

Portuguese Readings of William Blake: Fernando Pessoa, a National Poet, and Três Tristes Tigres, a Pop-Rock Band

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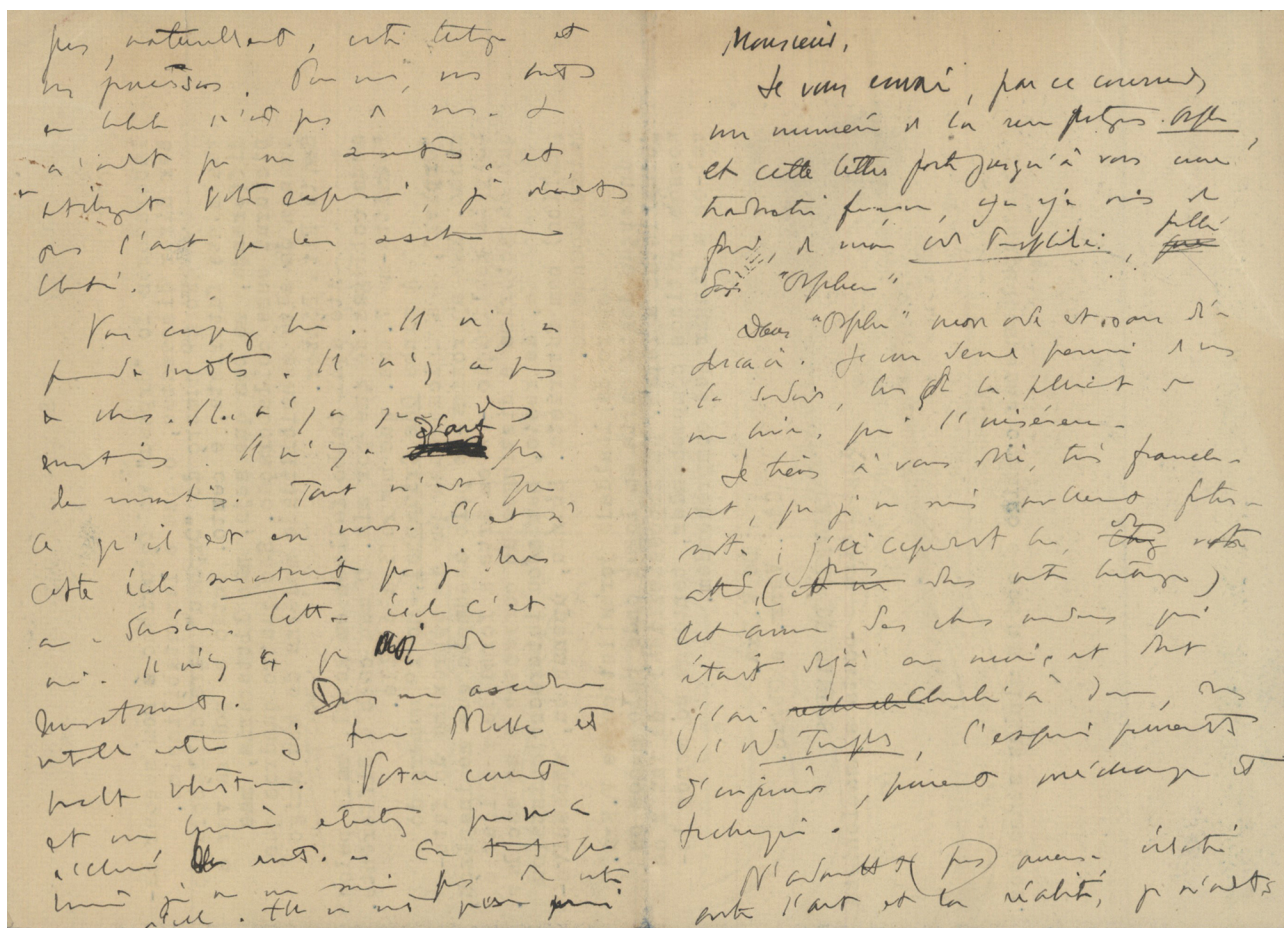
she has coedited Pessoa’s *História da Literatura Inglesa* (*History of English Literature*) (2021), as well as two other volumes of his works, *The Transformation Book—or Book of Tasks* (2014) and *Writings on Art and Poetical Theory* (2022), both published in the US.

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¹ IN a post published 1 April 2020 on his personal blog, John McGowan declared that “[a] student learns how to ‘do’ close reading by immersion in various examples of the practice, not by learning a set of rules or ‘a’ method.” In the present case, we are indeed bringing to the fore two radically different, although both inspired and inspiring, examples of readings of William Blake’s poetry and poetic principles, one by Fernando Pessoa and the other by Três Tristes Tigres (Three Sad Tigers).¹ Pessoa (1888–1935) is the modernist writer now acclaimed, in both elite and popular cultural circles, as Portugal’s twentieth-century national poet; aware of Blake since at least 1903–04, he openly acknowledged his influence c. 1915: “In my intellectual an-

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1. The rhythm and linguistic play of the tongue-twisting name are thus lost in translation. All translations are ours, unless otherwise attributed.



1. Fernando Pessoa, “Rascunho de uma carta escrita a Marinetti” (“Draft of a letter written to Marinetti”), Lisbon, c. 1915. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal. BNP E3/21-123^v-122^v.³ It is published in Pessoa, *Sensacionismo e Outros Ismos* 377.

The acknowledgment of Blake’s influence reads, in French, “Dans mon ascendance intellectuelle je trouve Blake et Walt Whitman” (left side, bottom third, seventh to fifth lines from the end). Pessoa may have sent a letter to Marinetti, for there is a second in the Pessoa Archive (BNP E3/19-35-37) in which he thanks Marinetti for having sent him some futurist manifestos; this seems to imply that Marinetti had responded to an earlier letter. The second letter is published in Pessoa, *Páginas de Estética e de Teoria e Crítica Literárias* 164-69 and in the *Arquivo Fernando Pessoa* in *Modernismo—Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu*, <<https://modernismo.pt/index.php/arquivo-fernando-pessoa/details/33/2474>>. We thank Nuno Ribeiro for calling our attention to it (personal communication, 25 July 2020).

cestry I find Blake and Walt Whitman.”² Três Tristes Tigres is a Portuguese pop-rock band from the 1990s, currently comprising the singer Ana Deus, the guitar player Alexandre Soares, and the poet Regina Guimarães; almost twenty years after their first albums (1993–98), the group released *Mínima Luz* (*Minimum Light*, 2020), which includes the track “Tigre,” the first musical adaptation of a poem by Blake to be sung in a Portuguese translation.

2. For the quoted acknowledgment of Blake’s influence, see *illus. 1*. For Pessoa’s first reference to Blake (not discussed until now, as far as we know), see *illus. 2*.

3. Key to references in the Pessoa Archive:

BNP: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (National Library of Portugal)

E3: Espólio 3—Espólio de Fernando Pessoa (Archive 3—Pessoa Archive)

Arabic numerals: folder and document numbers in the Pessoa Archive

r: recto

v: verso

“In my intellectual ancestry I find Blake and Walt Whitman”

Fernando Pessoa (c. 1915)

2 As already noted, Pessoa is Portugal's twentieth-century national poet, a position to which he was elevated through a highly successful process of canonization, which is clearly elucidated by Darlene J. Sadlier's "Text versus Work: Constructing and Deconstructing a National Poet": "After his death he became a symbol of the nation's culture, and his authorship conferred a kind of dignity on the Salazar regime. ... He was studied in schools, and he was somehow linked to the identity of the nation itself" (127). This is certainly not unrelated to the appearance of *Mensagem* (*Message*) in 1934, the first and only book of poetry in Portuguese he ever published. Implicitly concurring with these explanations, but refining them, Irene Ramalho Santos argues: "Of course, *Mensagem*, by its conception, structure, thematics, and major source of imagery, is also a nationalistic poem" (41).⁴ Sadlier's analysis of Pessoa's long, intricate process of canonization is an indispensable prerequisite to further inquiries into the reasons why the strong influence of the English Romantics—and of Blake in a particularly labyrinthine manner—was not a main focus of Pessoaan criticism until the turn of the twenty-first century. In fact, after the 25 April 1974 military coup (popularly known as the Carnation Revolution), which at last overthrew the Salazar-Caetano dictatorial regime Estado Novo (New State, 1933–74), the context of Pessoa's reception radically changed.

3 Sadlier emphasizes that, in 1980, when "Portugal celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of ... the death of Camões [the author of *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusiads*)] ... , the postrevolutionary government was disinclined to adopt the poet of the empire as its literary symbol." But "Pessoa ... was a modern writer who could represent a new leadership and its hope to transform Portugal. One sign of Pessoa's importance to the government was the establishment of a Center for Pessoa Studies in Oporto shortly after the revolution." Moreover, the center began producing a journal, *Persona* (1977–85), which "became an important source of

4. The typescript of *Mensagem* can be read in the Biblioteca Nacional Digital, <<http://purl.pt/13965/1>>.

Pessoa himself agrees, in a letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro dated 13 January 1935 and known as "Carta sobre a génese dos heterónimos" ("Letter on the genesis of the heteronyms") (BNP E3/72-31^r-38^r), that *Mensagem* manifests his nationalism, although he classifies it as a facet of his personality that is "em certo modo secundária" ("somewhat secondary"). The letter is published in Pessoa, *Correspondência 1923–1935* 337–48; Pessoa, *Selected Prose* 251–61; and in the *Arquivo Fernando Pessoa in Modernismo—Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu*, <<https://modernismo.pt/index.php/arquivo-fernando-pessoa/details/33/2245>>.

postrevolutionary scholarship on the poet," initiating "the full-scale academic industry that exists today" (128). We would qualify Sadlier's conclusions by saying that the foundation of Centro de Estudos Pessoaanos at the University of Porto (opening on 26 April 1976, the day after the elections for the first post-1974 democratic parliament) was certainly not a top priority of Portugal's sixth provisional government, which was dealing with a huge economic, social, and political crisis; it was undeniably one of the feats of a new generation of academics, along with those not so young professors who had been expelled from the universities for political reasons and were then resuming their academic careers. In this case, it was mainly the achievement of Arnaldo Saraiva, among others, as can be inferred from his very brief history of the center, which he read on its opening day and is now included in the facsimile edition (2019) of its journal.⁵

2

4 Santos's *Atlantic Poets* starts with the premise that "Pessoa has now [2003] been 'discovered' by English-speaking readers as one of the finest poets of Western modernism"; Michael Hamburger's *The Truth of Poetry* (1969) is aptly referred to in her study as a "path-breaking critical interpretation" of Pessoa (3). In fact, the tradition that Pessoa wrote in and built on was that of modern poetry, its modernity consisting, from Hamburger's perspective, in "an international phenomenon" (Hamburger vii) fathered by Baudelaire, "the prototype of the modern poet whose vision is at once sharpened and limited by a high degree of critical self-awareness" (Hamburger 1). This "critical self-awareness" is further illuminated: "The 'self' written about becomes no more than a multiplicity of alternatives, possibilities and potentialities," the conclusion being that after the end of the Romantic period, "a poet's self was what he chose to make it, his identity to be found only in the bodies that he chose to fill" (50). In the case of Pessoa, the end of Hamburger's statement should be rephrased: the poet's identity is to be found only in the bodies that he chose to engender—that is, in his heteronyms, which are characterized by Anna M. Klobucka and Mark Sabine as "fully developed *dramatis personae*"—Alberto Caeiro, Álvaro de Campos, and Ricardo Reis—"realized textually as existentially independent individuals, with biographic trajectories and interpersonal relationships of their own" (3–4).

5. It should be noted that Margarida L. Losa had already (1975) published, in English, "Fernando Pessoa, the Saudosista," where she addresses the question of the poet's political ideas, concluding: "Pessoa ... is ... in his political prose writings usually closer to a mild conservative stand" (204).

- 5 A study of the type of modernity defined by Hamburger would benefit from a comparative analysis of, on the one hand, Blake's well-known description of how he had written a "long Poem" (*Milton*, but maybe *Jerusalem*, or even *The Four Zoas*)—"I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without Premeditation & even against my Will" (letter to Thomas Butts, 25 Apr. 1803, E 728-29)—and, on the other hand, Pessoa's explanation in "Aspectos" ("Aspects"), from about a century later (c. 1918), of the authors he would later call his heteronyms: "Nem esta obra, nem as que se 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" (BNP E3/20-70^r-71^r-72^r; Pessoa, *Livro do Desasocego* 449) ("Neither this work nor those to follow have anything to do with the man who writes them. He doesn't agree or disagree with what's in them. He writes as if he were being dictated to"; translation from Pessoa, *Selected Prose* 2).
- 6 Since the publication of *Atlantic Poets* in 2003, it has indeed become less and less difficult for English-speaking readers to discover Pessoa. In 2015, an issue of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* devoted to him was introduced by João Cezar de Castro Rocha, the editor-in-chief of the journal:

The title of this issue ["Fernando Pessoa as English Reader and Writer"] ... may intrigue the reader. Does it mean that Patricio Ferrari and Jerónimo Pizarro [the guest editors] are concerned mainly with the reception of the Portuguese author in English-speaking countries? Does it convey the importance of literature written in English in Fernando Pessoa's own works? Does the title stress the overlapping of reading and writing as a key element in understanding the fascination provoked by Pessoa's ... literature? (xi)

It could be said that the title conveys all three meanings interrelatedly, the second and third being the ones privileged in our essay. Plus, the guest editors themselves classify that issue as "the first publication devoted exclusively to Pessoa as an English reader and writer" (Ferrari and Pizarro 4). "Inside the Mask: The English Poetry of Fernando Pessoa," the fall 2016 special issue of *Pessoa Plural: A Journal of Fernando Pessoa Studies*, was "conceived and organized" in the "pioneering spirit" of the October 1977 Brown University International Symposium on Fernando Pessoa and of George Monteiro's "ground breaking *Fernando Pessoa and Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Literature* (2000)" (Ferrari 1-2).⁶ In 2020, Jerónimo Pizarro published *Fernan-*

6. Monteiro had already edited *The Man Who Never Was* (1982), a collection of essays presented at the 1977 symposium.

In *Fernando Pessoa and Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Literature*, he refers to Maria da Encarnação Monteiro, *Incidências Inglesas na Poesia de Fernando Pessoa* (1956) as a "pioneering study" (67).

do Pessoa: A Critical Introduction, in which he sums up his own reading of the Portuguese writer:

I believe Fernando Pessoa was and was not One, No One and a Hundred Thousand. I think that, historically, he was a man who was born in 1888 and died in 1935, and in this period of time he lived many lives; and I think that, literarily, he was One and No One, because he chose to lessen his identity as an author, in order to assume the ones of his characters; and I believe that posthumously he is now one hundred thousand, and maybe millions or hundreds of millions if we take into account, particularly, his massive dimension and presence on the internet. (9)

Jonardon Ganeri's *Virtual Subjects, Fugitive Selves: Fernando Pessoa and His Philosophy* was published in 2020 and deals with what Hamburger had termed the type of modernity built, from Romanticism through modernism, by various poets' critical self-awareness. We can thus be sure that Pessoa, a "forgotten voice in twentieth-century modernism," to quote Ganeri's hyperbolic formula, is "now finally taking his rightful place alongside giants such as C. P. Cavafy [*sic*], Franz Kafka, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Jorge Luis Borges (Ganeri vii). What seems to be currently emerging as a priority is the need for a systematic historical analysis of the unfolding cornucopia of Pessoa studies, in both Portuguese and English, along with a series of specific analyses of the network of interconnected influences on Pessoa. Although much needed, these analyses are still arduous tasks, since his writings in the *Espólio Pessoa*, housed in the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal since 1979, still have to be fully collected, transcribed, dated, contextualized, and translated.

3

- 7 In any case, back in 2003, Santos agreed that there was still much to explore and to discover: "Substantial Pessoa scholarship and critical interpretation in English are not yet abundant" (1). Therefore, her first purpose was "to shed new light on Pessoa's poetry and poetics by placing them in the context of the Anglo-American tradition, with which they have so many affinities, and thus reconfirm his place in the broader context of Western modernism" (3). Our purpose here has to be much more limited. We are not dealing with the affinities between Pessoa's poetry and English Romanticism in general, but focusing upon a single example of how he proved to be a superbly inspired reader of Blake, and of how his readings may work as a kind of key to both the English artist's complex composite creations and the exquisite world of "multiple personality and self-division" (Hamburger 138) that Pessoa himself progressively constructed.

8 It has long been recognized that Pessoa was strongly influenced by “the Elizabethans and the Romantics he so much admired,” as emphasized in Monteiro’s *Fernando Pessoa and Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Literature* (45), which opens with a chapter on Wordsworth, followed by one on Gray and Keats, and a third dealing with Byron; we find Blake’s name merely in a note to the introduction, as the first on a list of poets also deemed advisable to study: “Other nineteenth-century writers who particularly interested Pessoa and are therefore deserving of close study include Blake, Coleridge, Shelley ...” (149n23). Although Pizarro’s *Fernando Pessoa: A Critical Introduction* provides us with particularly suggestive clues as to why Pessoa chose to confront Blake’s influence, Blake is likewise referred to only twice, in both cases in quotations from Pessoa himself. First, in “*The Keeper of Sheep: A Great Portuguese Book of Poems*,” a text written in English on Alberto Caeiro as a perfect representative of “Modern Portuguese poetry”—Caeiro being Pessoa’s heteronym and the author of *O Guardador de Rebanhos* (*The Keeper of Sheep*)—Pessoa says: “He [Caeiro] belongs to a species of poet of which there are only some examples, such as Blake, Whitman, Francis Jammes. But, though possibly he cannot be set besides [*sic*] the first of these—we have, however, no right to compare his one book to Blake’s total work—he certainly possesses the quality of being, though of other species, remarkable too in the shaping of his poetry” (Pizarro 151, 152). Secondly, Blake is pointed out by Pessoa in a letter to an English editor (1916) with respect to the definition of the Portuguese contemporary literary movement known as Saudosismo: “If you can conceive a William Blake put into the soul of Shelley and writing through that, you will perhaps have a nearer idea of what I mean [by Saudosismo]” (Pizarro 180n17).⁷ In fact, the systematic, detailed study or interrelated studies of the interactions between Pessoa and Blake still remain to be done, in spite of an attempt by Patrícia Oliveira Silva in “Fernando Pessoa’s *The Mad Fiddler*: Sensationism in English,” whose abstract reads: “Particular attention is paid to the impact of romantic poets from the pantheist lineage of Shelley and Blake on Pessoa’s emergent poetics and poetry, as well as to the hitherto little-known details of his reception of Blake’s poetry mediated through Yeats” (89). She had previously (publishing as McNeill, 2010) made some references to Blake in her *Yeats and Pessoa: Parallel Poetic Styles*, but she could not have expanded, in either of these works, the study of the extremely complex literary relationships among the triad Pessoa, Yeats, and

7. Santos discusses “saudade” (the noun from which the adjective “saudoso” and the noun “Saudosismo” derive) in connection with her reading of Pessoa’s *Mensagem*, mentioning “its language of unresolved paradoxes, sorrowful tones, and backward-looking nostalgia for the past and forward-looking desire for the future (the feeling best expressed in one word by the Portuguese *saudade*) ...” (106).

Blake, which have yet to be fully detected, organized, and described. The decisive role played by Yeats in Pessoa’s reception of Blake should be neither ignored nor overestimated.⁸

4

9 *Fernando Pessoa e Os Romantismos: Inglês, Francês, Português e Alemão* (*Fernando Pessoa and Romanticism: English, French, Portuguese, and German*, 2019) is Cláudia Franco Souza’s collection of diverse bibliographic specimens that document the strong English Romantic literary influence, among others, on Pessoa since the formative years he spent in Durban. Classified by Hamburger as a transplanté (138-39), he sailed from Lisbon with his mother in January 1896, at the age of seven, to join his stepfather, the Portuguese consul in Durban, a major town in Natal. Natal remained a British colony until 1910, when the Union of South Africa was established. With the interruption of about a year, from August 1901 to September 1902 (owing to his family’s stay in Portugal on extended leave), Pessoa lived and studied in Durban until August 1905, when he returned to Lisbon, never to leave his native country again—a flâneur strolling through his own hometown, his mythical Lisbon. During the Durban years (from ages seven to seventeen), he acquired a perfect command of English language and literature. The extreme complexity and originality of his linguistic and cultural identity are analyzed in Hubert Jennings, *Fernando Pessoa, the Poet with Many Faces: A Biography and Anthology*, written in the early 1970s and finally published in 2019. Jennings records that Pessoa was first enrolled in “the Convent School of St. Joseph’s,” where he stayed for “three years under the gentle Irish nuns,” and afterwards transferred to “Durban High School (DHS) ... a large school for those days, having some two hundred boys ranging in age from 9 to 20” (41). At DHS, he was taught by “young graduates from Oxford or Cambridge” (43). In 1903, he received the “newly instituted ... Queen Victoria Memorial Prize,” given for the best English essay, his being on the Victorian historian and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay; the fifteen-year-old Pessoa, “who during the year had drawn up several lists of ‘books wanted’ with careful calculations of their costs, was now granted the princely sum (to him) of £7 to

8. Pessoa owned *Poems of William Blake*, edited by Yeats (n.d. [1905]), <<https://bibliotecaparticular.casafernandopessoa.pt/8-44>>, and *The Letters of William Blake Together with a Life by Frederick Tatham* (1906), <<https://bibliotecaparticular.casafernandopessoa.pt/8-43>>. Both volumes have been fully digitized as part of the Biblioteca Particular de Fernando Pessoa (Fernando Pessoa Private Library) and can be accessed online and on site at the Casa Fernando Pessoa in Lisbon. English books or books translated into English are preponderant in his private library.

purchase books of his own choice. He chose Keats, Tennyson, Ben Jonson, and Edgar Allan Poe” (47-48).⁹ Those lists included, most probably, the one with his first reference to Blake (illus. 2).

- 10 *Fernando Pessoa e Os Romantismos* collects, for the first time, the very large number of complete and incomplete manuscripts, typescripts, and printed documents—lists of books to read or buy, reading notes from notebooks, literary and theoretical fragments, letters, and published articles—produced by the writer with reference to Romanticism and found by Souza after a thorough investigation in the Espólio Pessoa, supplemented by her research in the Biblioteca Particular de Fernando Pessoa, in *Hemeroteca Digital* (Digital Newspaper and Magazine Archive), and in other bibliographical resources stored in the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal. The documents prove beyond any doubt that Pessoa’s knowledge and understanding of Romanticism in general, and particularly of English Romanticism, were remarkably extensive and deep. Souza’s book is organized around six topics; under the title of the first, “O Romantismo Inglês,” the documents are arranged around the names of the six canonical English male poets, with nineteen on Blake, compared with nine on Wordsworth, eight on Coleridge, thirty on Shelley, fourteen on Byron, and eight on Keats.
- 11 From the documents relating to Blake, we have selected no. 17 (*Fernando Pessoa e Os Romantismos* 80-81) and, from its first page (illus. 3), a most representative passage of Pessoa’s ingenious, well-informed, theoretical, and critical readings of Blake. The document is a manuscript consisting of two pages, titled by Pessoa “elementos da nova poesia portuguesa” (“elements of the new Portuguese poetry”). The well-known difficulties encountered by any editor of Pessoa are explained by Richard Zenith in his “Notes on the Selection, Editing, and Translation” of his edition of Pessoa’s poems: “The majority of Pessoa’s unpublished writings (and he published relatively little) was left in an unfinished state”; his work was of a “rough and fragmentary nature,” and “the handwriting on the manuscripts sometimes verges

9. On the importance of Jennings’s contribution to Pessoa studies, Carlos Pittella, guest editor of the 2015 special Jennings issue of *Pessoa Plural*, declares:

Jennings was born in England in 1896 In 1923, [he] moved to South Africa, where he worked as a teacher at the Durban High School (DHS), the same institution where the young Pessoa had studied while in South Africa. When Jennings was invited to write the history of the DHS, he became interested in the famous Portuguese poet who had attended the school between 1899 and 1904. ... Jennings became one of the first biographers of Fernando Pessoa and one of the first scholars to be interested in both Pessoa’s English and Portuguese poetry (2-3)

on the hieroglyphic” (*A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe* xli-xlii). Confirming beyond any doubt Zenith’s characterization, “elementos da nova poesia portuguesa” is a preparatory note for “A nova poesia portuguesa” (“The New Portuguese Poetry”), a “three-part essay” published in 1912 in *A Águia* (*The Eagle*), which had become “the official journal of Renascença Portuguesa [Portuguese Renaissance], a literary association then just founded in Oporto” (Santos 35). It should be added that as the economic, social, cultural, and political crises had been accumulating in Portugal in the late-nineteenth to early twentieth century, the idea had been germinating in the country that a sorely needed change and renaissance had to be brought to it. This culminated in the assassination of King Carlos I and his son and heir apparent, Prince Luís Filipe, in 1908, and the fall of the constitutional monarchy and the proclamation of the first Portuguese republic in 1910. In this situation, the poet Teixeira de Pascoaes (1877–1952) “believed he was destined to become the philosopher-leader of the cultural reformation of the Portuguese Republic” and was the “main inspirer and spiritual mentor” of the literary association Renascença Portuguesa; as to Pessoa, he too “must have felt the urgency to intervene in the renewal of Portuguese letters” (Santos 35) when, in 1912, he decided to publish “A nova poesia portuguesa” in *A Águia*.

- 12 Although they are neither quoted nor referred to in the published essay, Blake’s poems and poetics—specifically *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*—constitute an obvious influence on “A nova poesia portuguesa,” as a comparative analysis of the published version and its preparatory note, “elementos da nova poesia portuguesa,” attests. At present, we will ponder only a brief, indicative passage from the preparatory note:

A matéria é como que a definição do espírito, mas é espírito: precisamente como o gelo é a definição da água, mas é água. É precisamente, inteiramente assim. Compreender de modo material é compreender de modo baixamente espiritual. A maravilhosa intuição de William Blake: “O corpo é a parte da alma que os sentidos □” é quase □, é mesmo a característica da □ de que William Blake (spiritualist). A matéria é espírito visto irreal. A compreensão material é a espiritual ainda em nebulosa.¹⁰

The note is badly scrambled, a new problem to add to Zenith’s list of difficulties with which editors have to deal. We propose the following translation:

Matter is a sort of definition of spirit, but it is spirit: just like ice is the definition of water, but *it is water*. It is precisely, entirely so. To understand in a material manner is

10. Italics indicate underlined phrases, and □ a blank space in a phrase.

Books.

Aldine Edition of English Poets:- 2/6 net. each.

Akenside;	Perhaps	
Beattie ;	Perhaps	
Blake ;	Perhaps	
Butler (2 vols);	"	
Chatterton (2 vols);	"	
Churchill (2 vols);	"	
Collins;	"	
Ryderson (5 vols);	Z	?
Falconer;	Perhaps	
Gray;	—	
Herbert;	Perhaps	?
Herrick (2 vols);	"	
Kirke White;	"	
Parnell ;	"	
Prior (2 vols);	"	
Raleigh and Wotton ;	"	
Rogers ;	"	
Surrey;	"	
Swift (3 vols);	"	
Vaughan;	"	
Wyatt ;	"	
Younge (2 vols).	"	

2. Fernando Pessoa, "Lista de livros para ler ou adquirir" ("List of books to read or buy"), included in "Caderno de notas de Fernando Pessoa" ("Fernando Pessoa's Notebook"), datable to 1903-04. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal. BNP E3/153-42^v. It is published in Pessoa, *Fernando Pessoa e os Romantismos* 64 and in the Biblioteca Nacional Digital, <<http://purl.pt/13901/1/P102.html>>.

This is a list of poets in the Aldine Edition of the British Poets, which includes *The Poetical Works of William Blake, Lyrical and Miscellaneous*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (1874; 3rd ed., 1880).

to understand in a low spiritual manner. The wonderful intuition of William Blake: “The body is *the portion of the soul* that the senses □” it is almost □, it is the very characteristic of the □ about which William Blake (spiritualist). The matter is spirit seen as unreal. Material understanding is spiritual understanding, but still in nebulous form.

- 13 In this excerpt Pessoa is beginning to develop his definition of the central characteristic of the new poetry that, in his view, was already breaking forth in Portugal—an original, accomplished form of interrelating the two contrary manners of understanding the world around us, the material and the spiritual. The draft undeniably echoes *Marriage*, specifically lines from “The Voice of the Devil,” although they are loosely quoted:

All Bibles or sacred codes. have been the causes of the following Errors.

1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul.

2. That Energy. calld Evil. is alone from the Body. & that Reason. calld Good. is alone from the Soul.

3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True

1 Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld *Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses*. the chief inlets of Soul in this age

2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

3 Energy is Eternal Delight

(*Marriage* 4, E 34; our emphasis)

When we compare these lines with the paragraph from “elementos da nova poesia portuguesa” quoted above, what immediately stands out is the echo of Blake’s first “Contrary” in Pessoa’s truncated quotation from *Marriage*: “The wonderful intuition of William Blake: ‘The body is *the portion of the soul* that the senses □’ it is almost □, it is the very characteristic of the □ about which William Blake (spiritualist).” Though we were able to develop here our first approach to how Pessoa dealt with Blake’s influence on him, included in our chapter for *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, this is only an initial and obvious conclusion from the comparative analysis of the much more complex web of Blakean influences on Pessoa, beginning with Blake’s appearance on his list of works to purchase in 1903–04.

- 14 We would certainly have to enlarge the scope of that analysis to include at least “A nova poesia portuguesa.” The highly intelligent form in which the influence of Blake’s *Marriage* is enmeshed in Pessoa’s essay would make the study even more extended and require far more time and space than we have here. As noted above, the essay is divided into three—“A nova poesia portuguesa sociologicamente

considerada” (“The New Portuguese Poetry Sociologically Considered”), “Reincidindo” (“Relapsing”), and “A nova poesia portuguesa no seu aspecto psicológico” (“The New Portuguese Poetry in Its Psychological Aspect”)—with the first part published in the April 1912 issue of *A Águia*, the second in May, and the third in the September, November, and December issues. We will mention only a relatively brief but telling passage from “A nova poesia portuguesa no seu aspecto psicológico”:

[A nossa nova poesia] ... sendo ao mesmo tempo, e com quase igual intensidade, poesia subjectiva e objectiva, poesia da alma e da natureza, cada um destes elementos penetra o outro; de modo que produz essa estranha e nítida originalidade da nossa actual poesia—a *espiritualização da Natureza* e, ao mesmo tempo, a *materialização do Espírito*, a sua comunhão humilde no Todo, comunhão que é, já não puramente panteísta, mas, por essa citada *espiritualização da Natureza*, superpanteísta, dispersão do ser num exterior que não é *Natureza*, mas *Alma*.

The translation will offer us the opportunity to note the deeply ingrained influence of Blake’s *Marriage*, and particularly “The Voice of the Devil”; unlike in “elementos da nova poesia portuguesa,” its preparatory note, such an influence is never acknowledged by Pessoa in “A nova poesia portuguesa”:

[Our new poetry] ... being at the same time, and with almost equal intensity, subjective and objective poetry, poetry of soul and nature, each of these elements penetrates the other; and in this way that strange and clear originality of our current poetry is produced—the *spiritualization of Nature* and, at the same time, the *materialization of the Spirit*, its humble communion with the Whole, a communion which is no longer purely pantheistic but, because of that aforesaid spiritualization of Nature, super-pantheistic, dispersion of the being in an exterior which is not *Nature*, but *Soul*.

“Jorge Luis Borges said . . . , and this is the greatest eulogy that can be given to anyone: ‘Blake is no one’s contemporary’”

Alexandre Soares (guitarist of Três Tristes Tigres, 2020)

- 15 In 2020, the pop-rock band Três Tristes Tigres released the album *Mínima Luz* (*Minimum Light*), which includes the most recent Portuguese musical adaptation of a poem by Blake—“Tigre”—and the first to be sung in Portuguese.¹¹

11. The song can be heard at <<https://tresttigres.bandcamp.com/track/tigre>>.

Around the time of the 25 April 1974 coup, “The Tyger” was the first of Blake’s poems to be commercially recorded in Portugal, without music and in English (see Sousa and Callixto 197).

The translation of “The Tyger” was created by Regina Guimarães, a visual artist and a poet herself; when we asked where she had seen Blake’s poem, she sent the link to a post on the blog *Chimera Poetry*, where there is a poor reproduction of “The Tyger” (illus. 4) and a transcription of the poem, with no further information. After careful research in the *William Blake Archive*, we were able to identify the reproduction as from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy Z (illus. 5). Given this, the abstractly shaped, intermingling, blurred colors of the album’s cover (illus. 6) may easily lead those with knowledge of Blake’s works to imagine that there is some kind of relationship between that image and “Tigre.” Guimarães had, after all, seen a reproduction of “The Tyger” before translating the poem, and



4. (left) The image of “The Tyger” on the *Chimera Poetry* blog, post of 21 February 2015. <<https://chimerapoetry.wordpress.com/2015/02/21/the-tyger-by-william-blake>>.

5. (right) William Blake, “The Tyger,” *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy Z (composed 1789, 1794; printed 1826). Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. Catalogue no. 1801A. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.



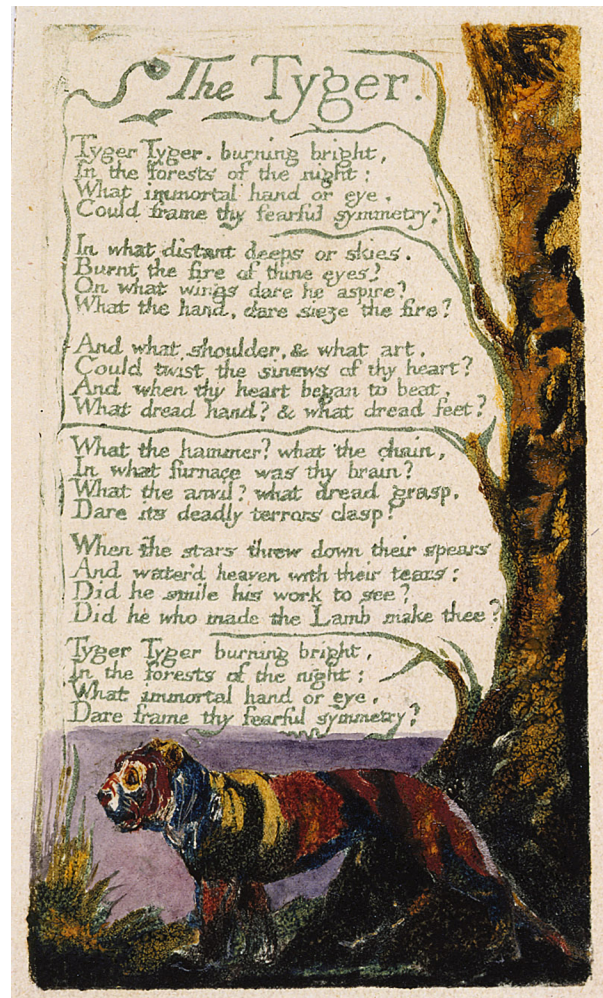
6. Catarina Coelho, cover for *Três Tristes Tigres*, *Minima Luz* (2020).

might have been influenced by its colors, which play an axial performative role in Blake's works:

Because every copy of every Blake book presents a new performance, Blake resists the stasis of mechanistic reproduction through the variations he inscribes via illuminated printing. In *Songs*, those variations occur foremost through the extraordinary palette of colors Blake uses to differentiate the designs of each iteration over a period of thirty-eight years, which range from the soft pastels of *SI* copy I to the rich, intensely vibrant shades of *SIE* copy Z. (Linkin 36)

- 16 Those “rich, intensely vibrant shades of *SIE* copy Z”—although poorly reproduced in the digital image of “The Tyger” seen by Guimarães—may indeed have impressed her; we believe, however, that the equally rich, intensely vibrant, but darker shades of blue, yellow, and ochre and the thick stripes of black on the animal’s body in “The Tyger” from copy T (illus. 7) are the ones that will immediately come to the minds of Blake fans/scholars as they look at the cover of the album. The fact is that Guimarães had nothing whatsoever to do with the cover art; as explained by the band’s vocalist, Ana Deus,¹² the cover is the work of Catarina Coelho, who took an anonymous illustration scrap of the beginning of the world from an old encyclopedia (sent by the singer) and inverted and blurred the image in order to conceive her own depiction of it. This is just another little puzzling coincidence, since “The Tyger” and Blake’s creation myth are inextricable.

12. Information given in a personal communication to João Carlos Callixto.



7. William Blake, “The Tyger,” *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy T (composed 1789, 1794; printed 1789, 1794, 1818). British Museum. 1856.0209.378. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

2

- 17 Before putting the focus on *Três Tristes Tigres*’ adaptation of “The Tyger,” we will briefly characterize the musical context from which the group’s songs stem. Portuguese popular music of the first half of the 1990s appears at the crossroads of mainstream and alternative artists arising in the previous decade; the 1980s brought forth a boom of Portuguese rock, as it was dubbed by the national music industry, with some major international labels, such as PolyGram and CBS, opening offices in Lisbon and signing many Portuguese artists. In the 1960s and 1970s, rock music was already being made in Portugal, with labels like Rádio Triunfo (Radio Triumph), Orfeu (Orpheus), and Valentim de Carvalho releasing a significant number of

records. At that time, “António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970) and his authoritarian regime ... were at last falling apart, and Marcello Caetano (1906–1980) had already been appointed (1968) ... to replace the old dictator”; Caetano’s “first years as President of the Council of Ministers became known as ‘Primavera Marcelista’ (Marcelista spring), a name expressing the hope that dictatorship would yield to a free circulation of fresh, new ideas between Portugal and Europe, and the world at large” (Sousa and Callixto 193–94). One of the peculiarities of the Portuguese recording industry was that, until the mid-1970s, the LP was not a very common format for releasing material, which was usually issued on EPs.¹³ As a result, the first three Portuguese studio albums did not appear until the end of 1969 and the beginning of 1970: *A Peça* (*The Play*, 1969) by Pop Five Music Incorporated; *Epopéia* (*Epic*, 1969) by Filarmonia Fraude (Fraud Philharmonic); and *Quarteto 1111* (1970) by the rock band of the same name. Quarteto 1111 was the only one of these bands to release a second album, after the 25 April 1974 coup.

- 18 The latter half of the 1970s paved the way for the changes that were to occur after 1980, such as the growing number of rock-music adaptations of Portuguese poems and later of some foreign ones, a crucial development that can be traced back to the heyday of psychedelic rock in the late 1960s. Quarteto 1111, led by the singer/songwriter José Cid, adapted medieval, Romantic, and contemporary poems.¹⁴ Subsequently, in 1999, Cid would record “O poeta é um fingidor” (“The Poet Is a Feigner”), his adaptation of Pessoa’s “Autopsicografia” (“Autopsychography,” 1932). As noted in the first part of our essay, Pessoa’s was a long, intricate, although highly successful, process of canonization, partly propelled by the fact that his poems had begun to be set to music by pop-rock bands and singers by the end of the 1960s. In May 1984, the very popular singer António Variações chose Pessoa’s “Canção” (“Song”), originally published in 1924 in the magazine *Folhas de Arte* (*Art Leaves*), and recorded a musical adaptation in his second and last album, *Dar & Receber* (*To Give and to Receive*). In the years since, Pessoa’s have been the most selected poems for musical settings, interpreted by popular singers like the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest winner, Salvador Sobral, or the two internationally best-known fado singers, Ana Moura and Mariza. Indeed, all reductive assumptions about the complex relations between so-called popular and elite types of culture, let alone the opposition between high and low kinds of art, are called into question by Variações’s,

Sobral’s, Moura’s, and Mariza’s songs, which may very well illustrate this observation from Steve Clark and Jason Whittaker’s introduction to *Blake, Modernity and Popular Culture*: “Any simplistic view of popular culture that posits implicit resistance to elite culture is, of course, to be viewed sceptically” (4).

- 19 GNR (New Rock Group) was a band hailing from Porto that gradually built a cult following during the first half of the 1980s, with some of its members working closely with Portuguese artistic and literary avant-garde circles. Alexandre Soares, the guitar player, had previously joined the progressive rockers Pesquisa (Search), a group from the late 1970s. In early 1988, after leaving GNR, he recorded his first solo album, *Um Projecto Global* (*A Global Project*), and thereafter briefly played with Ban, another quite successful pop-rock group from Porto. Finally, with some members of Ban, he founded Zero, which released just one album, in 1992. It was in Ban that two core members of Três Tristes Tigres—Soares and Deus—worked together for the first time. Deus rose to prominence on Ban’s debut album, *Sur-realizar* (*Surrealizing*, 1988). Later, she was given a coauthorship credit for the title song of their third album, *Mundo de Aventuras* (*World of Adventures*), which is still a popular Portuguese radio song today. It was 1990, and Três Tristes Tigres came next in their careers.

3

- 20 The first lineup of Três Tristes Tigres consisted of three female members: Ana Deus, Paula Sousa, and Regina Guimarães. Sousa, a pianist, had her first recording experience in *Antologia da Mulher Poeta Portuguesa* (*Anthology of the Portuguese Female Poet*, 1981), which contained poems from the Renaissance to contemporaneity, read by the renowned actress Eunice Muñoz.¹⁵ In the second half of the 1980s, Sousa had collaborated with Ban too, and afterwards she took part in the first lineup of the experimental electronic pop group Repórter Estrábico (Cockeyed News Reporter). She participated only in Três Tristes Tigres’ first record, but she wrote or cowrote the music for five of its songs. The lyrics of eleven of the fourteen songs were originals by Guimarães; the other three were Portuguese adaptations of songs from the repertoires of Brigitte Fontaine and Greta Garbo. Concerning the band’s name, Deus explained: “The origin of the name has to do with the tongue twister and with the sympathy toward the mammal [the tiger] itself, which was then already endangered. ... It was a

13. LP, long play, most commonly with a twelve-inch diameter; EP, extended play, with a seven-inch diameter and usually four songs.

14. In 2019, Cid was awarded the Latin Grammy for “musical excellence.”

15. Among those poets was Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (1919–2004), the sole Portuguese female writer included by Harold Bloom in appendix D, “The Chaotic Age: A Canonical Prophecy,” to his *The Western Canon* (550).

difficult name to pronounce and therefore it would stick in people's memories."¹⁶

- 21 In their debut album, released in 1993, the song "O Mundo a Meus Pés" ("The World at My Feet") became a mainstream success. There were two more albums—*Guia Espiritual* (*Spiritual Guide*, 1996) and *Comum* (*Common*, 1998)—and then a very long silence until *Mínima Luz* was released in 2020. None of the artists had abandoned the musical scene; they had continued to work together in another group, Osso Vaidoso (Vain Bone). In *Animal*, Osso Vaidoso's 2011 debut album, they sang mainly Guimarães's poems, along with other contemporary Portuguese poems; five years later, *Miopia* (*Myopia*) included two foreign poets, Rainer Maria Rilke and Jesús Lizano. Their way, and that of the pop-rock scene in Portugal, were thus paved for their adaptation of "The Tyger."

- 22 Soares had previously interacted with Blake's poems in very special circumstances. The actress and director Maria Hengge—who had seen him playing live in Lisbon in 2009—invited him to participate in a series of multimedia performances, titled "William Blake Session," in Vienna the next year. Hengge recited from Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, while Soares accompanied her onstage, alongside video artist Miro Mastropasqua. Soares evokes his unique experience: "A curious detail about this project is that, for more than half of the show, I am playing the Portuguese guitar. I tried to find out when the English guitar, which originated 'our' Portuguese guitar, came into Portugal, and concluded that it was about fifteen to twenty years after William Blake's birth. I invented a connection between these two facts, and created all the work based on this delirium of mine." Further asked by João Carlos Callixto about his interest in Blake, he said: "I've always enjoyed William Blake. Jorge Luis Borges said about him, and this is the greatest eulogy that can be given to anyone: 'Blake is no one's contemporary.'"¹⁷

16. "A origem do nome tem a ver com o trava-línguas e com a simpatia animal com o verdadeiro mamífero, que já na altura estava em perigo de extinção. ... Era difícil de dizer e ficaria na memória" (personal communication, 19 July 2020).

17. "Um detalhe curioso é que, em mais de metade do espectáculo, estou a tocar guitarra portuguesa. Fui ver a época em que a guitarra inglesa, que deu origem à 'nossa' guitarra portuguesa, chegou a Portugal, e é cerca de quinze a vinte anos depois do William Blake nascer. Inveniente para mim que havia uma ligação entre as duas coisas, e criei o trabalho baseado neste meu delírio."

"Sempre gostei do William Blake. O Jorge Luis Borges disse dele o maior elogio que, para mim, se pode dizer de alguém: 'O Blake não é contemporâneo de ninguém.'" Both quotations are from personal communication, 20 July 2020.

For more on Hengge's "William Blake Session," see <<https://esel.at/termin/39406/william-blake-session>>.

- 23 The album *Mínima Luz* also includes "À Tona" ("On Top"), a musical adaptation of the poem "Life Is Fine" by Langston Hughes, about whom Maria Popova has declared: "[He] was in a sense the William Blake of his generation—like Blake, he was endowed with a rare poetic genius that incurred merciless ridicule by the era's critics and was often wholly ignored by the public." Guimarães created the Portuguese version of Hughes's poem, as well as that of "The Tyger," both of which were musically adapted by Deus and Soares. According to Deus, in a radio interview with João Carlos Callixto, there was an earlier version of Blake's poem by Guimarães, but the group thought that it did not fit any of their previous albums. When at last they decided that it would be part of their new album, they could not find that first version, and Guimarães had to start all over again.¹⁸

4

- 24 In the introduction to *William Blake and the Digital Humanities*, Roger Whitson and Jason Whittaker briefly reconfigure the definitions of the two tightly interrelated concepts of literary reception and adaptation in terms of flat ontology:

For us, flat ontology reconfigures the hierarchical and epistemological model that dominates reception studies where the author's original expression is compared with his or her adaptation in other contexts and interpreted by the critic. By contrast, we imagine the entity "William Blake" as an ontologically democratic network or society made up of everything from the ideas that inspired Blake to the material objects he used in his artwork, the animals and plants he ate, and the individuals who were influenced by his work. By creating new work, artists who adapt William Blake are actively adding to and transforming his network. (12-13)

Adding to and transforming "the entity 'William Blake' as an ontologically democratic network" is precisely what Guimarães's version of "The Tyger" and its musical adaptation by Deus and Soares have accomplished.¹⁹ This 2020 Portuguese "Tigre" is indeed an inspired and inspiring example of a close musical reading of the poem.²⁰ In ref-

18. For the complete interview (done in Portuguese), see Callixto.

19. According to Whitson and Whittaker, "The Tyger" "is probably second only to 'Jerusalem' in terms of the number of [musical] versions that have been released in the last century" (65).

20. This evokes the adding to and transforming of the Blake network in "Who Be Kind To," a poem by Allen Ginsberg:

While in England with Dylan in 1965, Ginsberg heard Dylan's new song "Gates of Eden," and instantly noted its Blakean title and lyrics, which he drew attention to in his own poem "Who Be Kind To" (1965). In Ginsberg's poem, the music of Dylan and the Beatles is seen as heralding the arrival of the 1960s in Britain, which Ginsberg represents as

erence to our concept of close musical reading, Edward T. Cone offers the best definition that we could possibly find: “To a composer like Schubert, a poem is only raw material. *What he deals with is not the poem but his reading of it.* He appropriates that reading and makes it a component in another work, entirely his own—a larger form created by the musical setting” (20–21; our emphasis).

- 25 Translating from one language and culture into another is basically a question of choice, and Guimarães made truly exemplary choices; she was able to continue to privilege the rhythm of the English poem and simultaneously to keep the strength of its mental images.²¹ Let us compare the first lines:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright, Tigre, Tigre, brilho e brasa
In the forests of the night Que a selva da noite arrasa
 (“The Tyger” 1–2, E 24)

In both cases, the tiger is metaphorically characterized as glowing fire—“burning bright” and “brilho e brasa” (“brightness and ember”)—a violently purifying fire “Que a selva da noite arrasa” (“Which destroys the jungle of the night”), his violence being, in the Portuguese case, hyperbolized through the perfect end rhyme—“brasa” [brazɐ] / “arrasa” [ɐrazɐ].

- 26 The band decided that Deus would start with the second, not the first, quatrain. Moreover, apparently by mistake, the fifth quatrain, which introduces the lamb, was not sung at all, although it had been translated by Guimarães. As such, the song begins not with the characterization of the tiger, but rather with the questions about who his creator is—that is, quatrains 2 and 3 are the first to be sung, followed by quatrain 1, then quatrain 4, and 1 again (as Guimarães didn’t translate quatrain 6 in a different form), quatrain 5 being absent. Nevertheless, it can be said that the lamb is reintroduced into the song through the childlike, wailing voice of Deus as she sings and then repeats quatrain 1, intertwining her voice in an eloquent form with the musical arrangement, which, initially driven by the electric guitar, grows into a hypnotic musical loop that shows the particular use of the synthesizer by Soares. All this confers a most original Blakean character on “Tigre.”

a re-awakening of Blake’s mythical figures of Jerusalem and Albion: “Liverpool Minstrels ... / raise up their joyful voices and guitars in electric Afric hurrah for Jerusalem— / ... and Gates of Eden are named in Albion again.” (Walker 4)

21. For the complete text of the translation, see <<https://www.facebook.com/113755945779016/photos/a.422308678257073/514169049071035/?type=3&theater>>.

- 27 Now that we are coming to the end of this journey through Blake’s reception in Portugal, we wish to remind our readers of Soares’s appraisal of Blake through Borges: “Blake is no one’s contemporary.” Borges’s statement seems to resonate in Pessoa, who wrote about “the problem of celebrity, both occasional and permanent” almost a century ago, in “Erostratus” (c. 1925): “A Blake or a Shelley can never appeal to the generality of any age; they have the beauty of rarities rather than the beauty of perfect things” (BNP E3/19–47–49; Pessoa, *Páginas de Estética* 165, 179). By considering two examples of readings of Blake’s poems and poetic principles—Pessoa’s passage from “elementos da nova poesia portuguesa” and Três Tristes Tigres’ song “Tigre”—we hope to have contributed to exploring (like Clark and Whittaker in *Blake, Modernity and Popular Culture*) “both some of [the] diverse and unpredictable trajectories [of Blake’s works] and the broader issues of the relation of elite and popular culture posed by their reception history” (11).

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