

Antonio Botto, though young, is one of the best-known Portuguese poets of to-day. His initial success, as anyone who reads these poems can understand, was a *succès de scandale*. But he quickly came into his own as something more than the poet who had that sort of success.

His peculiar distinction lies in the subtlety, both expressional and rhythmical, ~~which~~ with which he deals with thoughts and feelings which are in themselves never complex. This has made him clear to the general public and dear to the literary one.

Whatever else might be said is sufficiently expressed in Senhor Teixeira Gomes' critical ~~Foreword~~ Preface. And it should be noted that, apart from having been Portuguese Ambassador at the Court of St. James and President of the Portuguese Republic, Senhor Manuel Teixeira Gomes is a subtle critic, both of letters and of art, and one of the greatest present-day writers of Portuguese prose. I stress this because, after all, it is, for our immediate case, the real and the truer title.

My translation has been made in the most perfect possible conformity, both expressional and rhythmical, with the original text. This does not mean that the translation is, expressional and rhythmically, a line-by-line one, though in many cases indeed it is. But I know the poet and the man so well that even when I have changed I have not altered. I have done my best to have these poems set down in English in the poet's exact style and rhythm, as if he had written them in the language.

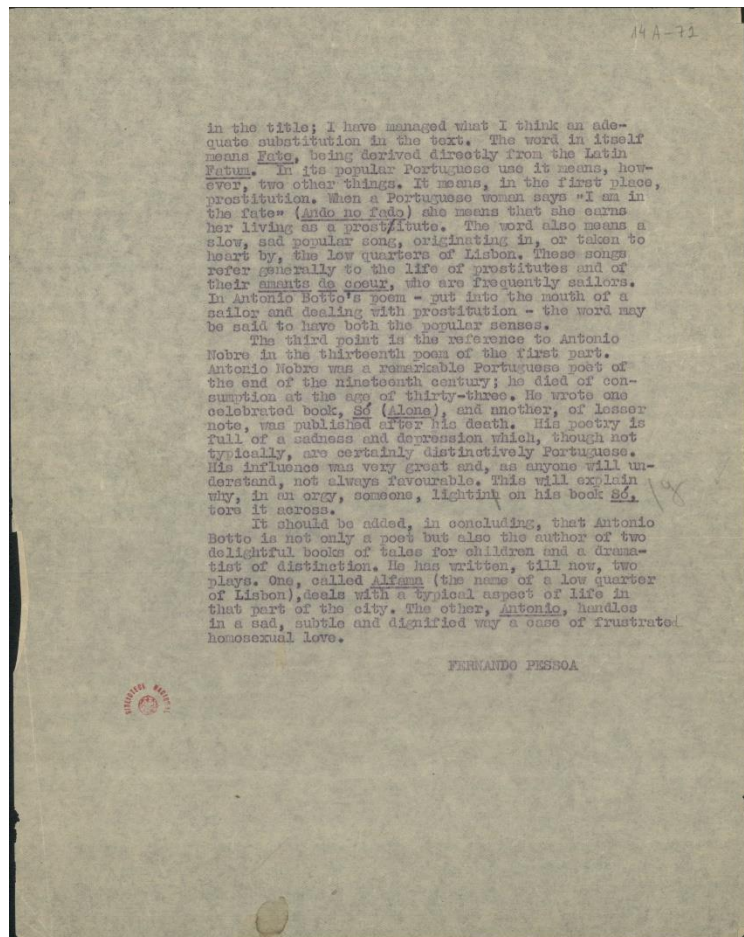
There are three points in the poems which require explanation, since they involve strictly Portuguese things, which most English readers would naturally be unacquainted with.

The first point refers to popular Portuguese poetry, the suggestions of which underlie, so to speak, in their simplicity and type of emotion, the subtlety of Antonio Botto's poems. Popular Portuguese poetry is all in seven-syllable quatrains, which the poet himself often writes, inserting them here and there in the generally irregular rhythm of his poems, where the sudden popular regularity brings in a curious contrast. As a matter of fact, and apart from quatrains themselves, seven-syllable lines are constantly recurring in these poems.

The second point is the word *Fado* which is the title of one poem in Part VII. I have left the word in the original Portuguese because, in the particular sense or senses in which it is here used, it is untranslatable. Apart from this, it figures only

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Transcrição



in the title; I have managed what I think an adequate substitution in the text. The word in itself means *Fate*, being derived directly from the Latin *Fatum*. In its popular Portuguese use it means, however, two other things. It means, in the first place, prostitution. When a Portuguese woman says "I am in the fate" (*Ando no fado*) she means that she earns her living as a prostitute. The word also means a slow, sad popular song, originating in, or taken to heart by, the low quarters of Lisbon. These songs refer generally to the life of prostitutes and of their *amants de coeur*, who are frequently sailors. In Antonio Botto's poem - put into the mouth of a sailor and dealing with prostitution - the word may be said to have both the popular senses.

The third point is the reference to Antonio Nobre in the thirteenth poem of the first part. Antonio Nobre was a remarkable Portuguese poet of the end of the nineteenth century; he died of consumption at the age of thirty-three. He wrote one celebrated book, *Só* (*Alone*), and another, of lesser note, was published after his death. His poetry is full of a sadness and depression which, though not typically, are certainly distinctively Portuguese. His influence was very great and, as anyone will understand, not always favourable. This will explain why, in an orgy, someone, lightning on his book *Só*, tore it across.

It should be added, in concluding, that Antonio Botto is not only a poet but also the author of two delightful books of tales for children and a dramatist of distinction. He has written, till now, two plays. One, called *Alfama* (the name of a low quarter of Lisbon), deals with a typical aspect of life in that part of the city. The other, *Antonio*, handles in a sad, subtle and dignified way a case of frustrated homosexual love.

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DIREITOS ASSOCIADOS

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