



Casa
Fernando
Pessoa

MUSEU DE LITERATURA

**28 SEP 2024
to 5 JAN 2025**



O MUSEU FORA DO ARMÁRIO

Queer books in Fernando Pessoa's library

Curadoria **André Murraças**

Queering the Museum

Queer books in Fernando Pessoa's library

The project *Queering in the museum* proposes a *queer reinterpretation* of the collections of Portuguese museums. For Casa Fernando Pessoa, an exhibition intervention was designed in Fernando Pessoa's private library, highlighting authors and books with queer characters and experiences, or subjects outside heteronormativity.

The word "queer" began to be used as a pejorative term for "homosexual"; but since the 1990s it has been chosen by non-heterosexual people to define their identity. The concept is also accepted by the academic universe and, in the theoretical context applied to the arts, it is a term relatable to the variety of identities, sexual and gender practices that deviate from heterosexual ideas, or that demonstrate their ambiguity.

Among the poet's collection of books, we find a range of titles on *queer experiences* – something that we consider recent, but which has, in fact, always existed. That said, which *queer* books are part of Pessoa's private library?

***Nova Sapho* (1912)**

Visconde de Villa-Moura

This is a milestone in literature, for contradicting the trend of its time to portray homosexuals in a derogatory way, as in the caricatures of Rafael Bordallo Pinheiro and in works such as *O Barão de Lavos* (1891), by Abel Botelho. The protagonist, Maria Peregrina, a lesbian poet, stands out in *Nova Sapho*, considered to be the first Portuguese *queer* novel. The narrative presents bi and homo characters in a natural and cosmopolitan way, challenging heteronormativity, even though it ends tragically with the poet enraptured with the corpse of a lover, both swept away by the sea.

***Alfama* (1933)**

Canções*

António Botto

As a teenager, António Botto moved to Alfama, permeating his work with sailors, *varinas* (female fish vendors), family dramas and fado music. This play depicts the typical neighbourhood, with women conflicted between following social norms or seeking freedom. Performed in Lisbon and Porto, the play was an act of resistance after the scandal of 1923, when Botto and other authors had their works burned for their content, dubbed immoral by a group of students. Botto was a pioneer in describing homosexual love as something natural and beautiful, challenging patriarchy and the conventions of the time with the book *Canções*, on display on the 1st floor.

***Reading** (in Portuguese) **on 12 DEC**
Thursday at 6:30pm · Free entry

***Sodoma Divinisada* (1923)**

Raul Leal

Sodoma Divinisada is a manifesto. The text circulated on print but was also published in the form shown here. It is a reaction to an article by the conservative Álvaro Maia that condemned *Canções* and its defence by Fernando Pessoa, considering them as *filth*. Leal writes: *Regarding the beautiful individuality of António Botto, Mr. Maia attacks lust and pederasty, Obra Divinas. Unable to feel the highest pleasures of the Spirit-Flesh that the Word has consecrated, he attacks them in a vile and foolish way.* It is said that the publication of this text prompted the attack by the Student Action League of Lisbon, which resulted in the confiscation of the books *Sodoma Divinisada*, by Raul Leal, *Canções*, by António Botto and *Decadência*, the book of poems by Judith Teixeira. This controversy became known as *Literature of Sodom*.

Antinous (1918)

Fernando Pessoa

(Documentary archive
CEDANSA – NOVA
FCSH / Heirs of José
de Almada Negreiros)

This English poem by Fernando Pessoa recounts the love between the warrior Antinous and the emperor Hadrian. Men of rare beauty and strength, Antinous accompanied the sovereign in his epic conquests and died in unclear circumstances. Some say Antinous was murdered, others that his death was a sacrifice for Hadrian to win his battles. We don't know what Pessoa's true intention was in focusing on this couple; and there are several possible readings of the poem, but what is certain is that it tells us about the mourning of a man in love with another, in the construction of the memory of what they were and the immortalising of a love. In a second version of the poem, Pessoa edited some words: *vice* (i.e. addiction), for example, became *love*.

Reading (in Portuguese) **on 28 SEP**

Saturday at 4pm · Free entry

A Confissão de Lúcio (1914)

**Mário de
Sá-Carneiro**

A Confissão de Lúcio is a fantastical novel, one of the first where a homosexual relationship appears as the focus of the narrative. It tells the haunted story of the ghost-triangle between Ricardo, Lúcio and Marta - a woman who may not exist and may only be a bridge for Lúcio (Sá-Carneiro's alter-ego) to attain the beautiful Ricardo. It was written shortly before the author committed suicide, in Paris.

Enclosed is a photograph of the stage adaptation of this novel, in 2020, by André Murraças, at the Centro Cultural de Belém, with actors Francisco Goulão, Isac Graça and João Cachola.

Reading (in Portuguese) **on 28 SEP**

Saturday at 4pm · Free entry

**Octávio
(1916)***

Victoriano Braga

**Manuscrito
sobre Octávio
(1916)**

Fernando Pessoa

(National Library
Collection)

Octávio is quite an original play, one of the rare ones, where a homosexual protagonist is described as “a bad boy, very unusual and with an unnatural character in intimacy”. The play was staged with relative success, although when read through today’s eyes, the character of Octávio is endowed with latent misogyny. Regarding this uncanny play, Pessoa wrote an article in which he proposed to determine the value of the drama *Octávio*, in an elliptical text where little is said about the play itself, as it tries to say everything about the dramatic genre.

***Reading (in Portuguese) on 7 NOV**
Thursday at 6:30pm · Free entry

**Sáchá –
comentários
à vida
moderna
(1923)**

**Francisco
Metello**

Written as a theatrical text, this is a mosaic of Lisbon society in the 1920s, where we can meet the most illustrious personalities. Sáchá, a dandy, mingles with bankrupt aristocrats and emerging artists in various scenarios, ranging from literary cafes to the now disappeared theatres of the capital. He is an unscrupulous Dorian Gray from Lisbon, looking for sustenance among those people, without regard to sex or sexual orientation, and planning his movements like a talented Ripley who only doesn’t kill because he doesn’t have to. The highlighted stories are sketched with irony and even backbite (note the names of characters like Seixal Madam, Alcabideche Baroness, etc.), but they give us a diversity of experiences, where *garçonnes* refuse to marry and men in silk pyjamas wander through the night, fuelled by alcohol and cocaine, in a freedom that is also sexual and lived without fear.

Reading (in Portuguese) on 7 NOV
Thursday at 6:30pm · Free entry

Revista Europa (1925)

Dir. Judith Teixeira

After the *Literature of Sodom* controversy, Judith Teixeira created *Revista Europa*, of which only three issues were published. The magazine addressed cosmopolitan themes, with articles by Reinaldo Ferreira and illustrations by Jorge Barradas and Bernardo Marques. It mixed texts about statues, promenades in Chiado, science, international cinema and literary reviews, with a strong presence of feminist articles on the social condition of women, fashion, and film divas.

But Judith Teixeira would never be the same again, and around 1926 she literally disappeared. We know little about her following years, except that, at the end of her life, she lived in Campo de Ourique and had an antique shop. Unfortunately, if we want to know more about her on the internet, even her image is misidentified and associated with a Brazilian poet, Gilka Machado. Let it be clear then: Judith Teixeira is not Gilka Machado. Judith Teixeira is Judith Teixeira.

Reading (in Portuguese) on 12 DEC
Thursday at 6:30pm · Free entry

Dracula (1897)

Bram Stoker

Leaves of Grass (1855)

Walt Whitman

[The works of] Euripides (1916)

La mare au diable (1898)

George Sand

Curiously, we see that Pessoa's interest in what steps outside the normative extends, in his library, to international works and authors. In addition to esotericism and mysticism, there is an appetite for gender and sexual behaviours, long before we started using these labels.

Dracula, by Bram Stoker (an openly homosexual author), showcases scenes of explicit sexual content, first and foremost the capture of Jonathan Harker by Count Dracula and his brides, forming a polyamorous quartet marked by submission and domination.

When Whitman published his *Leaves of Grass*, in 1855, American society was very different and it took a lot of courage to include, in it, a section of poems such as *Calamus*, where he describes his love for another man.

Are Euripides' plays *queer*? Yes, if we read them as texts where characters try to break out of the heterosexual normativity imposed by society, and who, for the most part, pay a price for their choice.

It is also worth mentioning the presence of writer George Sand in this library, whose real name was Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin. The writer used a male pseudonym to overcome prejudice, and adopted male attire in real life, defying the gender norms of her time.

Curatorship and texts
André Murraças

Production
Casa Fernando Pessoa

Leaflet Design
Atelier-do-ver

Actors in the staged readings
**Francisco Goulão, Gonçalo Santos,
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and Margarida Bento**

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Find out more about the project
Queering in the museum at:

 [omuseuforadoarmario](https://www.instagram.com/omuseuforadoarmario)

*To us, Love is the only reason for Life.
That is why Wilde tenderly sang of the love of
monsters and of flowers; he married men to the
imaginary inhabitants of the woods and the sea
and atoned in prison the crime of having liked
everything [sic], loving and singing the symphony
of lines, the intelligence of the Flesh, the freedom of
the soul! And us trying to force the world to see us with
different eyes from those through which it sees itself.*

In *Nova Sapho* (1912), Visconde de Villa-Moura



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