

**Assemblage of Heteronyms: Narrative of Inclusion and Affective
Coexistence in Fernando Pessoa**

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Abstract

Through heteronyms, Pessoa creates an environment, or a theatre of self, which includes the contradictory effects of each heteronym without nullifying them, providing them a space of coexistence. It is argued here that Fernando Pessoa creates a space of inclusivity through his heteronyms, thereby enabling the coexistence of ‘book people’ to demonstrate the possibility of ontological existence of multiple selves and a possibility of assemblage and affective coexistence. Furthermore, it is also observed that Pessoa creates multiple selves through heteronyms and orthonyms. When these selves are juxtaposed, in Deleuze and Guattari’s term we can see a strange *assemblage* of selves. In addition to this, it is postulated that the assemblage as a phenomenon paves the way to study affectations at two levels-orthonym and heteronyms. Incidentally, leading to the affective coexistence of multiple selves. In other words, Pessoa becomes a conductor of various affects, practising inclusivity, providing a space for affectations and providing a safe space for diverse affects. In order to demonstrate the same, this paper studies the three heteronyms Alberto Caéiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos to understand the affect on Pessoa as a non-orthonym within the conceptual framework of ‘assemblage’ and affect theory.

Keywords: Heteronyms, Affects, Assemblage, Drama em gente, Inclusivity, Rhizome.

Introduction

Fernando Pessoa was a 20th-century Portuguese writer who made a significant contribution to Portugal's Modernism. He showed his versatility by writing in multiple languages, in Portuguese, English, and French, writing poetry, prose, essays, and plays. He shared his observations from Shakespeare to Milton, from Whitman to Gandhi. Through his works, Pessoa intended to make Portugal a literary destination for the modern world, asserting its literary identity through his project of heteronyms. Pessoa introduced various movements inspired by the Modernist movements across the globe, writing poetry which exemplified the art of Sensationism, writing what is felt. Sensationism for Pessoa is "writing straight on the crooked lines of matter". (Pessoa, 70) Apart from his literary contributions, Pessoa's oeuvre was the way in which he crafted his writings. The uniqueness of Fernando Pessoa lies in the art of crafting literary subjects.

Fernando Pessoa employed the use of various identities, which he termed heteronyms, under whom he crafted his literary world. Contrary to a pseudonym, a heteronym is a unique identity crafted by the author, who has a different personality altogether from the author. The statement, "Fernando Pessoa, who doesn't exist, strictly speaking" (Pessoa, 52), sums up the condition of Fernando Pessoa, the individual. Pessoa is Portuguese for person, and the author started the practice of accommodating various identities from as early as six years of age and continued to do so till his death. Through heteronymity, Pessoa built a world within himself, an imaginary Lisbon with people of his creation, interacting within his "drama em gente" the theatre of his self. Pessoa accommodated these selves within him to interact and engage in the artistic practice, and Pessoa served as a space of inclusion for identities like Álvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis, Alberto Caeiro, Bernardo Soares, Alexander Search, Jean Seul, Charles Robert Anon and many more.

Among the many heteronyms of Pessoa, three were the most prominent: Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos. They were designated the responsibility of poetic creation along with the Orthonym, Fernando Pessoa. Like a heteronym, an orthonym is an identity separated from the flesh, the authorial identity with the name Fernando Pessoa and not the publisher of works, Fernando Pessoa. Alberto Caeiro was considered to be the master, and the

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Inclusivity through Interdisciplinary Dialogues

Mr. Sangeeth S.G. and Dr. Yashashwini M.

Assemblage of Heteronyms: Narrative of Inclusion and Affective Coexistence in Fernando Pessoa 105

other two heteronyms, along with Fernando Pessoa-orthonym, his disciples. Alvaro de Campos was a naval engineer by profession and one of the most prolific and outspoken of Pessoa's heteronyms. He had a love for the poetry of Whitman and was obsessed with machines and modern life. Campos celebrated the modern age and machinery with a sense of longing for the past when naval exploration was all about the sense of the unknown. He explores it in his works like the "Maritime Ode" and "The Triumphal Ode", where he says:

...O great modern noises,
From hearing you at too close a range,
And my head burns with the desire to proclaim you
In an explosive song telling my every sensation,
An explosiveness contemporaneous with you, O machines! (Zenith, 2006, 153)

Campos was also the most public of Pessoa's heteronyms, often contradicting the opinions of Pessoa, whom he thought to be too rational.

Ricardo Reis was a classicist and a physician by trade who represented the lost age of the Greek Gods through his poetry. He believed that freedom, happiness and peace are privileges which are denied even to Gods and as humans, we must live in illusions of the same. His poetry used references to classical poetry, invoking mythical figures and reflecting them onto a sense of tedium, which was a common sensation explored by Pessoa through his heteronyms. Three of them together represented the movement of sensationism, which was a movement in poetry which was devised by Pessoa which aimed at capturing the feeling.

Inclusivity is defined as the act of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded. In Pessoa, the art of inclusion is confined to providing a voice for those voices within that are often not represented and repressed. Pessoa, through his heteronymity, provides a space for these voices which are often brushed aside as hysteria in people. He says in a handwritten passage to a work which he never published, titled *Aspectos*, wherein he calls heteronymity a manifestation of hysteria:

The human author of these books has no personality of his own. Whenever he feels a personality well up inside, he quickly realizes that this new being, though similar, is distinct from him—an intellectual son, perhaps, with inherited characteristics, but also with differences that make him someone else."

"That this quality in the writer is a manifestation of hysteria, or of the so-called split personality, is neither denied nor affirmed by the author of these books. As the helpless

slave of his multiplied self, it would be useless for him to agree with one or the other theory about the written results of that multiplication. (Zenith, 2001,2)

These aspects, or heteronyms, which Pessoa was long involved in creation forms his drama em gente. In Pessoa, there is an assemblage of characters, whose identities make them distinct and unique, existing within their own realities in a world constructed for their fictive coexistence. Assemblage, as it is used by Deleuze and Guattari, first appeared in their 1980 work, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Assemblage, as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari's work, is a concept dealing with the play of contingency and structure, organization and change; however, we should also keep in mind that these pairs of terms are false alternatives (D: 99). The term in French is *agencement*, usually translated as “putting together”, “arrangement”, “laying out”, “layout” or “fitting” (Cousin *et al.* 1990: 9–10). It is important that *agencement* is not a static term; it is not *the arrangement* or *organization* but the *process* of arranging, organizing, fitting together. The term as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari's work is commonly translated as *assemblage*: that which is being assembled. An assemblage is not a set of predetermined parts (such as the pieces of a plastic model aeroplane) that are then put together in order or into an already-conceived structure (the model aeroplane). Nor is an assemblage a random collection of things, since there is a sense that an assemblage is a whole of some sort that expresses some identity and claims a territory. An assemblage is a becoming that brings elements together. (Wise, 2014, 91)

Adam Morris, in his study titled *Fernando Pessoa's Heteronymic Machine* reiterates the idea of Heteronymy as an assemblage. He says:

The assemblage of Pessoa's work includes not just the poetry and prose of his orthonym, heteronyms, and semiheteronyms, but also includes the Deleuze-Guattarian "book-machine" of heteronymy itself. The person of Pessoa the writer constitutes the individual heteronyms of Pessoa, and these individuals also constitute the person Pessoa. His oeuvre thus resembles the mutually constituting "macro" and "micro" multiplicities that Deleuze and Guattari describe in *A Thousand Plateaus*. (Morris, 2014, p. 128)

‘Inbetweenness’

The drama em gente of Pessoa becomes an assemblage point for the heteronyms; heteronyms are not random creations, but purposeful personas made to provide a representation for the

multitude of voices within the author. The drama em gente provides an inclusive society of identities that are otherwise excluded or repressed as madness. Pessoa was always conscious of his own mental condition due to the history of mental illness in his family. He has frequently acknowledged his concerns in writing. The madness for Pessoa was his art, and through this art, he engaged in the creation of heteronyms. The creation of heteronyms are products of accommodating various affects through these identities. Gregory J Seigworth and Melissa Gregg in their book, *The Affect Theory Reader*, define the concept of affect as:

Affect arises in the midst of inbetweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. (Seigworth and Gregg 1)

Pessoa the body becomes the 'inbetweenness' within which the heteronyms act upon. The heteronyms intrusively act upon Pessoa, and the willing suspension of Pessoa the orthonym, results in the acting of the heteronyms. The state of affect parallels with what Pessoa defined as Sensations and being acted upon the sensations become an interplay of affects. The heteronyms, Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos acted as conduits of various sensations or feelings. Sensationism is defined by Pessoa as:

Sensation is all, Caeiro holds, and thought is a disease. By sensation, Caeiro means the sensation of things as they are, without adding to it any elements from personal thought, convention, sentiment or any other soul-place. For Campos, sensation is indeed all, though* not necessarily sensation of things as they are, but of things as they are felt. So that he takes sensation subjectively and applies all his efforts, once so thinking, not to develop in himself the sensation of things as they are, but all sorts of sensations of things, even of the same thing. To feel is all; it is logical to conclude that the best is to feel all sorts of things in all sorts of ways, or, as Álvaro de Campos says himself, "to feel everything in every way." So he applies himself to feeling the town as much as he feels the country, the normal as he feels the abnormal, the bad as he feels the good, the morbid as the healthy. He never questions; he feels. He is the undisciplined child of

sensation. Caeiro has one discipline: things must be felt as they are. Ricardo Reis has another kind of discipline: things must be felt, not only as they are, but also so as to fall in with a certain ideal of classic measure and rule. In Álvaro de Campos, things must simply be felt. (57, Pessoa)

These feelings are the intensities within which they coexist.

For the study, I have taken *Notes from the Memory of My Master Caeiro*, written by Alvaro de Campos. The text exhibits a unique space of interaction of these three heteronyms and Fernando Pessoa, the orthonym, in which they examine their iterations of sensationism. Alvaro begins by describing his meeting with his future master, Caeiro. The work distinctly mentions the differences in attitude, literary choices and the link which connects them all, which is sensationism and their religion, Paganism. The inclusion of Pessoaan heteronyms within Pessoa was done through expressions of their individual senses. As Caeiro rightly says in his interaction with Campos: “I’m one of my sensations.” (Pessoa, 45) And Pessoa must have followed the same principle for inclusivity in curating his theatre. Pessoaan heteronyms are not perfect in any way; they are all individualities with their lacunas. Within the three major heteronyms themselves, what made them real was the lack within them, marking them unique. Alvaro de Campos describes Pessoa as an empty shell when he says, “Fernando Pessoa feels things but doesn’t react, not even on the inside” (44, Pessoa). The “feeling” was left to the heteronyms, from the prolific ones like Alvaro de Campos, to the hunchbacked, forlorn woman, Maria Jose. The heteronyms exist through their degrees of sensations. The sensations are various affects which drive the thought in the heteronyms of Pessoa. The intensities of the sensations culminate in the space constructed by Pessoa for these heteronyms to interact.

Pessoa’s heteronymity makes him a vessel for inclusion, opening doors to various types of people brought out. The heteronymous voices found their inclusion within his theatre of self, providing a space for them to reflect as literary outputs. The heteronyms stated by Pessoa in defining sensationism show various shades of affect in Pessoa, exhibiting their sensations. The uniqueness of Pessoa’s heteronyms and their ideas expressed suggests the variety of affects represented by the art of heteronymity in him. Pessoa becomes a space of affective coexistence, a space which holds Pessoa, the orthonym as well as the numerous heteronyms exist in a non-hierarchical and rhizomatic structure. The feature of multiplicity of a heteronym is paralleled in a defining feature of a rhizome as observed by Deleuze and Guattari in their chapter on

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Mr. Sangeeth S.G. and Dr. Yashashwini M.

Assemblage of Heteronyms: Narrative of Inclusion and Affective Coexistence in Fernando Pessoa 109

“Introduction to Rhizome” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. They observe:

Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or "return" in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows). (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8)

Conclusion

Heteronyms and Pessoa have hence a rhizomatic relationship, supplanting the subject Pessoa with the heteronyms which exist within him. Heteronyms represent a rhizomatic structure having its unique magnitude and dimensions without changing the nature of each multiplicity within.

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