Fernando Pessoa: The Poet as Philosopher

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Abstract

Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) lived what was in many ways an astonishingly modern, transcultural, and translingual life. He was born in Lisbon, the point of departure for Vasco da Gama's voyage to India as commemorated by Pessoa's forebear, the poet Luís de Camões. Pessoa grew up in Anglophone Durban, acquiring a lifelong love for English poetry and language. Returning to Lisbon, from where he would never again leave, he set himself the goal of travelling throughout an infinitude of inner landscapes, to be an explorer of inner worlds. He published very little, but left behind a famous trunk containing a treasure trove of scraps, on which were written some of the greatest literary works of the twentieth century, mainly in Portuguese but also a substantial amount in English and French. Pessoa is now acknowledged as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century, and he has emerged over the last decade as a forgotten voice in twentieth-century modernism, taking his rightful place alongside C.P. Cavafy, Franz Kafka, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Jorge Luis Borges. Pessoa was also a serious student of philosophy and himself a very creative philosopher, yet his genius as a philosopher has as yet hardly been recognized at all.

1. Introduction

Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) has become many things to many people in the years that have passed since his untimely death. For some, he is simply the greatest poet of the 20th century, certainly in Portuguese and arguably more widely. His poetry, much loved and widely read, has over the years been meticulously edited, published, and translated. For others, he has gradually emerged as a forgotten voice in 20th-century modernism, now finally taking his rightful place alongside giants such as C.P. Cavafy, Franz Kafka, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Jorge Luis Borges. And yet Pessoa was also a philosopher, and it is only very recently that the philosophical importance of his work has begun to attract the attention it deserves. Decisively breaking with the conventional strictures of systematic philosophical writing, the philosophy in his heteronymic poems and his prose anti-novel is a profound and exquisite exploration in the philosophy of self.

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Jonardon Ganeri

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2. Pessoa's Novel Invention

Fernando Pessoa's invention of the concept of a heteronym represents a singular moment in the history of subjectivity.[1] A heteronym is another I, a self that is not one's own. Scattered among his drafts of prefaces to never-to-be-completed editions of his writings and in letters to friends and editors are the few explicit clues we possess as to his intentions. 'The mental origin of my heteronyms lies in my restless, organic tendency to depersonalization and simulation', he writes, already isolating the twin poles around which his philosophy of self revolves, before continuing, 'Fortunately for me and others, these phenomena have been mentally internalized, such that they don't show up in my outer, everyday life among people; they erupt inside me, where only I experience them'.[2] Each heteronym is fully and in its own right a person: 'Ever since I was a child, I've felt the need to enlarge the world with fictitious personalities – dreams of mine that were carefully crafted, envisaged with photographic clarity, and fathomed to the depths of their souls […]. I intensely conceived those characters with no need of dolls. Distinctly visible in my ongoing dreams, they were utterly human realities for me, which any doll – because unreal – would have spoiled. They were people'.[3]

Pessoa's three most famous heteronyms are the world-class poets he names Alberto Caeiro, Álvaro de Campos, and Ricardo Reis: 'I placed all my power of dramatic depersonalization in Caeiro;

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[1]   Excellent recent overviews of Pessoa in English include Jackson (2010), Maunsell (2012), Frow (2014), and Visser (2019).

[2]   Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 254).

[3]   [Another version of the genesis of the heteronyms], in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, pp. 261–262).

194

I placed all my mental discipline, clothed in its own special music, in Ricardo Reis; and in Álvaro de Campos I placed all the emotion that I deny myself and don't put into life'.[4] As he puts it in a draft preface for an unfinished edition of the *Fictions of the Interlude* (his designation for the complete corpus of his poetic work), 'In the case of the authors of *Fictions of the Interlude*, it is not only the ideas and feelings which differ from mine: the technique of composition itself, the very style, differs from mine. In those instances each protagonist is created as essentially different, not just differently thought out. For this reason, poetry is predominant in *Fictions of the Interlude*. In prose, it is more difficult to other oneself'.[5]

Heteronymy is, as the name implies, an othering of oneself, an awareness of oneself but as other. The contrast with the pseudonym is deliberate: 'Pseudonymous works are by the author in his own person, except in the name he signs; heteronymic works are by the author outside his own person. They proceed from a full-fledged individual created by him'.[6] A pseudonym is a mask, a disguise intended, even if only ironically, to hide the true identity of the author. A heteronym is something else entirely: it is the author writing 'outside his own person' and in doing so transforming himself into an other I. A heteronym occupies the first-person position within the experience of the author and has a defined literary voice and a distinctive power of expression. So to 'write in the name of'[7] a heteronym is not to hide oneself behind a mask but to live in experience as that very person; each heteronym, Pessoa says, is 'lived by the author within himself' and has 'passed through his soul'.[8] A heteronym is 'someone in me who has taken my place'.[9]

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[4] Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, pp. 253–254).
[5] [Preface to *Fictions of the Interlude*], in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 313).
[6] [Bibliographical summary], in *A Little Larger than the Entire Universe: Selected Poems* (Zenith, 2006, p. 3).
[7] [Bibliographical summary], in *A Little Larger than the Entire Universe: Selected Poems* (Zenith, 2006, p. 5).
[8] [Aspects], in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 2).
[9] *The Book of Disquiet* (Zenith, 2002), sketch #351. All references to *The Book of Disquiet* will follow the numbering in Zenith's Portuguese and English editions. The online *LdoD Archive* provides, among other things, for cross-referencing against different editions of the *Livro do Desassossego*. In what follows, any citation attributed to Pessoa from *The Book of Disquiet* should be understood as an attribution to his semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares.

Jonardon Ganeri

In assuming a heteronym one transforms oneself into another I: 'First we must create another I, charged with suffering – in and for us – everything we suffer'.[10] The experiences of my heteronym are both *in* me, in the sense that I am their host, and also *for* me, standing, with respect to me, in a first-personal subjective relationship. When Pessoa writes of heteronymy that it is a subjective state in which 'every felt pain is automatically analysed to the core, ruthlessly foisted on an extraneous I […]',[11] he exactly formulates the essence of the concept in the idea of experience that is at once irreducibly first personal and yet also alien. A heteronym is a fully formed subject subsisting within one's conscious experience. Heteronyms are, to introduce a notion I will have more to say about later, *virtual subjects*, subjects which are 'well-defined personalities who have incorporeally passed through [one's] soul'.[12] Unlike the target of empathy, which would occupy a second-person position, addressed as 'you', the formal feature that is definitive of heteronymy is that a heteronym occupies the first-person position, spoken of with a use of the first-person pronoun 'I'. A heteronym possesses agency, if only in the capacity to compose verse, and has its own expressive and experiential style. A heteronym is another I, an I who is not me, an othered I: 'But since I am me, I merely take a little pleasure in the little that it is to imagine myself as that someone else. Yes, soon he-I, under a tree or bower, will eat twice what I can eat, drink twice what I dare drink, and laugh twice what I can conceive of laughing. Soon he, now I. Yes, for a moment I was someone else: in someone else I saw and lived this human and humble joy of existing as an animal in shirtsleeves'.[13] Heteronymic simulation is, we might say, the mechanism of self-alienation.

If transforming oneself in simulation into another I is the core of the idea of heteronymic subjectivity, an equally important theme in Pessoa is that of depersonalization. Living through a heteronym, which from one point of view must certainly constitute an enrichment of experiential life, is paradoxically described in terms of a

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[10] 'Sentimental education', in *The Book of Disquiet* (Zenith, 2002, p. 455).

[11] 'Sentimental education', in *The Book of Disquiet* (Zenith, 2002, p. 456).

[12] [Aspects], in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 2). I am not alone in appealing to the language of the virtual to elucidate heteronymy: David Jackson calls the heteronyms 'virtual authors' (2010, p. 15) and John Frow describes them as 'virtual selves' (2014, p. 222).

[13] *The Book of Disquiet*, #374.

196

loss of self: 'Today I have no personality: I've divided all my humaneness among the various authors whom I've served as literary executor. Today I'm the meeting-place of a small humanity that belongs only to me […]. I subsist as a kind of medium of myself, but I'm less real than the others, less substantial, less personal, and easily influenced by them all'.[14] Again, 'I created a nonexistent coterie, placing it all in a framework of reality. I ascertained the influences at work and the friendships between them, I listened in myself to their discussions and divergent points of view, and in all of this it seems that I, who created them all, was the one who was least there'.[15]

Several distinct claims are intertwined here. The first is that even as he assumes multiple heteronyms, Pessoa is separately conscious of himself in the capacity of medium or meeting-place for them. Unlike a heteronym, which corresponds to a well-defined style of experiencing, this separate self-consciousness is one that is empty of any specific personality or content: it is a depersonalized self-awareness. The use of the first person in relation to this type of self-consciousness is thus quite distinct from that which figures in the self-expression of a heteronym (the use made of it in the formula 'an extraneous I'). Second, one's awareness of oneself as medium or meeting-place is less robust than one's awareness of oneself as another I, in the sense that it does not sustain as strong a sense of presence. Finally, one's self-awareness as meeting-place is associated with a clearly identifiable trait: it at least partially consists in a capacity to observe the heteronyms, both from the outside ('I *see* before me, in the transparent but real space of dreams, the faces and gestures of Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos'),[16] and also, more importantly, from the inside, a partly introspective and partly empathetic capacity to analyse and scrutinize the subjective character of the heteronymic mental life being lived through.

It seems, then, that two distinct kinds of self-awareness are co-present in any act of heteronymic simulation: a *heteronymic* self-awareness which consists in an awareness of oneself as another I, living through a distinctive set of experiences, emotions, and moods; and what I will call a *forumnal* self-awareness, an awareness of oneself as hosting the heteronym, which is at the same time a

[14] [Another version of the genesis of the heteronyms], in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 262).
[15] Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 257).
[16] Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 257).

Jonardon Ganeri

place from which one's experiential life as heteronym can be observed and analysed. It is from the first-person position of the forum that Bernardo Soares, the semi-heteronymic/semi-orthonymic narrator of *The Book of Disquiet*, speaks: 'For me it's never I who thinks, speaks or acts. It's always one of my dreams, which I momentarily embody, that thinks, speaks and acts for me. I open my mouth, but it's I-another who speaks. The only thing I feel to be really mine is a huge incapacity, a vast emptiness, an incompetence for everything that is life'.[17] Pessoa describes Bernardo Soares as a semi-heteronym because 'his personality, although not my own, doesn't differ from my own but is a mere mutilation of it. He's me without my rationalism and emotions. His prose is the same as mine, except for certain formal restraint that reason imposes on my own writing'.[18] And 'Bernardo Soares' is also a semi-orthonym because the name is a 'mere mutilation' of 'Fernando Pessoa', 'Bernardo' differing from 'Fernando' in only two letters, and 'Soares' is almost exactly a syllabic inversion of 'Pessoa'.[19] When Pessoa-as-Soares writes that 'due to my habit of dividing myself, following two distinct mental operations at the same time, it's generally the case that as I lucidly and intensely adapt myself to what others are feeling, I simultaneously undertake a rigorously objective analysis of their unknown self, what they think and are',[20] he shows a keen understanding of the co-presence of these two kinds of self-awareness, a simulated heteronymic self-awareness consisting in 'adaption' to the feelings of another I, and a forumnal self-awareness consisting in 'objective analysis' of what is thereby felt.

The formal structure of Pessoa's philosophy of self is nowhere more clearly set out than in his celebrated late poem *Countless Lives Inhabit Us*:

Countless lives inhabit us.
I don't know, when I think or feel,
Who it is that thinks and feels.
I am merely the place
Where things are thought and felt.

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[17] *The Book of Disquiet*, #215.
[18] Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 257).
[19] A different semi-orthonym exists as an entry in *The Transformation Book*: 'Ferdinand Sumwan (= Fernando Pessoa, since Sumwan = Some one = Person = Pessoa). A normal, useless, lazy, careless, weak individual'. *The Transformation Book* (Ribeiro, 2014, p. 326).
[20] *The Book of Disquiet*, #305.

198

I have more than just one soul.
There are more I-s than I myself.
I exist, nevertheless,
Indifferent to them all.
I silence them: I speak.
The crossing urges of what
I feel or do not feel
Struggle in who I am, but I
Ignore them. They dictate nothing
To the I I know: I write.[21]

When I think or feel, the first stanza says, it is one of many possible I-s that is thinking or feeling. This heteronymic use of 'I' is immediately juxtaposed with another use of 'I' to refer to the place where things are thought or felt. The second stanza continues with this use, for it is only from the position of the forum that I can affirm that I have more than one soul – each heteronym, taken individually, thinks of itself as a single unified self. The two uses of 'I', heteronymic and forumnal, are again juxtaposed in the final stanza, the urges felt or unfelt are the felt volitions of a heteronym – that is, of myself as another I – but I (as forumnal observer) disregard them.

The poem's disconcerting air of paradox is a deliberate construct, produced by the alternation without explicit indication of two quite distinct uses of 'I'. There is a third use too, almost too pedestrian for Pessoa to mention, the standard and everyday use of 'I' to refer indexically to whomsoever it is that has spoken or written it: as when Pessoa writes in a letter to a friend, 'I submitted the copies required by the Office of Propaganda'.[22] In the poem there is perhaps a trace of this third, indexical, use in the echoing phrases, 'I speak', and 'I write'.

The disconnect between the heteronymic and the forumnal can be heard playing out in another poem, in which 'who I am', my heteronymic self, is contrasted with 'what I am', myself as forum:

I don't know who my soul is.
Nor does it know who I am.
Understand it? It would take time.
Explain it? Don't know if I can.
And in this misunderstanding

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[21]   In *Fernando Pessoa & Co.: Selected Poems* (Zenith, 1999, p. 137). The poem is dated 30 November 30 1935, just two weeks before Pessoa's death.
[22]   Letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935, in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 252).

Jonardon Ganeri

> Between who I am and what am I
> There's a whole other meaning
> Lying between earth and sky.[23]

3. Heteronyms as Virtual Subjects

The act of heteronymic self-transformation is quite different from that of inventing a character in a story. Pessoa alludes to the difference when, while noting that novelists and playwrights 'often endow the characters of their plays and novels with feelings and ideas that they insist are not their own', he adds somewhat gnomically that in the authorship of heteronyms 'the substance is the same, though the form is different'.[24] What is fundamental to the notion of a heteronym is that it is an othered I, 'lived by the author within himself', that is to say, lived first-personally. So a heteronym is not a character because the relationship an author stands in to an invented character is a third-personal one. The point in question is analogous to the one William James makes when he says that 'it is impossible to reconcile the peculiarities of our experience with our being only the absolute's mental objects [...]. Objects of thought are not things *per se*. They are there only for their thinker, and only as he thinks them. How, then, can they become severally alive on their own accounts and think themselves quite otherwise than as he thinks them? It is as if the characters in a novel were to get up from the pages, and walk away and transact business of their own outside of the author's story'.[25] The autonomy here denied to fictional characters is a freedom from the author who has created them. James's point is that if an individual human subject were merely the 'mental object' of another mind, standing in the same relationship to this mind as the fictional character does to its author, it would similarly be without a capacity for autonomous self-expression. The comparison helps to clarify what is so distinctive and original in the idea of heteronymy. For a heteronym is not a mental object but a mental subject, a virtual subject transforming its author into another I: 'Why should I look at twilights if I have

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[23] In *A Little Larger than the Entire Universe: Selected Poems* (Zenith, 2006, p. 329).
[24] [Aspects], in *Selected Prose* (Zenith, 2007, p. 1).
[25] James (1909, p. 69). There is an exquisite treatment of this very issue in chapter 31 of Unamuno's 1914 novel *Mist*. Here, the character begs the author to be permitted to live, but to no avail: the author has already decided that he must die.

200

within me thousands of diverse twilights […] and if, besides seeing them inside me, I myself *am them*, on the inside and the outside?'[26]

Stephen Crites, by contrast, says of Søren Kierkegaard's pseudonyms that nobody 'would mistake them for the voices of real human beings. They are altogether theatrical creations. They are sheer personae, masks without actors underneath, voices' (Crites, 1972, p. 216). Kierkegaard does, sometimes, describe his pseudonyms – which he also calls 'polynyms' – in a manner that makes them sound more similar to heteronyms than conventional pseudonyms. He is keen to stress that he is simply their producer, or the occasion for their production, or a prompter (*souffleur*) for them, but not their author: 'What is written is indeed therefore mine, but only so far as I have put the life-view of the creating, poetically actualized individuality into his mouth in audible lines, for my relation is even more remote than that of a poet, who creates characters and yet in the preface is himself the author. For I am impersonally, or personally, in the second person, a souffleur who has poetically produced the authors' (Kierkegaard, 2009, pp. 527–528). Yet he goes on to deny that he is himself any of his pseudonyms, and says that he has 'no opinion about them except as third party'; remarks which imply that a Kierkegaardian pseudonym is also still a third party and not an essentially first-personal 'another I'. Pessoa's heteronyms, as John Frow, puts it, 'are not personae, masks through which the poet speaks; they are autonomous figures which allow him to take on quite distinct personalities in his writing' (Frow, 2014, p. 215). Polynyms, again, are multiple names for the same object, and they give rise to puzzles of their own, most famously the puzzle of explaining how identity statements containing them can be informative. Solutions to that puzzle, such as distinguishing between the reference of a name and its sense, the mode under which the reference is presented,[27] are of little help, however, in understanding the phenomenon of heteronymy; for a heteronym is another I, not the same I under another mode of presentation.

One of Pessoa's most basic philosophical concerns is with what I shall refer to as 'the grounding problem for subjects'. This is the problem of accounting for the metaphysical grounds for individual subjects of experience: what it is they exist in virtue of; what they are due to; what they are dependent on for their being.[28] The

[26] *The Book of Disquiet*, #215.
[27] See Frege (1980).
[28] As a term of art in contemporary philosophy, grounding refers to a particular sort of non-causal and asymmetric priority between facts,

invention of heteronymy serves to underline the fact that there is no solution to this problem in attempts to reduce subjects to merely purely mental objects, such as are the characters in a novel. Neither is it the sort of metaphysical problem that can be solved at the level of linguistic analysis alone.

A closer, if still inadequate, analogy would be with one of those stories in which each chapter has a different narrator writing from a first-person position, such as Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red* (2001), or William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1990), or Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's short story *In a Grove* (2011), on which Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashōmon* is based. Each character in one of these stories presents in the first person and is not merely reported on from a third-personal perspective. Each one takes it in turn to occupy the narrator position. And yet a sequence of distinct narrators writing in the first person is *still* not a display of heteronymy. They are distinct characters taking it in turn to speak about themselves in the first person; there is no suggestion that any of them is identical to the author, and neither can any be described as the author as transformed into another I.

Nor does Jorge Luis Borges explicitly describe heteronymy in his brilliant story *The Circular Ruins* (1999). In this story someone, whom Borges describes only as 'the foreigner', sets out to dream into existence another human being, having understood 'that the task of moulding the incoherent and dizzying stuff that dreams are made of is the most difficult work a man can undertake'. Within his directed dreamworld he fashions a youth, whom Borges describes as a 'phantasm' and a 'simulacrum', an individual who is 'not a man but the projection of another man's dream'. Pessoa, too, describes the creation of heteronyms as acts of directed imagining, but the distinction between a simulation and a simulacrum is crucial. For there is no suggestion at any point in Borges's story that the dreamt-up simulacrum is the foreigner himself – an other I of the dreamer – which is what would be required if the simulacrum, a virtual object, were to be a heteronym, a virtual subject, a simulated occupant of the subject position.

Borges ends the story with a twist: the foreigner is given to understand that he is himself a simulacrum, as 'with relief, with humiliation, with terror, he realized that he, too, was but appearance, that another man was dreaming him'. It is within the dream of 'another man' that the foreigner exists, exists as a simulacrum, and in the phrase 'he, too, was but appearance' there is again a clear implication

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indicated by the use of expressions like 'in virtue of', 'due to', 'based on', 'what makes', and 'because of'. See Correia and Schnieder (2012).

202

that what is being created is a merely purely mental object. The simulacra in the directed dreams, as the characters in a novel, are virtual objects; a virtual *subject* on the other hand is a simulation, a heteronym, a transformation of the author into another I.

Pessoa anticipates Borges when he writes, 'I begin to wonder if I exist, if I might not be someone else's dream. I can imagine, with an almost carnal vividness, that I might be the character of a novel, moving within the reality constructed by a complex narrative, in the long waves of its style'.[29] What is important to appreciate, though, is that Pessoa is not offering this as a description of heteronymic subjectivity; it is the simpler idea that one might discover that one is, after all, a simulacrum oneself. The grounding problem for subjects begins with the assumption that subjects are not merely apparent, and yet, reluctant to grant them the status of fundamental pieces of the world's furniture, asks what their existence is dependent on. We are more like shadows than hallucinations.

In fact, in *The Circular Ruins* there is a trace of the idea of heteronyms, but it is not to be found in the relationship between 'the foreigner' and his dreamt-up simulacrum. When Borges writes, 'the foreigner dreamed that *he* was in the centre of a circular amphitheatre', the embedded use of the personal pronoun situates the foreigner within his own dream. When one dreams it is not uncommon for oneself to figure in the dream as the one to whom the events in the dream are being presented. The 'subject-within-the-dream' is both a virtual subject and a simulation of the dreaming subject; and for this reason, it would be entirely appropriate to describe the subject-within-the-dream as the dreaming subject's heteronym in the dream. Evan Thompson, in his magnificent book *Waking, Dreaming, Being* (2014), uses the language of virtual reality gaming to make the interesting suggestion that the distinction between subject-within-the-dream and dreaming subject is analogous to the distinction between an avatar in a virtual world and its user: 'We need to distinguish between the dreaming self and the dream ego – between the self-as-dreamer and the self-within-the-dream', he rightly says, continuing,

> In a nonlucid dream, we identify with our dream ego and think, "I'm flying". In a lucid dream, we think, "I'm dreaming", and we recognize that the dreaming self isn't the same as the dream ego, or how we appear within the dream. The dream ego is like

29 *The Book of Disquiet*, #285. Borges, it would seem, wrote *The Circular Ruins* in the same series in the late 1930s. He spent six weeks in the summer of 1924 living in Lisbon, and this has led to some speculation that Pessoa and he may have met (see Ferrari, 2015).

Jonardon Ganeri

> an avatar in a virtual world; the dreaming self is its user […]. In a nonlucid dream, we lose the awareness that we're imagining things and identify with the dream ego as the I. We're like gamers who identify so completely with their avatars they forget they're gaming. In a lucid dream, we regain awareness of our imagining consciousness. Nonlucid dreams frame experience from the imagined perspective of the dream ego; lucid dreams reframe experience from the perspective of the imagining and dreaming self. Lucidity can enable the dreaming self to act consciously and deliberately in the dream state through the persona of the dream ego, who becomes like an avatar in a role-playing game […]. (Thompson, 2014, pp. 109–110)

It is not, though, quite correct to characterize the relationship between the dreaming subject and the subject-within-the-dream as being that there are two distinct subjects whose distinctness is overlooked in an act of mistaken identification. The foreigner dreams that *he* is in a circular amphitheatre and there is no question of an error due to misidentification.[30] It is not that in his dream a certain simulacrum is in the amphitheatre, a simulacrum which is mistaken by the dreamer to be himself. So the analogy breaks down, and instructively so, for the way it does so helps us to understand better the difference between avatars and heteronyms. The difference is that an avatar is a virtual object, a simulacrum, but the subject-within-the-dream is a virtual subject, a virtual occupant of the subject position. What it means to be at the subject position within the dream is indeed that the dream experience is 'framed from the perspective' of this position, and by positioning himself there the dreamer has in effect created a heteronym, an 'I' within the dream. So he cannot 'use' this heteronym as a gamer might an avatar or a master might a slave, because he does not stand in an appropriately third-personal relationship to it. It is literally correct to say 'In *my* dream *I* was flying', and this statement is not a mistaken rendering, based on a false identification with another, of 'In my dream my avatar was flying'.

The idea of heteronymy is much better captured in Yasumasa Morimura's multiple self-portraiture under the assumed identities of famous historical artists, if indeed Morimura would be willing to affirm 'I myself am them, on the inside and the outside'. As in *My Name is Red*, the text for his video piece *Egó Sympósion* has every participant, each of whom is a famous figure in the history of art, taking

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[30] On the philosophical concept of immunity, see Prosser and Recanati (2012).

204

Figure 1. Yasumasa Morimura, *An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Hand-Shaped Earring),* 2001. © Yasumasa Morimura. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York.

turns to speak for themselves in the first person. The reason this does not reduce to a case of sequential first-person narration by a series of distinct narrators, and the reason it is not merely a case of successive pseudonymous disguise, is that the viewer is never in any doubt that it is Morimura who is assuming – that is, simulating – each participant in turn. Though made up to resemble Frida Kahlo or Johannes Vermeer, Morimura makes no attempt to hide himself or to pretend not to be there. The representation is of Morimura-as-Kahlo not Morimura-as-if-Kahlo, not Morimura pretending to be Kahlo.

The Portuguese novelist José Saramago provides a superb illustration of the idea of the heteronym in a short notebook entry about Pessoa. He imagines Pessoa looking in a mirror and seeing his reflection, in turn as Reis, as Caeiro, and as Campos. 'My name is Ricardo

205

Jonardon Ganeri

Reis', 'My name is Alberto Caeiro', 'My name is Álvaro Campos', he declares in turn. When he looks again later that night at the mirror image, he sees that it is of his own face. 'My name is Bernardo Soares', he says, invoking an almost-orthonym:

> [O]n one of those days when Fernando passed in front of a mirror he spied in it, at a glance, another person. He thought this was just another optical illusion, those ones that happen when you're not paying attention, or that the last glass of *eau de vie* had not agreed with his liver and his head, but he cautiously took a step back just to make sure that – as is usually assumed – when mirrors show something they do not make mistakes. This one, however, had indeed made a mistake: there was a man looking out at him from inside the mirror, and that man was not Fernando Pessoa. He was a little shorter, and his face was somewhat dark-skinned and completely clean-shaven. Unconsciously Fernando brought his hand to his upper lip, then breathed deeply in childlike relief: this moustache was still there. One can expect many things from an image that appears in a mirror, but not that it will speak. And because these two, Fernando and the image that wasn't an image of him, were not going to stay watching one another forever, Fernando Pessoa said, 'My name is Ricardo Reis'. The other man smiled, nodded, and disappeared. For a moment the mirror was empty, bare, then right away another image appeared, of a thin, pale man who looked as if he were not long for this world. It seemed to Fernando that this must have been the first one; however, he made no comment, merely saying, 'My name is Alberto Caeiro'. The other did not smile; he merely nodded slightly, agreeing, and left. Fernando Pessoa waited, having always been told that whenever there are two a third will always follow. The third figure took a few seconds to arrive, and he was one of those men who look as if they have more health than they know what to do with, and he had the unmistakable air of an engineer trained in England. Fernando said, 'My name is Álvaro de Campos', but this time he did not wait for the image to disappear from the mirror, but moved away from it himself, probably tired from having seen so many people in such a short space of time. That night, in the small hours of the morning, Fernando Pessoa awoke wondering whether Álvaro de Campos had stayed in the mirror. He got up, and what he found there was his own face. So he said, 'My name is Bernardo Soares', and went back to bed. (Saramago, 2010, pp. 24–25).

206

A heteronym, finally, let me be completely clear, is not a Cartesian soul. A Cartesian soul is a putative denizen in the actual world, an immaterial mental substance standing in some mysterious relationship with other real entities such as human bodies. Lacking in spatial location, there is nothing to pair particular souls with particular effects: if two souls simultaneously acquire or lose a certain property, there is no way, even in principle, to decide which of the two is the cause of some subsequent event. This is what Jaegwon Kim calls the 'paring problem' for Cartesian souls (Kim, 2001). Then there is, as Bernard Williams puts it, 'absolutely nothing left to distinguish any Cartesian 'I' from any other, and it is impossible to see any more what would be subtracted from the universe by the removal of *me*' (Williams, 1973, p. 42). A heteronym is an aspect of a virtual world, although, as we have seen, it is not a virtual object like an avatar. What is subtracted from the universe by the removal of a heteronym is an entire style of feeling, and styles of feeling are also what is added to the universe by the invention of new heteronyms, new virtual subjects.[31]

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Jonardon Ganeri

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