

# Rendering the Formless: Language and Style in *Fausto*

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## Keywords

*Fausto*, Form, Formless, Language, Style, Milton, Shakespeare, Beckett, Bataille, Nietzsche, Flaubert, Eliot.

## Abstract

To use *Fausto's* metaphors, the absence of any “forma” grounded in, or grounding, the intrinsic nature of things entails a situation in which all—mind, matter, self, world—is “informe” (PESSOA, 2018: 181). Pessoa’s struggle—and it is in this, I argue, that the drama of *Fausto* consists—is thus to find forms for the formlessness of the self and the world. The goal of this article is to investigate this paradox at the level of language and style. The ways in which words are used in *Fausto* to in-form the *informe* constitute, paradoxically, Pessoa’s grand style.

## Palavras-chave

*Fausto*, Forma, Informe, Linguagem, Estilo, Milton, Shakespeare, Beckett, Bataille, Nietzsche, Flaubert, Eliot

## Resumo

Para usar as metáforas de *Fausto*, a ausência de alguma “forma” fundamentada em, ou fundamentando, a natureza intrínseca das coisas conduz a uma situação em que tudo – mente, matéria, eu, mundo – é “informe” (PESSOA, 2018: 181). A luta de Pessoa – e é nisto, argumento, que o drama de *Fausto* consiste – é assim encontrar formas para o informe do eu e do mundo. O objetivo deste artigo é investigar este paradoxo ao nível da linguagem e do estilo. Os modos em que as palavras são usadas em *Fausto* para in-formar o *informe* constitui, paradoxalmente, o estilo grandioso de Pessoa.

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*Fausto* presents the spectacle of a consciousness tortured over the questions, “*Porque ha? Porque ha um universo? | Porque é um universo que é este? | Porque é assim composto o universo?*” (PESSOA, 2018: 238) [Why is there? Why is there a universe? | Why is it this universe? | Why is the universe composed thus?]. These are variations on what Heidegger called the first question of metaphysics: “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” (2000: 1). The question asks why reality should have this substance and structure in the first place, what its most fundamental and essential cause is. Like every serious “Why?”, it strives to reach a ground, a reason upon which to establish a position. In his searching, *Fausto* can find no ground that is truly originary but instead encounters an abyss at every turn. He invokes only to dismiss, or travesty, the “formulas” laid down by Western philosophy and Catholic theology, even as he recognizes their popular necessity (93). If beings as such and as a whole have no foundation, then neither generically do they have intrinsic natures, so that a duplicate abyss separates *Fausto* from himself and from the world. For no correspondence can obtain between his desires and the essential core of the human self, and between his beliefs and the essential core of nonhuman reality, if such cores do not exist; and so is widened the subject-object split.

To use *Fausto’s* metaphors, the absence of any “forma” grounded in, or grounding, the intrinsic nature of things entails a situation in which all—mind, matter, self, world—is “informe” (PESSOA, 2018: 181). And if language is a medium for both expression (articulating what lies deep within the self) and representation (showing the self what lies outside it), then language, in consequence, also must be “formless,” meaning inadequate to either task. But a language in which form matches content can, by its very formlessness, properly express or represent the formless. Such isomorphism follows the Sensationist principle that expression is conditioned by the emotion to be expressed (see PESSOA, 2009: 166-167, 185). Pessoa’s struggle—and it is in this, I argue, that the drama of *Fausto* consists—is thus to find forms for the formlessness of the self and the world. The goal of this article is to investigate this paradox at the level of language and style.

I begin by contextualizing Pessoa’s conception of the formless in relation to those of Beckett and Bataille in order to reveal the poet’s participation in the broader modernist questioning of the viability and validity of form. Next, I examine how *Fausto* dramatizes a situation of partial or incomplete change in language games, as one description of the world, figured as the signature of creation, loses currency and no new description of the world is available yet to take its place. To understand this situation, I draw on American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty’s discussion of changes from one cultural vocabulary to another, as well as Nietzsche’s writings on the decay of conceptual metaphors. I then move into an analysis of Pessoa’s use, if not invention, of a forced language capable of rendering the abyss of being, knowing, and personal identity. I interpret Pessoa’s

stylistic techniques as metaphors for this double formlessness (linguistic and metaphysical). These techniques consist of a complex vocabulary, complicated grammatical constructions, allusions, extended similes, and repeated images. Such devices dovetail in many respects with Milton's "grand style" in *Paradise Lost*—understandably so, as Pessoa seeks to elevate his language in keeping with his lofty theme.<sup>1</sup> The ways in which words are used in *Fausto* to in-form the *informe* constitute, paradoxically, Pessoa's grand style.

Art is about form. Visual shape is a metaphor for conceptual form. But in the course of the twentieth century, the very notion of form becomes suspect (SCHA, 2006). Consider Georges Bataille's article on "L'informe" ("Formless") in the "critical dictionary" published in the dissident Surrealist journal *Documents*:

A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.

(BATAILLE, 1985: 31)

The undervaluing of all things formless has its root in philosophies that posit an ideal form of things and, in so doing, privilege form over matter. Take Platonic philosophy, Bataille's *bête noire*. In his "Analogy of the Divided Line", in Book VI of *The Republic*, Plato argues that the relationship between the visible and intelligible worlds parallels the one between reflections of physical things and physical things themselves. The world of Ideas (Forms) is eternal and more real, just as the kind of knowledge that corresponds to it, mathematical reasoning and philosophical understanding, is truer than the kind of knowledge that corresponds to the physical world. Hypothesis-driven dialectic aims to progress through knowledge of the forms to the first principle of them all, the Form of the Good. Artistic form is thus always already implicated in the theory of Forms, so that any endorsement of the formless carries an anti-Platonic agenda, a repudiation of the eternal, the real, the true, and the good.

Bataille, in particular, promotes a "base materialism" irreducible to ontology as an antidote to his era's persistent idealism. This program involves submitting oneself and one's reason to matter, understood not as physical

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<sup>1</sup> The style of *Paradise Lost* has been much debated. Detractors like ELIOT (1975) argue that Milton's involved syntax sacrifices sense to sound. Defenders like Christopher RICKS (1963) argue that such complications succeed at combining grandeur with delicacy and have their justification in the demands of decorum. My idea for and analysis of Pessoa's grand style owe a debt to Ricks' seminal work. See also LEWIS (1969) for his defense of Milton's style.

phenomena but as psychological or social facts so “low” that they resist against any attempt to elevate them into a superior principle (BATAILLE, 1985: 50). Examples include the two longer entries on spittle (“Crachat-d’âme” by Marcel Griaule and “L’eau à la bouche” by Michel Leiris) that immediately precede Bataille’s article on “L’informe.” In “Crachat-d’âme” (“Spittle-Soul”), GRIAULE draws on anthropology to show that spittle is more than the product of a gland: “Saliva is the soul distilled; spittle is soul in movement [...] To summarize: from evil will to good will, from insult to miracle, spittle behaves like the soul—balm or filth” (1995: 79). The juxtaposition of spittle and soul displaces the notion of the latter as the essence of the self. Spittle offers a parody of the soul, one too filthy to replace it in metaphysical considerations as the form of the body, the very idea of which the parody undermines. Bataille’s claim that “affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit” now gains clarity. Its juxtaposition with “Crachat-d’âme” satirizes the structure of nonhuman reality, along with the nature of the human species, as an academic construct no less redolent of magical thinking than the “spittle-soul” with which it is compared. Absent a metaphysical understanding of it, the universe hangs formless as spit. Something of this spittle-universe is present in Pessoa’s image of “o espaço sem mais nada | Que, se eu cuspir para elle, deixará | O que cuspi cahir em mim” (2018: 242).

Such base materialism, of course, differs greatly from the nihilism (really, idealism *manqué*) of *Fausto*. The Portuguese Decadent, operating out of a very different context—namely, at the intersection of *fin de siècle* pessimism and Sensationist fervor—does not share the French avant-gardist’s destructive aim. And where *o informe* in *Fausto* manifests itself at the level of language, Bataille’s conception of *l’informe* takes modernist art as its paradigm. As Bataille says elsewhere, “today certain plastic representations are the expression of an intransigent materialism, of a recourse to everything that compromises the powers that be in matters of form, ridiculing the traditional entities, naively rivaling stupefying scarecrows” (1985: 51). Duchamp’s ready-mades illustrate the kind of artistic formlessness that Bataille may have had in mind; for example, the porcelain urinal that the Dadaist signed “R. Mutt,” titled *Fountain*, and submitted for a 1917 exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists. These machine-made, mass-produced found objects subvert the “traditional entities” of Artist (origin of the artwork), Artwork (unique, hand-made, organic), and Art (beautiful, uplifting, useless, disinterested, universal, necessary, purposive), as well as disrupt established modes of producing, exhibiting, and consuming art. But Pessoa and Bataille agree that the rejection of idealism entails a devaluation of artistic form in favor of a formlessness that it is the task of art to pursue.

Another modernist who shared this view was Samuel Beckett, who articulated his distrust of form in *Three Dialogues*. This discussion with an art critic

about the nature of contemporary art doubles as a commentary on his thinking about his own literature. Beckett proposed a withdrawal from the modernist competition with reality given the crisis in representation he characterized as an “incoercible absence of relation” (1965: 125) between “the artist and his occasion” (1965: 124), or between artwork and world. He famously recommended that painting should instead strive toward “The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express” (1965: 103). Beckett fulfilled this impossible obligation in his own work by a great variety of means, including fiction that draws attention to its status as an artifact; fiction that treats words as the only reality; generic formlessness; bodiless voices; voiceless bodies; silence; negation; distorted syntax; verbal fragmentation; verbal permutation; paradox. As the eponymous character in his novel *Malone Dies* says, in an ironic inversion of Platonism that makes explicit the link between literary and metaphysical formlessness, “The forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief from its formlessness” (2010: 17).

A sustained comparison of these many forms with the radical experiments with language and structure in *Fausto* and other of Pessoa’s works merits separate examination. In fact, the multiple convergences between Beckett’s constant aspiration to nothingness and Pessoa’s ethics and aesthetics of abdication, underpinned as they both are by ideas of non-being, demand serious scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup> Suffice it here to observe that Beckett’s project grows out of the conundrum presented when one must express although expression is judged impossible, and that the same productive tension between the necessity and the futility of expression animates much of *Fausto*. In fact, *Fausto* in his soliloquies resembles nothing so much as Beckett’s loquacious monologists: both are less verisimilar characters than they are denuded voices howling in the void. Metaphysical groundlessness, even as it moots all possibility of enunciation, does not stop *Fausto* from waxing volubly about this groundlessness, about the impossibility of enunciating. Indeed, it drives him in repeated monologues precisely to try to “say” (“dizer”) the unsayable, to attempt a name for the “Unnameable” (“Innominaveis”) (PESSOA, 2018: 70, 71). There are, of course, important differences, chiefly, *Fausto*’s eloquence (however hampered by linguistic difficulty), as compared with Beckett’s less articulate speakers, along with his character as a vehicle for ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Beckett’s remarks make clear that the very notion of form assumes a stable relation between “representer and representee” (1965: 125), so that in proportion as the relation frays form becomes suspect. Put differently, insofar as the relation

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<sup>2</sup> Aino RINHAUG (2008) makes a good start in this direction.

<sup>3</sup> Eduardo LOURENÇO refers to *Fausto*’s *dramatis personae* as “ideias-personagens ou personagens-ideias” (1988: 74).

between word and world unravels, formlessness throws down its gauntlet. Beckett takes up the challenge with a project doomed to failure since it is impossible to speak of silence, to communicate incommunicability. In *Fausto*, Pessoa, too, dares to fail, and in this venture roundly succeeds, with the difference that he attempts to describe the particular indescribability of the self and the universe. The forms for the formless that Beckett and Pessoa find more or less mirror the impossible feat of creating something out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). By nothing, I mean their shared repudiation of the idea that anything—mind or matter, self or world—has an intrinsic nature to be expressed or represented.

Yet, whereas Beckett's works break cleanly with this idea, *Fausto's* anti-essentialism is qualified by regret. Discussion of the formlessness peculiar to the drama is thus necessary before turning to Pessoa's attempts at giving it linguistic form. According to RORTY, "About two hundred years ago, the idea that truth was made rather than found began to take hold of the imagination of Europe" (1999: 3). A purely negative drama, *Fausto* depicts the horror experienced by the protagonist as the full implications of the idea that truth is not found sink in—without the relief offered by the idea that truth is instead made. Rorty continues:

To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. Truth cannot be out there—cannot exist independently of the human mind—because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. [...]

The suggestion that truth, as well as the world, is out there is a legacy of an age in which the world was seen as the creation of a being who had a language of his own.

(1999: 5)

Nostalgia for this age,<sup>4</sup> in which "the world split itself up, on its own initiative, into sentence-shaped chunks called 'facts'" (1999: 5), permeates *Fausto*: "Sempre | Me foi a alma, ao ver a exterior | Variedade monotona do mundo, | Para vêr em cada coisa o abstracto objecto | No seu mysterioso alli-local de ser" (PESSOA, 2018: 61) [Always | My soul went out, upon seeing the external | Monotonous variety of the world, | To see in each thing the abstract object | In its mysterious local-there of being]. Where a trace of this world persists in Joyce's *Ulysses*—"Signatures of all things I am here to read," Stephen thinks while walking on Sandymount Strand (JOYCE, 1993: 3)—only dim memories remain in *Fausto*; hence the drama's elegiac character, as *Fausto* mourns the passing of a golden era. The Book of Nature has become illegible, "o livro de horror do mundo" (PESSOA, 2018: 197) [the book of horror of the world]. The horror of its illegibility cannot be stressed enough: "Objectos mudos | Que pareceis sorrir-me horridadmente | Só com essa existencia

<sup>4</sup> FOUCAULT (1989) identifies this age with the episteme of the pre-Classical period (the later Middle ages and Renaissance up to the end of the sixteenth century), in which Western knowledge was constructed on the basis of resemblance.

e estar-*alli*, | Odeio-vos de horror” (PESSOA, 2018: 70) [Mute objects | That seem to smile at me horribly | Simply with that existence and being-there, | I hate you out of horror]. Essence (“*alli-local de ser*”) has yielded priority to “*existencia*” (“*estar-alli*”). This applies as much to natural things, the setting sun and the verdurous mountain, as to those man-made, such as the “*cousas simples*” [simple things] in his room that Fausto can no longer bear to look at (PESSOA, 2018: 71). Yet, even as he agonizes over the speechlessness of the world, Fausto clings to the idea of a nonhuman language that expresses a truth identical either with God or with the world as God’s project:

As pedras em que eu piso, as casas brancas,  
Os homens, o convívio humano, a história,  
.....  
Tudo não traz consigo a explicação  
De existir, nem tem boca com que fale.

Porque razão não raia o sol dizendo  
O que é?

(PESSOA, 2018: 238)

[The stones I step on, the white houses,  
Mankind, relationships, history,  
.....  
All does not bring with it the explanation  
Of existing, nor has a mouth with which to speak.

Why doesn’t the sun shine saying  
What it is?]

Fausto stubbornly insists that each thing body forth its essence.

Montanhas, solidões, objectos todos,  
Ainda que assim eu tenha de morrer,  
Revelae-me a vossa alma, isso que faz  
Que se me gele a mente ao perceber  
Que realmente existis e em verdade,  
Que sois facto, existencia, cousa, ser.

(PESSOA, 2018: 317)

[Mountains, solitudes, objects all,  
Even at the cost of death,  
Reveal to me your soul, that which makes  
My mind freeze upon perceiving  
That you really, in truth, exist,  
That you are fact, existence, thing, being.]

Fausto remains stuck in the belief that descriptions of the world are—or should be—out there. He continues to think of the world, and the human self, as

possessing an intrinsic nature, an essence, that both world and self now strangely withhold. Fausto has yet to discover, with RORTY, that the world does not speak, only we do; that “languages are made rather than found, and truth is a property of linguistic entities, of sentences” (1999: 7). Rorty urges us to abandon the traditional philosophical search for a criterion that would tell us which vocabulary fits the world or expresses the real nature of the self. Indeed, the change from one language game to another does not occur by means of criteria or choice, he argues. Rather, the habit of using certain words gradually yields to the habit of using others, which offer a more useful way of describing the world and the self, not a more adequate one. *Fausto* dramatizes just such a moment of cultural change, except that the language game that has fallen into disuse has yet to be replaced by a new way of speaking, with the result that the protagonist finds himself linguistically bereft. Put differently, Fausto’s customary idiom, and the interlocked theses it took for granted, have lost their purchase, and no new idiom is available to relieve him of the formlessness that ensues. Note how the vocabulary, “Vida, l Ideia, Essencia, Transcendencia, Ser,” in the following passage is capitalized to indicate its desuetude; the words, as if put in quotation marks, are mentioned rather than used:

Tudo o que toma fôrma ou illusão  
 De fôrma nas palavras não consegue  
 Dar-me sequer, cerrado em mim o olhar  
 Do pensamento, a illusão de ser  
 Uma expressão d’isso que não se exprime,  
 Nem por dizer que não se exprime. Vida,  
 Ideia, Essencia, Transcendencia, Ser,  
 .....  
 Nem pelo horror dêsse impossivel deixa  
 Transvêr sombra ou lembrança do *que é*.

(PESSOA, 2018: 131)

[All that takes form or the illusion  
 Of form in words does not manage  
 To give me so much as, the eyes of the mind closed  
 Within me, the illusion of being  
 An expression of that which is not expressed,  
 Not even to say that it is not expressed. Life,  
 Idea, Essence, Transcendence, Being,  
 .....  
 Not even through that impossible horror does it afford  
 A glimpse of the shadow or remembrance of *what it is*.]

In fact, a number of words throughout *Fausto* are capitalized to mark their fading currency, and at least one word is actually put in quotation marks: “‘Existencia’” (PESSOA, 2018: 50). One way to describe this situation is to remark on the prominence of what JAKOBSON (1997) called the metalingual or reflexive function,



the use of language to discuss or describe itself. In his frequent questioning of basic terms, Fausto is trying to establish mutual agreement (with himself) on the code.

Nietzsche offers an alternative way of understanding the linguistic obsolescence dramatized above. In fact, his perspective “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” deeply informs this passage, as well as the work as a whole. What Rorty considers a change in language games Nietzsche interprets as the replenishment of metaphors. According to NIETZSCHE, “Truths are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they are illusions, worn-out metaphors without sensory impact, coins which have lost their image and now can be used only as metal, and no longer as coins” (1989: 251). Words do not name our primary experience of reality but the conceptual substitutes for countless unique and individual perceptions. Concepts gain in utility what they lose in vividness until, all vividness gone, they lose their usefulness along with it to become the “sepulcher” of perceptions (NIETZSCHE, 1989: 254). If we think of the world in terms of conceptual metaphors, the sensuousness of “Vida,” “Ideia,” “Essencia,” and so forth has given way to abstraction; owing to overuse, these words no longer give the illusion of naming things themselves. To replace these dead metaphors, new metaphors of reality must again be minted. But Fausto is not up to the poet’s task; heroic enterprise forms no part of this subjective tragedy. All he can do is finger these coins that have lost their image and lament his lot. Of course, that is not entirely true. He can coin purposely abstract metaphors for the metaphysical formlessness that assails him. He can find rhetorical and linguistic forms that have no form—the drama consists in the struggle to do so—by these means his author endows him with grandeur. It should be noted that the passage above poses a modification to Nietzsche’s claim that the illusory nature of the truth gets forgotten as its original image fades. Rather, in *Fausto*, the linguistic “fórma” having dulled from habit, the “illusão” that it once provided now stands exposed. Illusion expires as the concept loses all residue of metaphor; hence the need for new metaphors of perception.

Compounding the joint problem of lapsed language and intelligibility is the turbulence of Fausto’s thoughts and feelings. This is to say that the formlessness with which he struggles is really triple in nature: linguistic, metaphysical, and psychological. His “Tumultuarias | Ideias mixtas,” the “vãs desorganizações” of his childhood memories (PESSOA, 2018: 76), his “esvaida confusão nocturna” (70), his “surda | Nocturna confusão agglomerada | De □ e porções de pensamento” (126), his “atropellamento do sentir” (147) receive repeated emphasis throughout the text [Tumultuous mixed ideas, vain disorganizations, dissipated nocturnal confusion, deaf | Nocturnal agglomerated confusion | Of □ and portions of thought]. Fausto’s agitated state has its origins in the social and economic transformations that Pessoa, in his writings on Sensationism, diagnosed as the cause of the “tensão nervosa” [nervous tension] common to his generation (2009:

186). If emotion shapes its expression, only “o mais avançado desarticulamento de linguagem logica,” characteristic of *Orpheu*, can mirror the “hyperexcitação” that historically situates the protagonist of a drama otherwise studiously abstracted from its milieu (PESSOA, 2009: 185, 186). At the same time, such dislocation of language and logic, intended to reflect the sensory and psychological jangling induced by modernization, must not conflict, must somehow jibe, with the elevated subject-matter of the Faustian tragedy. On the one hand, the poet must force language into his meaning; as Fausto says, “A expressão | Fez-se para o vulgar, para o banal; | A poesia torce-a e dilacera-a” (PESSOA, 2018: 318) [Expression is made for the vulgar, for the banal; | Poetry twists and tears it].<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the poet must yet maintain a lofty tone. Both desiderata call for a language that deviates from common usage. To meet this paradoxical challenge Pessoa creates a gnarled grand style, adapted from *Paradise Lost*.

That the style of a nihilistic drama should intersect with that of a Puritan epic, that a work considered by Pessoa to be “perfectly ordered and constructed” would suggest a form for the formless, obeys a hidden logic (*apud* ANTUNES, 2016: 61). First, consumed with the “orgulho atro” [atrocious pride] of the “voraz pensador” [voracious thinker], despair at his auto- and ontic exile, revolt against his originating cause, envy of unconscious humanity, and terror of the void, Pessoa’s Fausto is a close analogue of Milton’s Satan, proud of his angelic supremacy, revolutionary from the first, despairing over his banishment from heaven, envious of his maker’s throne, fearful of further punishment (PESSOA, 2018: 37, 56). Both are apes of God. A Promethean grandeur links them; even more does their experience of consciousness as hell. Second, where *Fausto* travesties Christianity, *Paradise Lost* omits it. As Pessoa once said, echoing a common Romantic idea, Milton “was an Arian, his form of Christianity being the absence of Christianity. (His vast learning and experience of the learnt has put everything into his Christian epic; the only thing left out was Christ. Has anyone ever felt Christian after reading ‘Paradise Lost?’)” (1967: 210). Third, according to C. S. LEWIS, the style of *Paradise Lost* arose as a solution to the problem of achieving solemnity without the formality of setting that the original recited epics enjoyed (1969: 40). Similarly, *Fausto*’s style arises as a solution to the problem of achieving solemnity without the linguistic and conceptual forms that earlier versions of the drama took for granted. In each work, then, the style is artificial but has its rationale.

Six things produce the grandeur of Milton’s style: complex vocabulary, complicated grammatical constructions, allusions, extended similes, and repeated

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<sup>5</sup> Eliot believed that English poetry since the time of Milton had suffered a “dissociation of sensibility” (1975: 64), a divorce between thought and feeling. In order to combat this, the modern poet “must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning” (1975: 65). Although arising out of a very different context, one beset by its own linguistic and cultural malaise, Fausto’s grand style bears much in common with the kind of “difficult” poetry Eliot is calling for (1975: 65).

images. Pessoa adapts the same means to a twofold end: not just achieving sublimity but also giving form to the formless. What follows is not a comparison of the overlapping styles, but a close analysis of *Fausto's* style alone; more specifically, of Fausto's way of speaking, as his fellow characters tend to a more simplified expression.

The first aspect of *Fausto's* style that readers might notice is its complex vocabulary. This includes neologisms formed by:

- a prefix:
  - *ante*: “Antegrito” (144) [Pre-shout]
  - *des*: “descompreendo” (317) [discomprehend]
  - *trans*: “transvêr” (131), “transsentidos” (82) [trans-see, trans-senses]
  - *super*: “supervistos” (61) [super-seen]
  - *sobre*: “sobrenada” (119) [over-nothing]
- a suffix:
  - *mente*:
    - the transformation of an adjective into an adverb: “negramente” (118, 120), “Tummultuariamente” (147) [blackly, tumultuously]
    - the transformation of a past participle into an adverb: “ennuviadamente” (68) [cloudily]
- the transformation of a noun into a reflexive verb: “Deus inconsciencando-se” (37) [God shedding his consciousness]
- the transformation of a non-reflexive into a reflexive verb: “Soluços qu'rendo-se a si esquecer” (48), “dessentir-se” (123) [Sobs wanting to forget themselves]
- the transformation of a direct transitive verb into a verb both direct and indirect: “sou mais real que o mundo | Por isso odeio-lhe a existencia enorme | O seu amontoar de cousas vistas” (37; italics mine) [I am more real than the world | That's why I hate its enormous existence | Its pile of seen things]
- the verbalization of a noun: “nada-me uma dôr” (82) [a pain nothings me]
- the verbalization of a noun and the use of its past participle as an adjective: “abysmado” (186) [abyssed]
- a transitivized verb: “minha vida que morri” (242) [my life that I died]
- compound words: “não-real,” “não-alli” (37), “alli-local” (61), “estar-alli” (70), “não-pense” (246) [not-real, not-there, local-there, being-there, not-think]
- Latin loanword: “mensurante” (198) [mensurate]
- English loanwords: “fells him” (159) [mata-lo]

While all of these neologisms serve to lasso the formless (as well as lift the tone), the link between the two is more evident in some coinages than in others. The use of the negative prefix *des-*, beyond the single neologism, is common throughout the text, e.g., “deslembrados” (82), “desfeitas” (113), “dessentir-se” (123) [disremembered, unmade, lose himself]. Like the prefix *ir-*, e.g., “irrequieto” [unquiet] (100), the prefix *des-* helps convey the protagonist’s relentless negativity. The use of *trans-*, meaning “across,” suggests (failed) attempts to span the abysses that throughout the drama displace all grounds. The transformation of both nouns and non-reflexive verbs into verbs whose direct objects are the same as their subjects mirrors the reflexive character of Fausto’s thought about thought and language about language. The compound terms “*não-alli*,” “*alli-local*,” and “*estar-alli*” make deictic use of a place-word (“*alli*”), an empty vehicle of “*deixis*” or reference to the context of the enunciation, whose meaning and content vary depending on the place.<sup>6</sup> The problem is that the context omits to specify the place, and as a result the vehicle remains devoid of meaning. *Deixis* is activated only to be disabled: a word is used whose meaning depends on a context so contrived as to withhold that meaning. Since the compound terms are used to refer to the essences of things, their tactical deployment illustrates the point that *Fausto* takes repeated pains to make: the property or set of properties that supposedly make an entity what it fundamentally is, are, in fact, “*não-alli*.” Thus skillfully does Pessoa here achieve a form for the formlessness of beings.

For all of its neologistic expansion of verbal resources, *Fausto* makes repeated use of a limited lexicon. Paired terms—e.g., *verdade / erro*, *conhecer / ignorar*, *compreensão / incompreensão*, *consciencia / inconsciencia* [truth / error, know / ignore, comprehension / incomprehension, consciousness / unconsciousness]—recur throughout the text. That they form antinomies crucial to the drama’s meaning suffices to justify their frequent usage.<sup>7</sup> But this explanation does not account for the repetition of descriptive words, such as *abysmo*, *vacuidade*, *vazio*, *terror*, *horror*, *arrepio*, *pavor*, *suffocação*, *solidão*, *fundo*, *confrangido*, *transcendente*, *infinito* [abyss, vacuity, empty, terror, horror, fright, dread, suffocation, solitude, bottom, tormented, transcendent, infinite]. This repetition has its roots, rather, in verbal impoverishment, as Fausto operates within the constraints imposed by his linguistic predicament. Further justification derives from the obsessiveness of Fausto’s meditations, their recurrence to the same pool of nihilistic themes, the recursive structure of the drama itself. This structure is, no doubt, partly determined by the “*eterna viagem*” [eternal voyage] of thought in pursuit of the question of Being—a reimagining of Nietzsche’s eternal return—which, in the absence of convincing answers, the protagonist considers an “*eterno erro*” (PESSOA, 2018: 257) [eternal error]. Verbal repetition reaches its most condensed form in the

<sup>6</sup> See JAMESON (2012: 19) for a capsule discussion of *deixis*.

<sup>7</sup> See GUSMÃO, *O Poema Impossível* (1986: 50-86), for an analysis of these antinomies.

lines, “Fora Deus Deus, Deus”<sup>8</sup> (247) [Were God God, God] and “Mais, mais e mais” (123) [More, more and more].

Yet further rationale comes from *Fausto’s* meticulous catalogue of metaphysical horrors. That each horror is a subtle shading or entailment of the other explains why repetition often takes the form of lexical permutation within a stanza:

Desde que despertei para a consciencia  
Do abysmo da morte que me cerca,  
Não mais ri nem chorei, porque passei  
Na monstruosidade do soffrer  
Muito alem da loucura, ou da que ri  
Ou da que chora monstruosamente  
Consciente de tudo e da consciencia  
Que de tudo horriavelmente tenho.

(PESSOA, 2018: 130)

[Since awakening to consciousness  
Of the abyss of death that surrounds me,  
I no longer laugh nor cry, because I passed  
Through the monstrosity of suffering  
Far beyond madness, whether that which laughs  
Or that which cries monstrously  
Conscious of all and of the consciousness  
That of everything I horrifically have.]

Note the (near-)repetition of *ri / ri, chorei / chora, monstruosidade / monstruosamente, consciencia / Consciente / consciencia, tudo / tudo* [laughed / laughs, cried / cries, monstrosity / monstrously, consciousness / Conscious / consciousness]. To focus on just the last two lines, permutation wrings nuanced meanings from the key words “Consciente” and “consciencia.” Conscious of all, Fausto also has consciousness of this consciousness. The lexical repetition-with-a-difference anticipates the infinite series of Fausto’s inner observers, even as the lines’ chiasmic structure mirrors the *mise en abyme*. The infinite regress of Fausto’s consciousness is but one type of infinite regress in *Fausto*, a drama that negates the existence of first principles (even as it threatens to make the negation itself into a first principle) and takes as its baseline, “o abysmo é abysmo num abysmo” (PESSOA, 2018: 245) [the abyss is an abyss in an abyss]. Infinite regress infects not only consciousness but also cosmology (the universe is infinite, with infinite worlds), knowing (an infinity of middles separates subject from predicate, rendering *saber* impossible), and being (every being is a dependent being whose existence was caused by another dependent being, with no self-existent being to anchor the chain). The point is that in lexical permutation Pessoa finds a form for rendering infinite regress.

<sup>8</sup> Note the subtly different meanings of the three identical terms.

And yet, the chief reason for *Fausto's* verbal repetition lies in Pessoa's identification of poetry with the verbal behavior that fin-de-siècle medical discourse associated with madness. Pessoa's identification of the two built on Max Nordau's psychiatric diagnoses of Decadent literature. Nordau's interpretive approach suggested, or reinforced, the links that Pessoa drew between poetry in general and the paranomasia that Lombroso and others at the time were finding typical of madness. Two linkages must be clearly distinguished here: first is the disciplinary identification of madness with certain verbal activity; second is Pessoa's identification of poetry with madness, on the basis of their common verbal activity. Several entries in *Escritos sobre Génio e Loucura* (2006) show PESSOA noting or making these two linkages. In one entry, he writes, "Expressions proving the morbid, punning [. . .] nature of poetry," in connection with which he cites both Lombroso and Paulhan (2006: I, 104). Verses from Byron and Tennyson containing what I have called lexical permutation (*names / name, unconsumed / consuming, streams / stream, ruin / ruins, human / man*) exemplify "puns and inanities, such as may be seen in those poems of madmen" (2006: I, 75). The "echoing" of *distinct / distant* reminds Pessoa of the echolalia symptomatic of degeneration (2006: I, 75). He views alliteration in the same light. "Poetry," he writes, "expresses states of mind which cannot be expressed in normal language" (2006: I, 77). Lest poetry appear as "nonsense," the words must be understood in their "spiritual," as opposed to "rational," sense (2006: I, 76). Fausto is, of course, unsound, a man addled to the extreme by the upheavals of modernity; it is only fitting that he speak in the punning, paranomastic, alliterative, echolalic way that madmen do or were thought to do. And yet, this is the same way that poets speak. Thus, in the many cases of verbal repetition in *Fausto*, Pessoa exploits the links between poetry and madness both to portray the protagonist's disordered mind and to depict him as the poet he is. Again, Pessoa finds a form for the (psychologically) formless.

Inventive verbal strategies continue. Oxymoron pillories the law of identity, in keeping with this law's systematic contradiction in *Fausto*. Where each thing is not identical to itself, the protagonist understandably feels "diferentemente o mesmo" (PESSOA, 2018: 119) [differently the same]. Only a drama that regards being and non-being as one and the same can accommodate "a forma informe" (189) [the formless form]. Oxymoron captures this alterity that Pessoa posits in place of identity. JAKOBSON'S (1973) famous account of the function of oxymoron in Pessoa bears comparison. Focusing his analysis on "Ulysses," Jakobson discovers an oxymoronic pattern at every structural level, from the metrical to the morphological, and relates this pattern to the poem's "dialectical" [dialectique] understanding of myth, in order to reveal Pessoa as indeed the poet of construction he claimed to be (463). Like Jakobson, I locate the meaning of *Fausto* in its linguistic properties and regard oxymoron as the drama's dominant figure. My method owes an obvious debt to Jakobson's stylistic analysis. But three differences

distinguish my work from Jakobson's. First, in *Fausto*, the figure of the oxymoron eschews the dialectical to reinforce the themes of alterity and negation. Second, I do not isolate the unit of analysis but rather situate the work in its broader aesthetic and philosophical context. Third, driven by his notion of poetry as combining and integrating form and function, Jakobson's approach privileges poems that exhibit "form," that is, the kinds of linguistic symmetry that he is so fond of analyzing; more broadly, "dialectical" relations between part and whole, and signifier and signified; more broadly still, the kind of idealism that the modernists I have been discussing are reacting against. But what if the poem is "formless" in the way (both artistic and metaphysical) I have been describing *Fausto*? Formless forms—such is the drama's root oxymoron—pose a challenge to Jakobson's conception of the poetic function, particularly its embodiment of the projective principle. While *Fausto* certainly engages in "regular reiteration of equivalent units" (JAKOBSON, 1997: 155), as I have been demonstrating in the case of the text's verbal repetition, its recursive structure and (as will be seen below) convoluted syntax belie the "well-ordered shape" (154) that Jakobson takes for granted. In short, the formless in poetry calls for an approach elastic enough to accommodate linguistic asymmetry, anti-dialectic, and ideas of non-being—the kind of approach I hope to be demonstrating in this paper.

In addition to giving emphasis and further instancing repetition, tautology, as a fault of style, tallies with *Fausto*'s linguistic travail: "O ser é o ser" (PESSOA, 2018: 77), "confusões confusas" (147), "differentemente diferente" (251) [Being is being, confused confusions, differently different]. There is at least one pun: "Este meu pensamento transciente | De transcendencia" (246) [This my transcient thought | Of Transcendence]. "Transciente" combines "transiente" and "transcendencia" to convey the way *Fausto*'s thought all too soon falls short of the absolute. Archaic spellings abound, e.g., "Christo," "cousas" (37), "má," "mau" (68), "objectos" (70), "explender" (216), "Doira" (225) [Christ, things, bad, bad, objects, expend, Gild]. Together with the cast of allegorical Voices, the *auto* of the Bacchantes, and the tavern-talk of kings, queens, and citadels, the archaism lends a period texture to Pessoa's version of a medieval legend, as the Walpurgis-Night scenes did for Goethe's *Faust*. It also makes the text more solemn, cultivated, and refined.

Punctuation marks offer another verbal resource. Within and at the end of lines words are often omitted, not because they are able to be understood from contextual clues but because *Fausto*'s thought has reached its limits, and ellipses indicate the resulting silence. Frequent dashes reflect *Fausto*'s delirium, driven into it as he is by the accelerated condition of modern life. They also mirror the contradiction and uncertainty of his thoughts, as he attempts to qualify or clarify them as soon as they arise.

Stylistic analysis of certain vocables reveals the subtlety involved in rendering the formless. Consider the effects gotten from the frequent use of the comparative conjunctive locution “como que”: “Como que nú me sinto e exilado | Entre cousas extranhas” (120) [As if naked I feel and exiled | Among strange things]. Such is its nuance that this locution effectively dilutes the comparison between the two terms, Fausto and nakedness. The speaker, “as if” grasping for a way to express his exilic feelings, from his corresponding linguistic exile latches onto “como que.” Pessoa achieves similar effects in the following lines: “me criava | Uma *como* inconsciencia que fazia | *Com que* o mysterio nao vivesse sempre” (126; italics mine) [created in me | A kind of unconsciousness that made | it so that the mystery did not live always]. The grammatical rule, of course, states that a preposition is only to be used after an indirect transitive verb. The unconventional use of “com” after the direct transitive verb “fazia” serves to emphasize the effort employed by the subject of the action. How the “inconsciencia” can carry out this action, though, remains tinged with an opacity that the semantic modulation here allows Pessoa to convey. In the second verse, the comparative subordinative conjunction “como” means “something similar to.” However, the fact that the word “something,” which would constitute the first term of comparison (the second being “inconsciencia”), is not explicit leads “como” to assume the function of an adjective. For the mental state described in these lines there can be no comparison, Pessoa seems to be saying—and showing, grammatically.

In addition to unfamiliar words, Pessoa tends to use unfamiliar constructions in *Fausto*. The piling-on of adjectives is noteworthy: “surda | Nocturna confusão aglomerada (126) [deaf | Nocturnal agglomerated confusion]. Inverted verb phrases are common, e.g., “Mas isto que eu em vão impôr-lhe quero” (318) [But this that I in vain to impose upon it wish]. Verbs are often used at once reflexively and non-reflexively, so that the action of the verb bears upon the subject and the object alike: “se me esfriaria em mêdo a alma” (136) [my soul would chill in fear], this *se me* + verb construction appearing frequently. That his soul here chills both itself and him emphasizes Fausto’s internal split. A similar effect is achieved through the nominalization of a verb doing this sort of double duty:

Às vezes eu olhando o proprio corpo  
Estremecia de terror ao vel-o  
Assim na realidade, tão carnal  
Incarnação do mysterio, tão proxima  
Mysteriosidade e transcendente  
Apontar-se-me em mim do negro e fundo  
Mysterio do universo.

(PESSOA, 2018: 121)

[At times I, looking at my body,  
Would tremble at seeing it



Thus in reality, so carnal  
 An incarnation of mystery, so near  
 A mysteriousness and transcendental  
 Turning in me toward the black and deep  
 Mystery of the universe.]

The noun infinitive “Apontar-se-me” functions as an appositive that renames “o proprio corpo.” The distance between the appositive and the noun it renames mirrors Fausto’s alienation from his body. Turning the verb “Apontar-se-me” into a noun sunders the action from its agent and reinforces the dissociation. That both the subject (“o proprio corpo”: *se*) and the direct object (the speaker: *me*) receive the action of the verb further heightens the sense of estrangement.

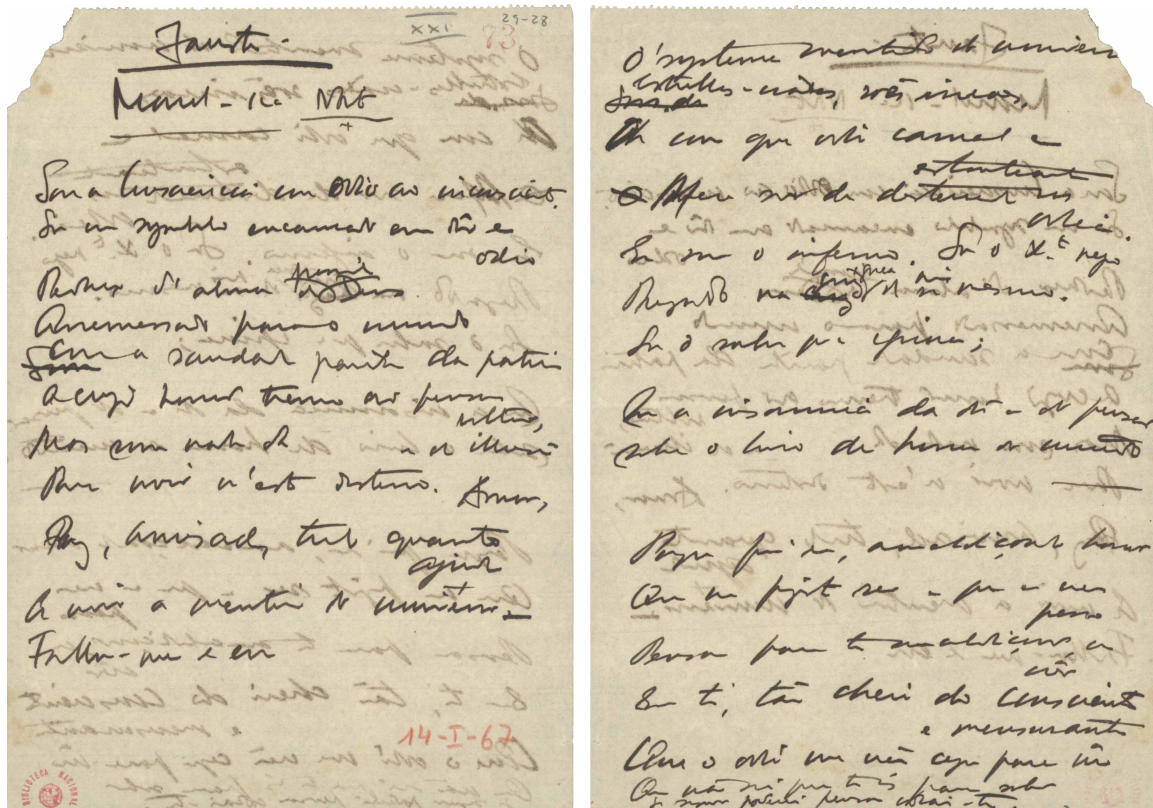
The syntax grows exceedingly complicated in this apostrophe to the Night:

Porque fui eu, amaldiçoado horror  
 Que me fizeste ser e que eu nem posso  
 Pensar para te amaldiçoar, ou crer  
 Em ti, tão cheio do consciente e mensurante  
 Que o odio me não cegue para ver  
 Que não sei que tu es para saber  
 Se sequer poderei pensar odiar-te? (197-98)

(PESSOA, 2018: 197-198 [Fig. 2])

[Why was it I, accursed horror  
 That made me be and that I cannot even  
 Think to curse you, or believe  
 In you, so full of the conscious and mensurate  
 That hatred does not blind me to see  
 That I do not know what you are to know  
 If I could so much as think of hating you?]

The fourfold relative clauses, the lexical permutation (“amaldiçoado” / “amaldiçoar”), the neologism (“mensurante”), the double negative (“me não cegue para ver | Que não sei”), the initial ambiguity over which noun the adjectival phrase (“tão cheio do consciente e mensurante”) modifies (“eu” or “ti?”), all typify Fausto’s convoluted style of soliloquy (his dialogue is more conventional). The syntax is so tortuous that most readers are probably unaware that a question is being asked until they see the question mark at the end of the passage. Yet the word-order is not meaninglessly contorted but meaningfully controlled. If Pessoa purposely strives for atypical syntactical patterns, it is because they offer a way both to elevate Fausto’s speech and imitate his sensibility. What Eliot says of a sentence in Henry James (to which he unfavorably compares a Miltonic sentence) applies as well to most sentences in *Fausto*: “The complication, with James, is due to a determination not to simplify, and in that simplification lose any of the real intricacies or by-paths of mental movement” (ELIOT, 1975: 261).



Figs. 1 e 2. Fausto's apostrophe to the Night (29-28<sup>r</sup> e 28<sup>v</sup>).

In his monologues Fausto is not conversing but thinking aloud, and so the style aims at tracing the contours of thought becoming speech. As his thoughts and feelings are deranged, so will his language be disturbed. If the syntax is labyrinthine, it is because Fausto, in pondering first principles, reasons like MILTON's devil: he finds "no end, in wandering mazes lost" (s.d.: 46). Where Fausto gropes in the dark, the sense cannot but be obscure. In short, the peculiarity of Pessoa's style is aimed at precision.

Another aspect of Pessoa's knotty grand style is the number of allusions and references, divisible into two kinds. First are the overt references to Fausto's *Mestres* (Christo, Buddha, Shakespeare, Goethe), his literary precursors (Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, Milton's Lucifer), and the Greeks whose philosophies mostly confirm his skepticism (Gorgias, Platão, Zenão de Eleia). These references strike up a kinship between *Fausto* and Pessoa's projected *Livro de Legendas* [Book of Captions], a book dealing with the figures, texts, and movements of world history and literature most responsible for the composition of the Portuguese, more broadly Western, cultural imaginary. Two fragmentary lists of *Legendas* and three references attest to the existence of this projected book. Buddha and Christo (together with Apollonio de Tyana) appear under the heading *Trez Deuzes* on one list; Lucifer and *A Tentação de Santo Antão* (which I discuss below) number among

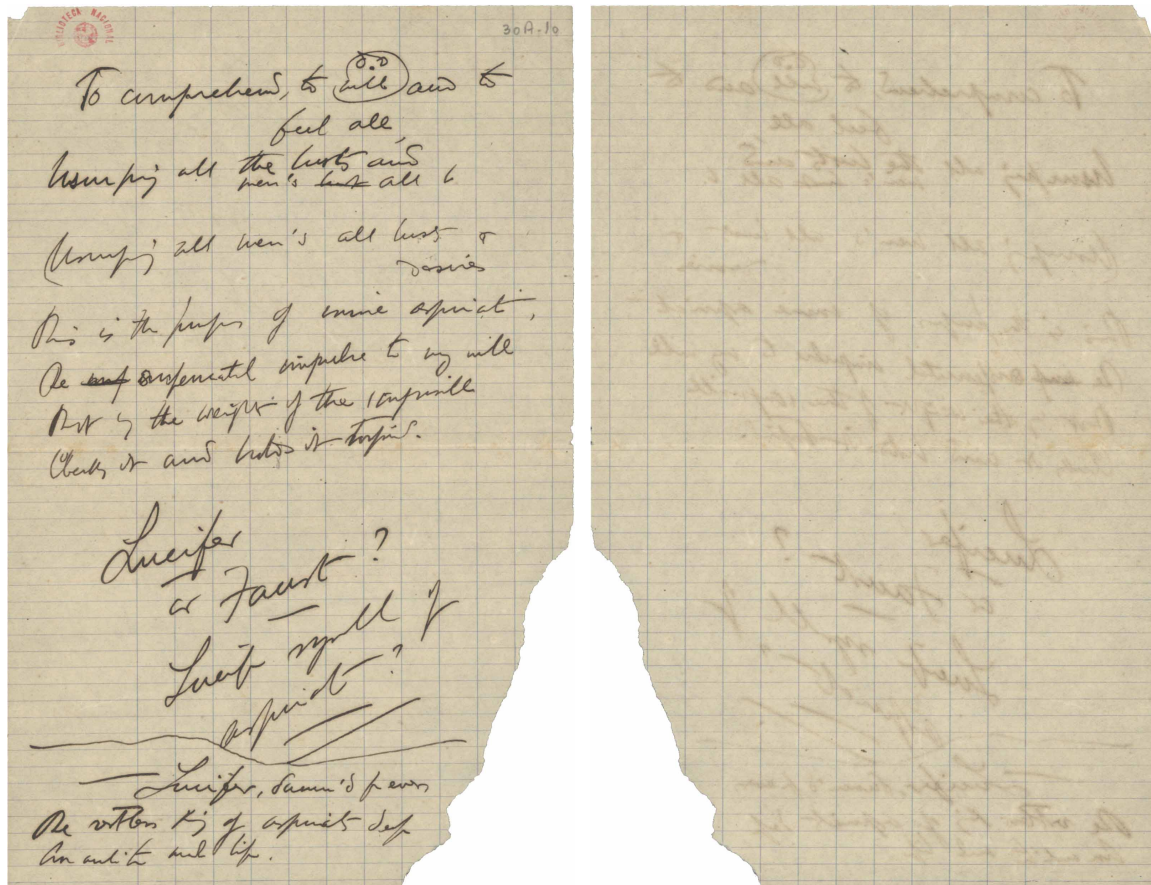
the 17 cultural touchstones on the other list.<sup>9</sup> That four of the intended figures and texts feature prominently in *Fausto* underscores the extent to which the drama serves as a compendium of the Western culture that Fausto has absorbed to no avail. If *Livro de Legendas* was supposed to affirm the spiritual-heroic tradition stretching from Homer to the Round Table and on to *Orpheu* and *Mensagem*, *Fausto* appears to negate it.

Second are the more or less veiled references. The allusions to *Paradise Lost*, together with the works' commonalities in style, character, and Christian heresy, make *Fausto* Pessoa's most sustained engagement with the poet Ricardo Reis called "maior que Shakespeare" (*apud* Antunes 2016: 61). The verse "Eu sou o inferno" (PESSOA, 2018: 197), of course, references Satan's line in Book IV of MILTON's epic: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (s.d.: 90). A scattering of verses stressing Fausto's experience of consciousness as hell—really, the whole work centers on this theme—repeat his identification with Satan. Fausto's "revolta" against the cause of life again links him with his revolutionary prototype (PESSOA, 2018: 66). This is to take only the most obvious allusions to *Paradise Lost*, as the similarities just mentioned stamp all of *Fausto*. The differences, of course, are more significant. Fausto aspires to nothing, unless it is nothingness to which he aspires. The impossibility of salvation, be it from Knowledge, Love, Action, or Dream, leads him toward resignation. No prospect of Eden, of Pyrrhic victory, spurs fallen Fausto on. To bring the analogy to a head, *Fausto* is the story of what Satan would have been like had he given up.

And yet, it was not always thus. The renouncing of lowly aims does not make for high drama. Fausto's tragedy arises from his abdication of a quest little less vaulting than that "bold enterprise which he [Satan] undertook alone against God and Man" (MILTON, s.d.: 88), namely, "To comprehend, to do and to feel all" (PESSOA, 2018: 187). The similarity between his quest and Sensationism's ultimate aim at representing "A maxima realidade" (PESSOA, 2009: 149) identifies Fausto as a Sensationist (anti-)hero and his (failed) undertaking as the *ne plus ultra* of this avant-garde movement. Poem 123 of the critical edition establishes precisely the link between Lucifer and Fausto, between "An ambition made life" and an aim of comparable magnitude, however defeated in the end. Fausto's quondam "will" to experience all sensations, now "check(ed)" by the impossibility of its object, is nothing less than Byronic (PESSOA, 2018: 281).

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<sup>9</sup> See VIZCAÍNO and PIZARRO (2018: 266-70) for a discussion of the *Livro de Legendas*, along with both lists. See Annex 102 of PESSOA (2018) for the list of 17 *Legendas*, as well as Annexes 100, 103, and 104 for references to the book.



Figs. 3 e 4. Poem 123 of the critical edition (30A-10<sup>r</sup> e 10<sup>v</sup>).

Indeed, *Fausto's* strong reminiscence of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* constitutes another layer of reference. Both works represent apotheoses of the individual will; both feature protagonists driven by disillusionment to seek refuge in distraction. According to Jerome MCGANN, *Childe Harold* served Byron as a mask through which to express his view that "man's greatest tragedy is that he can conceive of a perfection which he cannot attain", since "mask after mask is fashioned but to no redemptive avail" (1992: 307). The same view undergirds *Fausto*. In his Plan for the second of three *Faustos*, Pessoa writes, "Symbolo da aspiração insaciavel que, casada com Helena, ou Hellenismo, produz o espirito moderno—a perfeição humana—e é castigado como a *fallencia*, a imperfeição, e o desastre; como acontece ao espirito moderno" (PESSOA, 2018: 342). Pessoa takes from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* the paradigm of the modern tragedy and in *Fausto* deepens its negativity while reconceiving perfection in Sensationist terms. Like Byron, he fashions for himself a literary mask. If *Childe Harold* became a vehicle for Byron's own beliefs and ideas, *Fausto* serves as a spokesman for Pessoa's views on love, action, dreams, the body, sex, sensations, poetry, and other topics.

Another allusion occurs in what might be called *Fausto's* "To be, or not to be" soliloquy (lines 57-83 of poem 19), which evokes the one spoken by Hamlet in Act III Scene I of Shakespeare's play. The evocation occurs at the level of rhythm,

with line 61, “Morrer, talvez morrer” (PESSOA, 2018: 70) [To die, perhaps to die], echoing “To die, to sleep—| To sleep, perchance to dream” (lines 72-73). It also occurs at the level of theme, namely, the wish for death as an escape from the pain of living, were it not that death might bring something worse. Like Hamlet’s, Fausto’s speech ends in irresolution, as he sputters “Nada sei” and expresses a desire neither to live nor die (PESSOA, 2018: 71). A monologue on sleep, dream, and death is not all that Pessoa’s and Shakespeare’s protagonists have in common. What Fausto says in poem 70 about trying the magic potion—“Sou para elle a propria indecisão” [For it I am indecision itself]—Hamlet might have said regarding his whole enterprise (158). And yet, Fausto shows a flash of his precursor’s fire—for all his hesitation and delay, Hamlet remains Shakespeare’s most active character—when, like Hamlet stabbing his sword through the arras and killing Polonius, he fells the old man. This comes just after Fausto threatens the Velho with “acção” for withholding the philter (PESSOA, 2018: 159). The juxtaposition of indecision and action reinforces the characters’ comparison. The allusion to *Hamlet* continues in poem 75, in which two gravediggers micturate in the wake of a drunken mob (173-74). Just as the graveyard scene in *Hamlet* (v.i) serves as a *memento mori*, sharply contrasting life and death, so this tavern scene symbolizes the coexistence of disturbance and peace—and by extension, that of Fausto, inwardly tortured, and society, unburdened by consciousness. If *Fausto* is Pessoa’s *Hamlet*, it is also his *King Lear*: where the king’s abdication precipitates the tragedy, the scholar’s abdication, given the conditions that force it, is the tragedy.

Line 10 of the opening poem of *Fausto* alludes to *La Tentation de saint Antoine*. Pessoa’s character may agree with Flaubert’s that “L’homme, étant esprit, doit se retirer des choses mortelles. Toute action le degrade.” [Man, being spirit, should withdraw from mortal things. All action degrades him.] (FLAUBERT, 1910: 42). Of course, the desert ascetic chooses isolation as a form of worship, so that Hilarion’s (Lucifer’s) accusation of hypocrisy falls wide of the mark. But the accusation applies in no small measure to Fausto, who in his imagination indeed gives vent to his lusts and whose contempt for the world stems from his impotent hatred of it. More precisely, Fausto recognizes his sensations as the only reality, so that what escapes them pains him. Since all visible objects defy his scrutiny, scrutiny being the highest sensation, all visible objects earn his scorn. There are additional points of contact between the two works. Fausto’s cosmology owes something to the Gnostic accounts of creation with which a parade of phantasmagoria bombards Antoine. This parade feeds into the pageant of allegories that comprise the *Vozes* sections of *Fausto*. Where a stream of heretics seeks to lure the saint astray, a cast of personified abstractions, speaking of the sage, widen the compass of his drift.

Finally, clear echoes of specific lines in Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth appear throughout *Fausto*, as do numerous glances at the *Gospel of John* posing a

variation upon the Arian heresy. But their identification and elaboration are unnecessary, as enough allusions have been unpacked to make my point. The purpose of all these references is twofold: to extend the reader's understanding through comparison and to situate *Fausto* within a horizon of classic Western works. This situation must not be confused with an Eliotic attempt at depersonalizing poetry via the sense of tradition. That tradition, like the "jarra divina" [divine vessel], lies shattered in *Fausto*, as does the organic work of art (PESSOA, 2018: 46). What "The Thunder Said" in *The Waste Land* the protagonist of *Fausto* cannot hope to say: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (ELIOT, 1922: 49). The fragments of tradition resist salvaging; they have disappeared into the abyss that separates Fausto from his happier forbears, those for whom the Word made flesh grounded the relation between word and world. Pessoa does not use allusions as ELIOT does Homeric myth: to give "a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (1975: 177). The aspiration to shape and significance gives way in *Fausto* to wallowing in fragments, in a manifold formlessness, including the structural kind. And yet, a trace of modernist nostalgia remains. For if the "divine vessel" of tradition cannot be reconstituted, yet in the tragedy's frequent allusions its fragments may shimmer.

Extended similes form still another aspect of *Fausto's* style. The use of epic similes goes back to Homer in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but Pessoa uses similes with more detail than even Milton. In lines 56-61 of poem 45 Fausto likens his premonition of emotional disturbance to signs of an impending storm, finding for his psychic state a corollary in the physical world. But the typical simile in *Fausto* does not proceed along these lines, by comparing an abstract term (Fausto's thoughts and feelings) to a concrete one (the landscape). A concrete term will rarely do, since Pessoa wishes to depict not sensation in all its immediacy but rather sensation at a mental remove—or better, the sensation of mental removal. This removal is already evident in the simile above, which compares not emotional disturbance to an impending storm but the premonition of one to signs of the other. Because Pessoa aims at evoking not just physical or emotional sensations but the consciousness thereof, his terms of comparison tend equally towards abstraction. Put differently, in order to convey the sensation of consciousness, his similes frequently pose an analogy between progressively intellectualized terms.

The longest simile in *Fausto*, spread over all 63 lines of poem 48, exemplifies this tendency toward what Pessoa called "a concretização abstracta da emoção" (PESSOA, 2009: 172). Resuming the tempest motif mentioned above, this simile launches with an extended description of one adrift in a stormy sea and terrified almost to death, before introducing, by way of "Assim," the principal term of comparison, namely, Fausto's "pensamento" (PESSOA, 2018: 123). The effect is that, for a solid 32 lines, the reader is similarly stranded as to the poet's meaning. In

other words, the poet seems to do what he describes. It is not even clear from the start that we are dealing with a simile, since the comparison opens without the usual “Como” but rather straightaway with “Alguem” (122). While Fausto and Alguem share the experience of horror, Fausto’s has an internal object (horror in the face of metaphysical mystery) and Alguem’s an external object (horror at the prospect of a watery death)—but only at first, for Pessoa moves it inside. He dwells not on the concrete details of Alguem’s plight (e.g., external conditions, such as water, shipwreck, darkening sky, or physical sensations, such as cold, hunger, exhaustion) but on the terror that so fills his consciousness as to bring him near to madness. That Pessoa does so typifies his tendency to intellectualize sensations. Indeed, the body in Pessoa serves as but a vehicle for thought, an organ of consciousness: “E todo o corpo d’elle é um sentido | Para sentir pavor, e cada póro | É sentiente e consciente e agudo | Em ter uma atenção de terror cheia” (123) [And his whole body is one sense | For feeling dread, and each pore | Is sentient and conscious and sharp | In having an attention full of terror]. Fausto echoes these lines in describing himself: “Assim cada póro da alma se me torna | Um sentido para pensar” (123) [Thus each pore of the soul turns | Into a sense for thinking]. It is a commonplace that Pessoa thinks with his feelings and feels with his thoughts, but perhaps nowhere else does he state the paradox so crisply. A reformulation of Pessoa’s tendency to concretize the abstract and abstract the concrete, the paradox applies equally to the logic of Pessoa’s similes.

Besides extended similes, Pessoa also traces a number of images throughout *Fausto*. One of the most recurrent is the image of the “abismo / abysmo.” Over and over in the work, there are mentions of an abyss separating the self from the self, from others, or from the universe. The abyss, of course, is a metaphor for the groundlessness of being, knowing, and personal identity, as well as the consequent misfit between a given vocabulary and the reality of the self and the world that it purports to express or represent. Other images that Pessoa uses to refer to metaphysical formlessness include “poço” / “poço sem paredes” (118, 247) [well / well without walls], “Maëlstrom” (54), and “labyrintho” (292) [labyrinth], a repurposing of MILTON’s image for the serpent into which Satan entered (s.d.: 208). Since formlessness demands abstraction, Pessoa’s images are duly minimal (especially in contrast to Milton’s elaborate imagery). Another key image, thrice repeated, is the one whose rich fund of implications incited this paper: “informe.” The paradox at the heart of Pessoa’s style is neatly captured in the oxymoron “a forma informe | Da sombra” (189) [the formless form | Of the shadow] and again in “O informe tomou forma dentro em mim” (181) [The formless took form inside me]. Altogether, these repeated images (let us not forget the storm imagery mentioned above), by offering anticipations, echoes, and reminders, help unify the in-many-ways disjointed work.

Just as I have used the concept of the formless to explain the peculiarity of *Fausto's* language and style, so the concept may help in justifying the work's "unfinishable" character ("inacabavel"; GUSMÃO, 1986: 213). Certainly, the drama's recursive structure (and generic anomaly) merits patient study. My own concern has been to elucidate what I see as the central challenge Pessoa set himself in *Fausto*: to find a form for the formless. I take the metaphor of the *informe* directly from *Fausto* to refer to the metaphysical, linguistic, and psychological predicament dramatized therein: unanswered Why-questions; unavailable vocabulary; untranquil mind. The paradox of finding a form for this triple formlessness is compounded by the need to give it a grandeur appropriate to the lofty theme. I argue that Pessoa rose to the occasion of this double demand by elaborating a grand style modeled partly on *Paradise Lost*. This style is energetically abstract enough to trace the constrictions and involutions of thought thinking about itself, yet it is also hobbled by a paucity of words that neologism can never quite supply. While radical experimentation with language marks many of Pessoa's works (*Livro do Desasocego* [PESSOA, 2010] bristles with coinages), only in *Fausto* did he employ such an exalted, if hamstrung, style. A style of refined formlessness, of marred sublimity: the devising of this is Pessoa's heroic achievement in *Fausto*. Thus, the author's quest mirrors that of his character: the sage's struggle becomes the poet's own; in limning Fausto's failure Pessoa emphatically succeeds. If modernism can be defined as a suspicion of form that precipitates a search for forms for the formless—and I contend, in closing, that it can—then *Fausto* is paradigmatic of modernist enterprise.

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