



RUA DE SÃO BENTO, 17

L I S B O A

# Fernando Pessoa - Childhood

(Text José Correia)

Fernando António Nogueira Pessoa, was born in Largo de São Carlos, Chiado, n.º 4, 4.º Esq.º, in Lisbon, on June 13th, 1888 (a Wednesday or Thursday), on St. Anthony's Day, at 3:20 p.m.

This building where Pessoa was born is located in front of the National Theater of São Carlos, which was inaugurated on June 30th, 1793.

The name Fernando António was chosen by his parents not only because our poet was born on Saint Anthony's day but also because the saint was called Fernando de Bulhões, with who Pessoa's family claimed to have some kinship. Years later, Pessoa sought to find similarities with the saint responsible for his first two names, namely, through the occultism that he was very interested in, and in this particular case, sacred numerology. The hermetic sum of the birth dates of Saint Anthony and Fernando Pessoa results in a 7, the sacred, perfect and powerful number (as stated by Pitágoras), also considered magical (mystical number par excellence). "The seven is a combination of the three with the four. The three, represented by a triangle, is the Spirit. The four, represented by a square, is Matter. Thus, it can be said that the seven represents the spirit on Earth, leaning on the four Elements (Fire, Water, Air and Earth), or Matter which is enlightened by the Spirit. In this sense, the number four that symbolizes the Earth, in association with the three, that symbolizes the sky, allows to deduce that the seven represents the Totality of the Universe in Movement. The seven is the number of the transformation, it is the first manifestation of human to know the things of the spirit, the things of God, the Creation. It is the number of Divine Perfection, given that on the seventh day God rested from all his Works". Pessoa's calculations were based on the respective dates of birth (1195 for the saint, and 1888 for himself). It would also be 7 the sum of the year of the saint's death (1231). Curiously, the date of death of Fernando Pessoa's father (1893) also gave 7.

Pessoa also became aware of the prophecies of Bandarra (cobbler of Trancoso). He announced, in the third body of his prophecies, through the calculations of mystical arithmetic, the return of Dom Sebastião (whatever is meant by this "return"). Some of the calculations starting from the date of 1578 (disappearance of D. Sebastião in the battle of Alcácer Quibir), point to the arrival of a new D. Sebastião between 1878 and 1978 and Pessoa is born precisely on June 13th of 1888. Following another Interpretation (Hermes Stella), the year appointed for the arrival of the new D. Sebastião is precisely 1888. These two interpretations will be very important for the 5th Empire, prophesied by Pessoa. His parents were Joaquim de Seabra Pessoa, born in Lisbon (28/5/1850) and Maria Madalena Pinheiro Nogueira (12/30-/861), born in Angra de Heroísmo (Terceira Island), Azores. His brother - Jorge Pessoa, was born on January 21st of 1893, and died on January 2nd, 1894, victim of tuberculosis.

Joaquim de Seabra Pessoa did not attend any University, but spoke fluent Italian and French. He was a civil servant (at the Secretary of Justice) and musical critic (Opera) of Diário de Notícias (newspaper that is still published today). He died on July 13th of 1893, a victim of tuberculosis.

tMaria Madalena Pinheiro Nogueira was a very educated lady for that time, she was fluent in French and English, knew German, had knowledge of Latin and wrote rhymes, besides playing the piano.

The news of the birth of Fernando Pessoa was published in a Lisbon newspaper "Correio da Noite", on June 14th, 1888, in the first page, in the section Elegante Chronicle.

Fernando Pessoa was baptized on July 21st, 1888, in the present Basilica of the Martyrs (Rua Garrett, in Chiado). The godparents were Ana Nogueira de Freitas, his aunt (Anica), and General Cláudio Bernardo Pereira Chaby, also related to the family.

His paternal grandparents were Joaquim António de Araújo Pessoa, born in Tavira on February 13th, 1813, infantry general, who participated in the liberal campaigns, and was highly decorated for being a brave fighter, and Dionísia Rosa Estrela de Seabra, born in Lisbon on June 17th, 1823.

Grandmother Dionísia will later live with his family, on largo de São Carlos (when Pessoa was born, she was 64 years old, and had suffered from dementia since mid-life).

His maternal grandfather, Luís António Nogueira was born on December 29th, 1832, in Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island, Azores,. He held a degree in law from the University of Coimbra and various positions in the Portuguese State, joining later the Kingdom Ministry as General Director of Civil and Political Administration, reaching the position of State Counselor. His maternal grandmother, Madalena Xavier Pinheiro, was born on June 14th , 1836 in the São George Island (Velas).

Manuel Gualdino da Cunha (whom Fernando Pessoa called with great affection Uncle Taco and and who was very important because he already played with the poet in his childhood using fictional characters), future husband of Pessoa's great-aunt Maria Xavier Pinheiro, was born on April 18th, 1825, in Lisbon. Officer of the Navy, who came to occupy important positions in the General Managment of the Railways accompanied Pessoa and his mother on the trip to Durban in 1896. Maria Xavier Pinheiro, the closest aunt to Pessoa, who characterized her as a kind of an "educated woman" of the eighteenth century (Enlightenment - century of Lights), skeptical concernig religion, supporter of the aristocracy and was politically monarchical. She also wrote rhymes, and it was even said that her poetry had more quality than that of Pessoa's mother. She got married, a little late, with Manuel Gualdino da Cunha, having no children.

Ana Luísa Pinheiro Nogueira, aunt Anica, the only sister of Pessoa's mother, was born on March 19th, 1860, and got married in 1889 with João Nogueira de Freitas (1865-1904), an agronomist.

Pessoa, his mother, brother Jorge, his grandmother Dionísia and two servants, moved to Rua de S. Marçal, 104, 3º, on November 15th of 1893, months after his father's death. Months later, Maria Madalena (Pessoa's mother), will begin a new relationship with João Miguel dos Santos Rosa, an officer of the Navy.

On July 26, 1895, Fernando writes his first poem entitled "To My Dear Mom".

His mother's marriage took place on 30th of December of the same year in the Church of S. Mamede, by proxy, with commander João Miguel Rosa (they had met in January 1894 in an elevator in Lisbon, and according to their family, it was a true passion, love at first sight), which was at the time in Durban (before he had been commander of the port of Lourenço Marques, now Maputo - Mozambique), having been appointed consul of Portugal in October by the King. He was represented by his brother, Henrique Rosa (Militar retired in 1903 with the rank of general of brigade, who also was a poet of vast culture. He will have a great literary and political influence (notably for his antimonarchical convictions) on Pessoa, with whom he develops close friendship after Pessoa's return to Lisbon in 1905 (after his return, Pessoa was entrusted by his stepfather to support the general in his daily activities, given the illness that made it impossible for him to leave the house).

In an autobiographical note wrote by Pessoa in 1935, he described his general ancestry, as being a mixture of noblemen and Jews. In fact, Pessoa was always very proud of his paternal family. He even discovered that a relative of his - Sancho Pessoa da Cunha, who was born in Montemor-o-Velho, had been a new Christian condemned by the inquisition in 1704 (the process archived in Torre do Tombo), for professing Judaism and dedicating himself to the practice of Astrology and of Occultism, issues that the Pessoa himself will develop throughout his life. He even drew and painted the family coat of arms, in honor of his great-great-grandfather, Captain José António Pereira de Araújo e Sousa, descendant of a distinguished family in Algarve, who ordered to coin the coat of arms, in deference to the King of Portugal, due to relevant services to the country.

Pessoa, at the age of six, created his first imaginary friend: Chevalier de Pas, who wrote letters addressed to himself, perhaps in French.

In a notebook (Floral Birthday Book) that belonged to his mother and where she wrote down the anniversary dates of her friends, he even put the name Chevalier de Pas (which is the oldest record of his writing).

In February 1896, Pessoa and his mother, accompanied by Uncle Cunha, arrived in Durban.