.

The ability to move between languages and cultures underpins Pessoa's work.¹⁰ He returned to Lisbon, the city of his birth, aged seventeen, having spent his childhood and adolescence in Durban. Despite having yearned to be in Lisbon more than any other city, on his arrival he found he was a foreigner there.¹¹ Pessoa is thus at the periphery of multiple cultures, at their margins. Tabucchi suggests that Pessoa belonged primarily to Anglophone culture, even as he tried in some ways to 'riappropriarsi dell'anima portoghese, ma con operazioni intellettuali che rimangono intellettuali' [re-appropriate for himself the Portuguese soul, but with intellectual tactics which remained intellectual].¹² Tabucchi also described Pessoa as a writer who 'saltò alternativamente dal portoghese all'inglese' [jumped alternatively between Portuguese and English], and this choice of 'jumping' or 'leaping' is significant, suggesting a writer in motion, constantly crossing linguistic borders.¹³ For Tabucchi, Pessoa's marginality and positioning between languages was key. In one of his earliest critical essays on Pessoa, Tabucchi emphasized the importance of the author's geographical position in Lisbon, outside the major European cultural currents of the twentieth century, and the way he wrote in multiple languages, as enabling him to find reason and plausibility in a life which seems unreasonable and implausible. Tabucchi drew parallels between Pessoa and Italo Svevo -- who, living in Trieste was also positioned outside the major European centres and who wrote between Italian and Triestine dialect -- underlining the importance of their marginality and positioning between languages in shaping their literary output.¹⁴

In later readings of Pessoa, Tabucchi emphasized this marginality from a different perspective, arguing that the heteronyms are themselves marginal figures: Ricardo Reis lived in voluntary exile in Brazil because of his monarchic ideas; Álvaro de Campos was a naval engineer who graduated in Glasgow but lived, unemployed, in Lisbon; Alberto Caeiro lived in the remote countryside.¹⁵ If translation is about literature on the margins, voices straining to be heard in the centre, then it is fitting that these marginal voices compete for space within the selected, translated voice of 'Pessoa' in translation. Tabucchi offers a useful explanation of his understanding of Pessoa's heteronymy in *La nostalgie, l'automobile et l'infini*, stating: 'les hétéronymes sont des autres que lui-même, des personnalités indépendantes et autonomes qui vivent hors de leur auteur' [the heteronyms are other to him, independent and autonomous personalities who live outside of their author].¹⁶ He later clarifies this, writing 'ce sont des créatures créatrices, ce sont des poètes: c'est-à-dire des créatures de fiction qui, à leur tour, produisent la fiction de la littérature' [they are creating creatures, they are poets: in other words they are creatures of fiction, who, themselves, create the fiction of literature] (pp. 28-29). Through the heteronyms and fictitious authors, Pessoa published in a range of languages, already undergoing in some senses a process of self-translation. Alexander Search and

¹⁰ For a fuller discussion of Pessoa's ability to move between languages and cultures see: Gianluca Miraglia, "'É um dos pontos negros da biografia que não tive": Reflexões acerca de um texto autobiográfico de Fernando Pessoa com uma digressão sobre um erro na *Ode Marítima* que as edições críticas não emendaram', *Estudos Italianos em Portugal* (2007), https://doi.org/10.14195/0870-8584_2_16 [accessed 13/07/20]; Patrícia Ferreira, "Entre duas pátrias: o bilinguismo de Fernando Pessoa", (2014). *Pessoa Plural—A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies* (2014). Brown Digital Repository <https://doi.org/10.7301/Z06W98JS> [accessed 13/07/20].

¹¹ Paul Buck, *Lisbon: A Cultural and Literary Companion* (New York: Interlink, 2002), p. 76.

¹² Antonio Tabucchi, in *Alberto Albasino, Italo Calvino, Andrea Camilleri, Umberto Eco, Mario Luzi, Claudio Magris, Dacia Maraini, Antonio Tabucchi raccontano se stessi*, ed. by Alberto Scarponi (Rome: Gangemi, 2002), p. 123.

¹³ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule pieno di gente*, p. 114.

¹⁴ Antonio Tabucchi, 'Alvaro de Campos e Zeno Cosini: Due coscienze parallele', *Studi filologici e letterari dell'Istituto di filologia romanza e ispanistica dell'Università di Genova* (Genova: Bozzi, 1978), 151-62 (p. 154).

¹⁵ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Antonio Tabucchi, *La nostalgie, l'automobile et l'infini: Lectures de Fernando Pessoa* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1994), pp. 24-25.

Charles Robert Anon, for example, published in English, whilst Jean Seul de Méluret wrote in French.¹⁷ Pessoa translated through his fictitious authors, and we can read Pessoa's translations of Espronceda and Antero de Quental as written by Charles James Search.¹⁸ Pessoa's fictitious authors were also acutely aware of the power of translation: Thomas Crosse had a plan to use translation to introduce the Anglophone audience to the work of the Portuguese sensationalist poets,¹⁹ whilst Anna Klobucka and Mark Sabine have noted that Pessoa made recourse to the English language for some of his more candid and uncensorious discussion of homosexuality.²⁰ Pessoa was aware then of the potential of languages to be powerful in shaping what is said where and to speak to a different audience, as well as of the power of translation to create distance as well as to connect. It is also worth remembering that Pessoa worked as translator for a living.

Whilst the multilingualism of the fictitious authors is important in shaping how we conceive of Pessoa as a self-translating writer, the concept of heteronymy and fictional authorship itself speaks to the importance of Pessoa as a translational writer. Through the popular conception of Pessoa as 'an eccentric and exotic part of many selves',²¹ we can perhaps think of Pessoa translating himself through each of the different writing voices. Pessoa then is an innately translative writer. Yet the potential for his work to speak to key questions relating to the agency and creativity of the translator is heightened by the way in which his work is open to construction and reconstruction, selection and filtering by editors (and translators). Following his death, more than 27,000 documents penned by Pessoa were discovered in a trunk, with an additional 3,000 remaining with Pessoa's heirs.²² Most of these pages were penned by him, and perhaps 3% or less by his literary alter egos. Jerónimo Pizarro and Steffen Dix describe the posthumous publication of 'this labyrinth of overlapping papers' as an 'editorial adventure', given their fragmentary and open-ended character.²³ These writings have been drawn together in numerous different ways, as editors seek to impose order and shape to the texts, enabling Pessoa to be constructed differently by different agents in the publishing process. This is particularly marked in the case of *The Book of Disquiet*, where, in his preface to the English edition, Richard Zenith notes that each version of this text involves the editor and translator deciding which of the parts of the text to use, and in which order to present them.²⁴ The translator, along with the editor, has extraordinary agency to (re)create Pessoa's work through a creative act which involves piecing together fragments from the writing and constructing a unifying narrative.

¹⁷ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule*, pp. 48-52.

¹⁸ Nicolás Barbosa López, "'The Student of Salamanca': An English translation", *Pessoa Plural—A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies* (2016) Brown Digital Repository. Brown University Library. <https://doi.org/10.7301/Z07P8WKJ> [accessed 27 February 2020]. On Pessoa as translator and self-translator see also Arnaldo Saraiva, *Fernando Pessoa: poeta-tradutor de poetas* (Porto: Lello, 1996); Claudia J. Fischer, "Auto-tradução e experimentação interlinguística na gênese d'O Marinheiro de Fernando Pessoa", *Pessoa Plural—A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies* (2012), Brown Digital Repository, Brown University Library, <https://doi.org/10.7301/Z0B56GZH> [accessed 13/07/20].

¹⁹ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule*, p. 52

²⁰ Anna M. Klobucka and Mark Sabine, 'Pessoa's Bodies', in *Embodying Pessoa: Corporeality, Gender, Sexuality*, ed. by Anna M. Klobucka and Mark Sabine (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 3-36. The two scholars also note Pessoa attributed discussions of homosexuality to Álvaro de Campos.

²¹ Klobucka and Sabine, p. 3.

²² Jerónimo Pizarro and Steffen Dix, 'Introduction', *Pessoa: The Future of the "Arcas", Portuguese Studies*, 24 (2) (2008), 6-12.

²³ Pizarro and Dix, 'Introduction', p. 6.

²⁴ Richard Zenith, 'Notes on the Text and Translation', in Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. by Richard Zenith (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. xxvi-xxxi (p. xxix).

Tabucchi as translator, editor, creator

A case study focusing on Tabucchi and Pessoa offers insights into the agency of the translator, because of the way in which the Italian author has creatively constructed Pessoa for an Italian audience across a range of rewritings and interpretations. His constructions highlight how Pessoa's works grant the translator the agency to select and imagine the writer for the reader. Tabucchi's translations are particularly powerful in this process because of the way that they intersect with Tabucchi's other reworkings of Pessoa's texts and ideas, through essays and fiction. They also become part of what becomes a self-referential dialogue. Lefevere's notion of refraction is helpful here in underlining how all of these rewritings enable the rewriter to shed light on the original works from a specific perspective. Lefevere argues that 'the same basic process of rewriting is at work in translation, historiography, anthologization, criticism and editing'²⁵ – and to this list we might add the category of fictional reimaginings of authors and their characters. All of these rewritings are important in the way that they generate an 'image' of the text, which then becomes 'the original' for the majority of readers who are only tangentially exposed to the source text.²⁶ Lefevere's term 'refraction' is particularly useful for my discussion of Tabucchi and Pessoa, and more precise than a broader notion of 'rewriting', because its visual image, that of a ray of light changing direction as it passes through a prism, underlines the agency of the translator, writer, and critic and their ability to channel perception in a specific direction. 'Refraction' as a concept highlights thus the power of the rewriter.

As a translator, Tabucchi contributed significantly to making Pessoa's works more widely known.²⁷ Translation is intrinsic to Tabucchi's relationship with Pessoa, as his own experience of Pessoa's writing moves between languages from the very beginning:

J'étais étudiant à Paris e je suis tombé par hasard sur le poème de Pessoa, *Bureau de tabac*, dans la traduction française de Pierre Hourcarde. Il m'a tellement enthousiasmé que j'ai décidé d'en apprendre la langue, pour le lire dans l'original, et que je suis parti pour Lisbonne.²⁸

[I was a student in Paris and by chance I came across Pessoa's poem *The Tobacco Shop*, in Pierre Hourcarde's French translation. I was so excited by it that I decided to learn the language, to be able to read it in the original, and to go to Lisbon.]

²⁵ Lefevere, Translation, *Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, p. 9.

²⁶ André Lefevere, 'Translation: Its Genealogy in the West', in *Translation, History, and Culture*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (London: Cassell, 1990), pp. 14-27 (p. 27); Lefevere, 'Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 239-55 (p. 253).

²⁷ For a fuller discussion of Tabucchi's role in popularizing Pessoa in Italy see Elisa Alberini, "Esboço de um percurso quase secular de Fernando Pessoa em Itália: do papel das primeiras traduções à transfiguração de Pessoa em mito contemporâneo", *Pessoa Plural—A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies* (2019), Brown Digital Repository, Brown University Library, <https://doi.org/10.26300/gksm-j308> [accessed 13/07/20]. The first translation of Pessoa into Italian was by Enzo di Poppa Volture in 1942. For a discussion of this and subsequent translations into Italian see Gianluca Miraglia, 'Le traduzioni italiane di Álvaro de Campos', *Del tradurre* 1 (1992), 161-76 and Roberto Mulinacci, 'Translation Revisited: Ritorno alle traduzioni italiane della poesia di Pessoa', *Estudos Italiano Portugal* 7 (2012), 103-26. Miraglia also compares and contrasts different Italian translations of Álvaro de Campos' poetry, including some by Tabucchi.

²⁸ Jacques Fressard, 'Entretien avec Tabucchi', *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, 16-30 April 1993, pp. 15-16.

Tabucchi's first encounter with Pessoa then was refracted through French, inspiring him to go on to read Pessoa in Portuguese, and eventually to make Pessoa available to an Italian readership. His contribution here has been significant and, on one level, the scope of Tabucchi's translations of Pessoa empowers the Italian reader to construct his/her own understanding of the Portuguese writer, by making available a broad selection of Pessoa's writing. In the second volume of the collection *Una sola moltitudine*, Tabucchi's introductory note signals his mission to provide the reader with a generous cross-section of Pessoa's poetic voices:

I tre eteronimi qui accolti (Reis, Caeiro, C. Pacheco) concludono l'antologia, da me progettata per il lettore italiano, dell'opera plurale di Fernando Pessoa. Si tratta di sei voci in tutto (contando il Pessoa ortonimo) che se non esauriscono l'intero repertorio della più multiforme personalità letteraria del Novecento *ne costituiscono però, spero, un soddisfacente campionario* (my emphasis).²⁹

[The three heteronyms collected here (Reis, Caeiro, C. Pacheco) conclude the anthology that I envisaged for the Italian reader, drawn from the plural works of Fernando Pessoa. It comprises six voices in all (including the orthonym Pessoa) which, although it does not exhaust the entire repertory of the most multiform literary personality of the twentieth century, *does nonetheless constitute, I hope, a satisfactory illustration*. (My emphasis)]

Over the course of his career, Tabucchi's translations provided more than an illustration of Pessoa's works. From the first volume of *Una sola moltitudine* (published in 1979) to the posthumously published *Poesie di Fernando Pessoa* in 2013, Tabucchi's translational output was considerable.³⁰ His translations included *Il libro dell'inquietudine di Bernardo Soares* [The Book of Disquiet] (1986), *Il poeta è un fingitore* [The Poet Is a Pretender] (1988), *Lettere alla fidanzata* [Letters to his Beloved] (1988), *Il marinaio* [The Mariner] (1988), *Nove poesie di Álvaro de Campos e sette poesie ortonime* [Nine Poems by Álvaro de Campos and Seven Poems by Pessoa Orthonym] (1988), *Poesie di Álvaro de Campos* [The Poetry of Álvaro de Campos] (1993).³¹ As translator, Tabucchi outlined his desire to 'strappare il lettore dalle sue abitudini linguistiche e ad introdurlo in quelle di Fernando Pessoa' [to tear the reader from his usual linguistic customs and introduce him to those of Fernando Pessoa].³² This suggests an approach which moves the reader to Pessoa, rather than Pessoa to the reader, and thus emphasises the power of the source text and the source author.

Yet within this broader emphasis on the agency of the source text, Tabucchi's translations reveal the way in which translation of Pessoa's work speaks to the capacity of the translator to creatively construct a writer. In the title of the collection *Il poeta è un fingitore: Duecento citazioni scelte da*

²⁹ Antonio Tabucchi, 'Nota introduttiva di Antonio Tabucchi', in Fernando Pessoa, *Una sola moltitudine. Volume secondo*, ed. by Antonio Tabucchi, trans. by Maria José de Lancastre, Kathleen Norris, Flavio Vasselli, Antonio Tabucchi (Milan: Adelphi, 1984), pp. 9-16 (p. 11). C. Pacheco is not considered a heteronym anymore.

³⁰ Fernando Pessoa, *Una sola moltitudine. Volume primo*, ed. by Antonio Tabucchi and trans. by Rita Desti, Maria José de Lancastre, Antonio Tabucchi (Milan: Adelphi, 1979); Fernando Pessoa, *Poesie di Fernando Pessoa*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi and Maria José de Lancastre (Milan: Adelphi, 2013).

³¹ Fernando Pessoa, *Il libro dell'inquietudine di Bernardo Soares*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi and Maria José de Lancastre (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986); Fernando Pessoa, *Il poeta è un fingitore: Duecento citazioni scelte da Antonio Tabucchi*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988); Fernando Pessoa, *Lettere alla fidanzata*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi (Milan: Adelphi, 1988); Fernando Pessoa, *Il marinaio*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi (Milan: Einaudi, 1988); Fernando Pessoa, *Nove poesie di Álvaro de Campos e sette poesie ortonime*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi (Bologna: Baskerville, 1988); Fernando Pessoa, *Poesie di Álvaro de Campos*, trans. by Antonio Tabucchi and Maria José de Lancastre (Milan: Adelphi, 1993).

³² Antonio Tabucchi and Maria José de Lancastre, 'Nota dei traduttori', in Fernando Pessoa, *Il libro dell'inquietudine di Bernardo Soares*, pp. 19-20 (p. 19).

Antonio Tabucchi [The Poet is a Pretender: Two Hundred Quotations Selected by Antonio Tabucchi), Tabucchi explicitly addresses the way in which he is interpreting and constructing Pessoa for the reader. He elaborates this further in the text itself, writing:

Questo libro di citazioni è un libro *assolutamente arbitrario*, una sorta di collezione privata fatta di campioni isolati, di esemplari sperduti, di gioielli rubati. Si potrebbe sostenere *che il suo organizzatore si sia comportato come un autentico predone, con il suo intento di costruire il "suo" libro di Pessoa: un libro di frammenti di quel frammentario, labirintico, eppure sistematico Libro che Pessoa ci ha lasciato*. Ma è necessario dire anche che questi frammenti, a loro volta, propongono un Pessoa sconosciuto: un Pessoa inedito, differente, stupefacente. Estratti dal loro contesto, isolati e illuminati da un riflettore puntato esclusivamente su di loro, certi versi o certe frasi di Pessoa sembrano acquisire una maschera quasi magica e oracolare [...] (pp. 9-10, my emphasis).

[This book of quotations is an *entirely arbitrary* book, a sort of private collection made up of isolated examples, of lost specimens, of stolen jewels. *It could be said that their organizer has behaved like a true predator, with his intention of creating 'his' book of Pessoa: a book of fragments from that fragmentary, labyrinthine yet systematic Book which Pessoa left us*. But it is also necessary to say that these fragments, in their turn, propose an unknown Pessoa, and unedited Pessoa, different, stupefying. Taken out of their context, isolated and illuminated by a spotlight shining exclusively on them, certain verses or certain phrases of Pessoa seem to acquire an almost magical and solemn mask [...]. (My emphasis)]

Tabucchi acknowledges that in creating this text, in choosing to translate (or reproduce his translations) of specific texts, he is constructing an image, a refraction of Pessoa for the reader. The image of the predator is striking for what it suggests about the agency of the translator as well as his intent. The translator (and editor) is able to act upon the source texts, which remain passive. Tabucchi also emphasises that the fragmentary nature of both Pessoa's work and of his own rendering of it in this volume. The specific nature of Pessoa's work empowers the translator to creatively (re)construct from those fragments. Continuing to reflect on the importance of fragmentation in the work, Tabucchi suggests that his approach in turn empowers the reader to work with the translations in order to (re) construct an individual version of Pessoa:

Così lo consegno al lettore italiano, perché siano anche suo lo stupore, la sorpresa e il piacere nel costruirsi, coi frammenti che propongo, il proprio "libro d'ore" pessoano: un libro d'ore sottratto a quell'Ora enigmatica che Pessoa definì la sua opera ma non per questo ad essa estraneo. (p. 10)

[Thus I deliver this to the Italian reader, so that s/he can experience the amazement, the surprise and the pleasure in creating, from the fragments which I propose, his or her own Pessoaan book of hours: a book of hours extracted from that enigmatic Hour which Pessoa defined as his work, but nonetheless not separate from it.

Yet the reader's agency is more nuanced and circumscribed than Tabucchi suggests. Whilst the reader does have agency to construct his/her own Pessoa from the fragments contained in the volume, that selection is necessarily from a limited choice. The reader's selection is already filtered, restricted to the texts which Tabucchi has selected for translation in the volume. As Monica Jansen suggests, in choosing 'Il poeta è un fingitore' as the title poem, Tabucchi is already directing the reader to understand Pessoa's work as a construction of true fiction, as an expression of

heteronomy.³³ In this way, the reader's (re)construction is doubly refracted through the translator's gaze, channelled by the interpretation of Pessoa offered in the translations themselves and further filtered by the choice of texts offered, which are then read in conjunction with each other.

This notion of cross-reading the texts is important in itself. Tabucchi, as well as translating Pessoa, also refracted the poet's work through critical writing, ranging from basic introductory essays to complex critical readings aimed at a specialist audience. His collection *Un baule pieno di gente* [A Trunk Full of People] is especially significant, drawing together essays which range from introducing Pessoa's fictitious authors to undertaking close textual analysis of specific poems.³⁴ The specialist audience reached by Tabucchi's critical work extended beyond Italy: his collection of essays *La nostalgia, l'automobile et l'infini* for instance was based on a series of lectures given at the Sorbonne.³⁵ Certainly for Tabucchi, the roles of critic and translator are complementary:

Comme on le sait, Fernando Pessoa est un des poètes qui ont accompagné ma vie d'intellectuel et d'écrivain [...] j'ai établi avec Pessoa, dès les années soixante-dix, un rapport qui va au-delà de la simple fidélité de lecteur (d'abord réceptif), établissant ce rapport actif qui appartient au traducteur et au critique. Seul, ou en compagnie de Maria José de Lancastre, j'ai durant vingt ans traduit en italien une partie considérable de son oeuvre de poésie et de prose, prolongeant cette activité (qui suppose à la fois de l'humilité et de l'arrogance) par des essais critiques sur les aspects les plus divers de sa personnalité et de sa poétique.³⁶

[As is well known, Fernando Pessoa is one of the poets who have accompanied me in my intellectual life and in my life as a writer [...], from the 1970s I established a relationship with Pessoa which goes beyond the simple fidelity of a reader (first of all a receptive relationship), establishing that active relationship which befits a translator and a critic. Alone or with Maria José de Lancastre, over the past twenty years I have translated a considerable portion of his poetry and prose works, extending this activity (which supposes both humility and arrogance at the same time) with critical essays dealing with various aspects of his personality and his poetics.]

What is most relevant here, in exploring the way the translation of Pessoa's work sheds light on the agency of the translator and creative construction in translation, is the way that these different activities, these different refractions, are brought into dialogue so that they create a self-reinforcing (re)construction of Pessoa. Just as in *Il poeta è un fingitore*, where the translator had the agency to shape the reader's (re)construction of Pessoa by offering the reader a closed choice of options, so

³³ Monica Jansen, 'Tabucchi e Pirandello: Un caso di eteronomia? A proposito de *Il Signor Pirandello è desiderato al telefono*', in *Pirandello e le metamorfosi del testo*, ed. by Bart Van den Bossche, Franco Musarra, Isabelle Melis (Florence: Cesati, 2009), pp. 127-40.

³⁴ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule pieno di gente. Scritti su Fernando Pessoa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000). Other important works include Antonio Tabucchi, *La parola interdetta: Poeti surrealisti portoghesi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970); Antonio Tabucchi, *Pessoa mínima* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa de Moeda, 1985).

³⁵ Antonio Tabucchi, *La nostalgia, l'automobile et l'infini. Lectures de Pessoa* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1994). The collection was later translated into Italian (though not by Tabucchi himself) as *L'automobile, la nostalgia et l'infinito: Su Fernando Pessoa*, trans. by Clelia Bettini and Valentina Parlato (Palermo: Sellerio, 2015). Tabucchi had died in 2012, three years before publication of the volume, so the reasons for not self-translating may have been different from those he stated in the case of *Requiem*, where he felt unable to translate his own work (see below).

³⁶ Antonio Tabucchi, *La nostalgia, l'automobile, et l'infini*, pp. 8-9.

through the dialogue between critical work, translations and fiction, the translator can create self-reinforcing images of the source work.³⁷ In *Un baule pieno di gente*, for instance, Tabucchi refers the reader to his own translation of Pessoa's 1935 letter to Adolfo Caeiro Monteiro on the genesis of his heteronyms as a way of helping the reader to understand the evolution of Pessoa's fictitious authorship.³⁸ This translation can help the reader to engage with Tabucchi's own understanding of Pessoa's heteronymy, which Tabucchi sets out in the title essay of the collection, creating a closed loop in which the translational and critical texts work together.³⁹

In terms of translatorial agency and creativity, such intertextual dialogue is particularly striking when it engages with fictional imaginings of Pessoa and his world. In the essay collection *La nostalgia, l'automobile, et l'infini*, the critical text includes a brief outline of some of the fictitious authors discussed:

Pour ceux qui découvrent ici Pessoa, je reprends la brève présentation des hétéronymes faite dans un précédent livre, simplement afin d'indiquer au lecteur 'qui est qui' dans la poétique dissonante de Pessoa.⁴⁰

[For those who are just discovering Pessoa here, I have included the brief introduction to the heteronyms produced for a previous book, with the simple aim of indicating to the reader 'who's who' in the dissonant poetics of Pessoa.]

The text indicated to the reader is Tabucchi's novel, *Gli ultimi tre giorni di Fernando Pessoa* [*The Last Three Days of Fernando Pessoa*].⁴¹ This narrative work imagines the last three days, or rather the last three nights of Pessoa's life before he died of liver failure in 1935. As he lies in his hospital bed, eased by the opiate laudanum, Pessoa is visited by the heteronyms and fictitious authors with whom he needs to make peace before he dies, and he also whispers his apologies to Ophélia Quéiroz, his 'one and only love', for breaking the promises they made to love each other forever: 'But my life was stronger than me, stronger than my love, Pessoa murmured, Forgive me, Ophélia, but I had to write and nothing else. I couldn't do otherwise. Now it's all over'.⁴² Over the course of the three days, Pessoa is visited by Álvaro de Campos, Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Bernardo Soares and António Mora, all of whom have secrets to unburden to him. For instance, Álvaro de Campos wishes to apologise for destroying Pessoa's relationship with Ophélia, Alberto Caeiro confesses that it was he who kept Pessoa awake at night, and Ricardo Reis admits that he was not in Brazil, in exile, as everybody had believed, but had been living quietly in the countryside all along. In all cases Pessoa offers reassurance and forgiveness.⁴³ Tabucchi's account of the imagined discussions between Pessoa and his fictitious authors and heteronyms is followed by a 'cast of characters' - biographical and bibliographical information about Pessoa and the heteronyms – and it is this text which is reproduced in *La nostalgia*. Within *The Last Three Days*, the 'cast of characters' and the fictional

³⁷ I term such self-referencing interchanges 'hybrid refractions' in Liz Wren-Owens, *In, On, and Through Translation: Tabucchi's Travelling Texts* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018), pp. 128-52.

³⁸ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule pieno di gente*, pp. 125-37.

³⁹ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule pieno di gente*, pp. 11-40.

⁴⁰ Antonio Tabucchi, *La nostalgia, l'automobile et l'infini*, p. 113.

⁴¹ Antonio Tabucchi, *Gli ultimi tre giorni di Fernando Pessoa* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994); Antonio Tabucchi, *Dreams of Dreams and The Last Three Days of Fernando Pessoa*, trans. by Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights, 1999).

⁴² Antonio Tabucchi, *The Last Three Days of Fernando Pessoa*, p. 92.

⁴³ For a discussion of the processes of resolution in the text, see Liz Wren-Owens, 'Absent and Real Bodies in Tabucchi: From Dissatisfaction to Resolution', in *In Corpore: Bodies in Post-Unification Italy*, ed. by Loredana Polezzi and Charlotte Ross (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), pp. 228-241.

imagining (a translation in the broadest sense) work together to enable the reader to construct his/her view of Pessoa and the fictitious authors. Yet as in the case of the closed choices provided to the reader in *Il poeta è un fingitore*, the readers have again limited agency, as they are constructing an image based on the filtered information and representation provided by Tabucchi. The 'cast of characters' tells us, for example, that:

Ricardo Reis was born in Oporto on September 19, 1887, and educated in a Jesuit college. He was a doctor, but we do not know if he practised medicine for a living. After the establishment of the Portuguese Republic, he withdrew to Brazil, in exile, because of his monarchist ideas. He was a Sensist, materialist, and classical poet. He was influenced by Walter Pater and the remote and abstract classicism that fascinated certain English scientists and naturalists of the fin de siècle. (p. 127)

The reader can use this information to inform his/her understanding of both Reis' confession that he had been living hidden away in a village close to Lisbon, writing his poetry and hiding in plain sight, and of Pessoa's reassurances to Reis that he had always known where Reis was. The reader is constructing Pessoa and his world, but only through the prism of the information already filtered by Tabucchi as creative 'translator'. Thinking back to the essays in *La nostalgie, l'automobile, et l'infini*, the reader of the critical interpretations of the heteronyms is being guided to use the 'cast of characters' (and perhaps by extension the fictional imaginings) as a means of approaching Pessoa's work.

A key argument of this essay is that the multiple identities within Pessoa's work and its fragmentary composition endow the translator with agency for creative construction. Extending Lefevere's notion of refractions to include fictional imaginings, we can include these fictional texts as part of the work which rewrites and reconstructs Pessoa. In doing so, the agency of the 'translator' is highlighted by a swift comparison between the fictional representations of the heteronym Ricardo Reis in Tabucchi's *The Last Three Days* and José Saramago's (much longer) *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*.⁴⁴ In Saramago's text, Reis returns to Lisbon in 1936 from his sixteen years of exile in Brazil and meets with Pessoa, summoned from his tomb to renew his relationship with the heteronym. Just as both texts focus on encounters at the end of life, so too do they use the same basic parameters. In his introduction to *The Year of the Death*, Giovanni Pontiero notes that Saramago 'builds on the factual details about Reis provided by Pessoa himself. Ricardo Reis was born in Oporto in 1887 and educated by the Jesuits. He graduated in medicine, became a general practitioner while writing poetry on the side, and opted for political exile because of his monarchist sympathies'.⁴⁵ These details are very similar to those provided by Tabucchi, yet whereas for Tabucchi the heteronym can be created as a character seeking forgiveness from Pessoa at the end of his life, Saramago's tale charts a more complex relationship between Pessoa and Saramago, exploring convergences and divergences in their perceptions of art and life. The polyphonic work of Pessoa, with its multiple identities and fragmented form, enable the texts to be refracted in creative and multifaceted ways.

In creatively constructing Pessoa's final encounters with his heteronyms, Tabucchi has complete agency and is able to shape Pessoa as he chooses. The foundations for such agency exercised by the translator (understood in the broadest sense) over the source author is set in an earlier fictional work by Tabucchi, the 1991 text *Requiem*.⁴⁶ Here, the narrator spends a sun-drenched day in Lisbon

⁴⁴ José Saramago, *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, ed. by and trans. by Giovanni Pontiero, (London: Harvill, 1992).

⁴⁵ Giovanni Pontiero, 'Introduction', in José Saramago, *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, pp. vii-xv (p. viii).

⁴⁶ Antonio Tabucchi, *Requiem: Uma Alucinação* (Lisbon: Quetzal, 1991).

awaiting a midnight meeting with an unnamed Guest, who through a series of clues is revealed as Pessoa. Jo Ann Canon rightly suggests that the narrator's search for Pessoa parallels Tabucchi's lifelong exploration of the writer's work.⁴⁷ The book has been seen as the high watermark of Pessoa's influence on Tabucchi, and the point at which Tabucchi is no longer reliant on Pessoa to navigate Portuguese space for him.⁴⁸ In *Requiem*, the much anticipated meeting results in a moment of disengagement from Pessoa's influence.⁴⁹ The narrator tells his Guest:

I've spent my whole life hypothesizing about you and now I'm tired of it, that's what I wanted to tell you. Please, he said, don't abandon me to all those people who are so certain about everything, they're dreadful. You don't need me, I said, don't talk nonsense, the whole world admires you, I was the one who needed you, but now it's time to stop, that's all.⁵⁰

In this encounter, Tabucchi as translator is re-setting the power dynamics of their relationship: he no longer needs Pessoa as source text, and can create his own understanding of heteronomy and Portuguese culture. In creating Pessoa as a character, Tabucchi has total agency in giving voice to Pessoa's thoughts, and is not directly governed by the source texts in the same way as with his refractions through translation and critical writing. If, as Walter Benjamin suggests, translators are creators who give new lives to works in other languages,⁵¹ here Tabucchi is in a more literal sense giving life to a construction of Pessoa. Scott contends that the creative act of translation is 'to confer on the text the autobiography of one's own reading and one's own creative ambitions, both inaccessible to others but available to appropriation'.⁵² In this fictional representation Tabucchi is offering an autobiography of his own reading, reflecting on his own creative ambitions and on the way that these had been shaped by Pessoa but can now take a new direction. Creativity and agency come together to shape the relationship between translator and source author. *Requiem* was written in Portuguese, signalling Tabucchi's increasing ownership of the cultural and linguistic landscape. Tabucchi felt unable to translate the text into Italian, and entrusted the translation to his friend Sergio Vecchio.⁵³ From a translatorial perspective, this opens up fascinating questions over the way in which the creative acts of writing and translation converge and diverge. In asserting agency over his refracted vision of Pessoa, taking creative agency in this field, Tabucchi opens his own writing up to the creative influence of another translator who will refract his own work, *Requiem*. Tabucchi's creative vision of Pessoa as a character in *Requiem* will again be introduced to the Italian reader through translation – but not a translation by Tabucchi.

The impact of creativity and agency shaping the new relationship between Tabucchi as creative translator and Pessoa leads Tabucchi to take ownership of the Pessoaan notions of heteronomy, and to leverage them to different agendas. Joseph Francese has mapped the different ways in which

⁴⁷ Jo Ann Canon, 'Requiem and the Poetics of Antonio Tabucchi', *Forum Italicum* 35, 1 (Spring 2001), 100-109.

⁴⁸ Louise Sheehan, 'Tabucchi's Portugal', in *Cross-Cultural Travel: Papers from the Royal Irish Symposium on Literature and Travel*, ed. by Jane Conroy (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 285-95.

⁴⁹ Anna Botta, 'Antonio Tabucchi's *Requiem*: Mourning Modernism', *Spunti e ricerche* 12 (1996/7), 143-57.

⁵⁰ Antonio Tabucchi, *Requiem: A Hallucination*, trans. by Margaret Jull Costa (New York: New Directions, 1994), p. 99.

⁵¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 71-83.

⁵² Scott, p. 110.

⁵³ For a discussion of the genesis of *Requiem*, see Antonio Tabucchi, *Autobiographie altrui: Poetiche a posteriori* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003).

Pessoan heteronymy and multiplicity manifest in Tabucchi's works.⁵⁴ In earlier works by Tabucchi, Francese suggests that the subjects of Tabucchi's narration seek understanding through identification with an alter ego. Yet *Requiem* signals a turning point in the use of Pessoa's ideas because from this point the subject of narration is able to view himself from the vantage point of the other. The Pessoa model is superseded when Tabucchi's dialogue with the self is turned outward and becomes political-ethical in nature. Tabucchi then has greater agency to translate Pessoa's ideas of heteronymy to suit his own creative ambitions in his fictions, as his texts begin to engage more explicitly with the socio-political moment, challenging the rise of the far right across Europe and arguing for the sanctity of liberty and justice, where reading and writing can become important acts of resistance.⁵⁵ In Tabucchi's 1994 novel *Sostiene Pereira (Pereira Declares)*, for example, acts of translation and a Pessoa's multiplicity of identity come together to shape a journalist's act of resistance against Salazar's regime.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Tabucchi's multi-faceted engagement with Pessoa's writing highlights the way in which Pessoa's own work, penned by his many heteronyms and fictitious authors and often fragmentary in nature, enables the translator to shape the target reader's understanding of the source text and author. Bassnett argues that historically 'translation was a means not only of acquiring more information about other writers and their work, but also of discovering new ways of writing'.⁵⁷ The ways in which Pessoa's ideas of heteronymy run through Tabucchi's work and are marshalled to changing agendas, reveal the interplay between his work as translator, writer, and critic. This goes beyond conceptualising the difference between fictional representations as a play of imagination and translations and essays as having a pretension to a more accurate portrayal of 'reality'. What is most significant about Tabucchi's many refractions of Pessoa is the way in which they are brought into dialogue, creating a self-referencing channel of understanding. The light is directed onto Pessoa's work in one particular way by one refracted piece, then mirrored back by another, ensuring the angle of illumination is controlled. From the great trunk of Pessoa's writing, Tabucchi extracts fragmentary texts and brings them into dialogue not only with each other, but also with his own constructions and imaginings of Pessoa. As translator, as critic, as author, Tabucchi refracts the texts so they speak to and reflect back on each other, in a process where agency sits with the 'translator' (understood in the broadest sense). Pizzaro and Dix argue that Pessoa's work is a 'heterogeneous and almost infinite reality [...] not an object in the past but a *corpus* in permanent renewal'.⁵⁸ Tabucchi's translations proper of Pessoa's work, alongside his fictions and essays, reveal the agency of the translator and his ability to channel that renewal, to refract Pessoa's works and to creatively construct Pessoa's image.

⁵⁴ Joseph Francese, *Socially Symbolic Acts: The Historicizing Fictions of Umberto Eco, Vincenzo Consolo and Antonio Tabucchi* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ For a discussion of socio-political commitment across Tabucchi's writing, see Liz Wren-Owen, *Postmodern Ethics: The Re-appropriation of Socio-Political Engagement in the Works of Leonardo Sciascia and Antonio Tabucchi* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007).

⁵⁶ Antonio Tabucchi, *Sostiene Pereira: Una testimonianza* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1994); Antonio Tabucchi, *Declares Pereira: A True Account*, trans. by Patrick Creagh (London: Harvill, 1995).

⁵⁷ Bassnett, 'Writing and Translating', p. 174.

⁵⁸ Pizzaro and Dix, 'Introduction', p. 9.

