

Reviews

***Pessoa in an Intertextual Web: Influence and Innovation.* Ed. David G. Frier. Oxford: Legenda, 2012.**

This collection of essays by ten contributors based mainly in the United Kingdom and Portugal extends the fruitful direction in *pessoano* scholarship that consists in exploring the writer's intertextual connections, engagements, and repercussions, and which appears to be currently booming, as also evidenced, for example, by the just-published volume *Fernando Pessoa's Modernity without Frontiers: Influences, Dialogues and Responses*, edited by Mariana Gray de Castro (Tamesis, 2013). Despite what some would posit as conflicting genealogies and theoretical claims of the notions of influence and intertextuality (e. g., Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein in their edited volume, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*), the collection ably edited by David Frier makes no such distinctions, indeed largely steering clear of any general theoretical reflection on the ways and means by which texts and authors relate to one another, as well as of any articulation of a shared theoretical ground among the contributors (which is understandable, considering that the volume's content originated principally in a discontinuous series of annual symposia on Pessoa held at the University of Leeds from 2007 to 2010). The result is a diverse miscellany organized into three blocks of chapters of somewhat uneven size: "Before Pessoa: Observation and Affirmation" (with five studies), "Pessoa and His Contemporaries: Tracing Possible Identities for the Self" (two chapters), and "After Pessoa: Four Authors in Search of a Character" (three chapters).

The wide range of themes and approaches pursued by individual contributors is perhaps best illustrated by the five essays included in the "Before Pessoa" section. The first two, by Richard Zenith and Mattia Riccardi, discuss Pessoa's philosophical antecedents, focusing respectively on Nietzsche (Zenith) and on Kant and Nietzsche (Riccardi). Zenith's subtle discussion of the deployments of the Nietzschean "will to power" as analogous to Pessoa's heteronymous transcendence of the singular, unified self relies on a wide-ranging

exploration of the two authors' shared literariness, since, as Zenith stresses, for both Nietzsche and Pessoa reducing their work "to a set of philosophical tenets" would result in "miss[ing] out on the better part of [their] genius" (12). Riccardi, on the other hand, while claiming to investigate Pessoa's literary "staging" of philosophical ideas through a reading of the heteronym António Mora's dialogue with Kant and Nietzsche, fails to move beyond such a reductive approach (i. e., to make operative in his analysis Mora's identity as an aesthetic construct), although his identification of the main source for Mora's, or Pessoa's, ideas on the subject (Jules de Gaultier's book *De Kant à Nietzsche*, which Pessoa owned) is a valuable point.

Continuing in the "Before Pessoa" register, Mariana Gray de Castro illuminates a new angle of the writer's lifelong obsession with Shakespeare by focusing on Pessoa's diagnosis of both himself and the playwright as fellow "hystero-neurasthenics." Castro's thorough discussion of the nineteenth-century medical research into newly proposed or revised mental conditions and its complex relationship to art and literature, followed by a detailed outline of Pessoa's references to hysteria and/or neurasthenia in his heteronymous writings and of his (and others') descriptions and appropriations of Hamlet's (and his creator's) alleged neurosis, lays a compelling and useful groundwork for future investigations of this fascinating sector of the "intertextual web" in which Pessoa's work was so richly and productively enmeshed. A very different sector of this web is in turn investigated by Rui Gonçalves Miranda through a deconstructive reading of Pessoa's vision of his relationship to the specifically national modern literary canon, construed in an aporetically perpetual movement toward the impossible terminus of Portuguese-ness through an evocation of three precursors to whom Pessoa himself indicated (in a 1934 manuscript) as Portugal's only three modern "masters": Antero de Quental, Cesário Verde, and Camilo Pessanha. Finally, Rhian Atkin's comparative analysis juxtaposes the imaginary journeys undertaken in Pessoa/Bernardo Soares's *Livro do Desassossego* and in Xavier de Maistre's novella *Voyage autour de ma chambre* (1795) in a Lacanian theoretical framework, engagingly explicated through a series of the critic's own drawings.

Composed of just two chapters, the section situating Pessoa amidst his contemporary discursive networks opens with a stimulating reappraisal of Álvaro de Campos's "Ode Triunfal" by Pedro Eiras, whose insistence on an unironic

reading of Campos's explosive poetic debut is a welcome corrective to fossilized critical common sense. In contrast with the vast array of intertextual connections and references summoned by Eiras to reflect on the project substantiated in Campos's ode, David Frier offers a more situated discussion of *Livro do desassossego* as relatable to Miguel de Unamuno's *La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez* (1930), exposing how the two texts' common ground of non-linear self-reflexivity leads to very different forms of engagement with their implied readers.

The volume's third part, with its rather mysterious subtitle (two of the "four authors" are obviously José Saramago and Antonio Tabucchi, but the remaining two are less easily identified), which is concerned with late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century appropriations of Pessoa's work and figure, appears the most uneven in its juxtaposition of two very brief and somewhat underdeveloped essays (by Paulo de Medeiros and Liz Wren-Owens) with Mark Sabine's long and elaborate examination of Saramago's negotiations of explicitly or implicitly Pessoaan ethics of alterity in his 1980s novels, most notably *O ano da morte de Ricardo Reis* and *História do cerco de Lisboa*. Medeiros's contribution explores the general problematic of "representing Pessoa" through a welcome review of some less well-known texts and art works, especially José Augusto França's novel *José e os outros* (2006), while Wren-Owens offers a well-structured and inviting overview of Tabucchi's intertextual relationship with Pessoa (although her claim that earlier critics of this engagement focused their readings exclusively on Tabucchi's *Requiem* points to the curious absence from her bibliography of a previous study that likewise discusses a wide range of the Italian author's "Pessoaan" texts, Francesca Billiani's 2007 essay "Antonio Tabucchi in Search of Pessoa's Heteronymous Body").

Even as it exposes a multidirectional diversity of concerns and approaches among its contributors, *Pessoa in an Intertextual Web* stands also as an eloquent demonstration of the ever-expanding sphere of hermeneutic possibility surrounding Pessoa's work, and as such constitutes a most valuable addition to the growing repository of *peessoano* criticism available in English.

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