

THE MATERIALITY OF TYPESCRIPTS IN PEDRO HOMEM DE MELLO'S WRITING PRACTICE

A MATERIALIDADE DOS DATILOSCRITOS NA PRODUÇÃO ESCRITA DE PEDRO HOMEM DE MELLO

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This article addresses the main typewriting habits of Portuguese poet Pedro Homem de Mello (1904–1984), as evidenced in documents belonging to his family's private estate and scattered collections owned by public archives and libraries. After examining his work in several spheres of activity (his personal and professional correspondence, his newspaper collaborations and essays as a folklorist, his work as an author and presenter of TV and radio programs), the essay focuses on material aspects of Homem de Mello's literary typescripts, such as page management strategies, the use of coloured ribbons, the occurrence of mechanical errors, or the combination of handwritten corrections and carbon-paper duplicators as a favoured revision technique. It concludes by questioning how the author's multimodal typewriting ecosystem may have contributed to stylistic changes in his poetry, catalysing freer modes of expression in the traditional forms of his choice.

Keywords: Typewriter. Creativity. Revision. Genetic Criticism. Modernism. Portugal.

Este artigo ocupa-se dos hábitos datilográficos do poeta português Pedro Homem de Mello (1904–1984), conforme evidenciado nos documentos do espólio familiar e em coleções dispersas por vários arquivos e bibliotecas públicas. Depois de examinar o seu trabalho em diversas esferas de atividade (a correspondência pessoal e profissional, as suas colaborações em jornais na qualidade de folclorista, a sua atividade de autor e apresentador de programas de televisão e rádio), o ensaio debruça-se sobre aspetos materiais dos datiloscritos literários de Homem de Mello, nomeadamente algumas estratégias de gestão espacial da página escrita, o emprego de fitas coloridas, a ocorrência de erros mecânicos e a introdução de correções manuscritas em cópias a papel químico, enquanto técnica revisória favorita. No final, procura-se averiguar de que modo o ecossistema multimodal de escrita mecânica deste autor pode ter contribuído para algumas alterações de estilo na sua poesia, favorecendo a introdução de modalidades mais livres nas formas tradicionais da sua preferência.

Palavras-chave: Máquina de escrever. Criatividade. Revisão. Crítica Genética. Modernismo. Portugal.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, scholars from different backgrounds have drawn attention to the impact of the typewriter on 20th-century writing practices.² Relying on case studies from Germany, France, Belgium, Finland, the USA, the UK, and Australia, those critics concluded that “responses to the typewriter were never uniform” and “we must now extend the geographical sphere” of research (Lyons, 2021, pp. 89, 15) to promote a greater understanding of the machine’s influence on literary creativity throughout the 20th-century. Accordingly, this article focuses on a Portuguese author, Pedro Homem de Mello (1904–1984), whose prolific and multifaceted writing activity presents an interesting case study for textual and genetic criticism.³

Besides being an award-winning poet of the so-called Second Portuguese Modernism – “a broad literary and artistic movement”⁴ (Silvestre, 2003, p. 17) associated with the journal *Presença* (1927–1940), which involved different generations and aesthetic orientations lying “on the margins or alongside the avant-garde”⁵ (Sena, 1977, p. 31) – Homem de Mello practised law and worked as a school principal and teacher, as well as a folklorist and audiovisual personality with several programs aired from the late 1950s until mid-70s. To comprehensively assess his writing habits, we shall, therefore, examine the author’s work within several spheres of activity: his personal and professional correspondence, his essays and newspaper collaborations as a folklorist, his work as an author and presenter of TV and radio programs, and his vast poetic oeuvre.

Based on extensive research into the author’s documentary estate⁶, this article will try to associate different uses of the machine with specific text genres before

² Kittler (1999); Lyons (2021); Pulkkinen (2020a, 2020b, 2023); Sullivan (2013); Viollet (1996).

³ Genetic criticism is a scholarly approach that emerged in France during the second half of the 1960s as an answer to the dominance of structuralism in textual studies. It succeeded in adding a temporal, paradigmatic dimension to the text, regarded as a process rather than a product, by investigating “the observable traces of intellectual production over literary, scientific and philosophical manuscripts” (Hay, 2017, p. 531), as well as typescripts, and other materials of the “editorial genesis” (Mahrer et al., 2015).

⁴ Translated from the Portuguese by the author of this article.

⁵ Translated from the Portuguese by the author of this article.

⁶ The investigations leading to this article date from 2014 to 2017, when systematic research was conducted into the archive of Pedro Homem de Mello at Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Lisboa), E14. Bought in 1986 but never properly curated, this vast repository contains different sorts of material, including manuscripts and typescripts of poems, articles, television / radio scripts, and correspondence. Additional research was also led into the documentation in the hands of the poet’s granddaughters – Rita Homem de Mello (Porto, now in Madrid) and Mariana Homem de Mello (Lisbon, now in Caminha) – and scattered collections owned by several private and public institutions: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, E5 (collection António Pedro), E11 (collection Vitorino Nemésio), E15 (collection Adolfo Casais Monteiro), E16 (collection João Gaspar Simões), E22 (collection Mário Henrique Leiria), E35 (collection Ruben A.), E37 (collection João Ameal), E48 (collection Natércia Freire), E64 (collection Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen), N28 (collection Cabral do Nascimento), N36 (collection Luís Forjaz Trigueiros), Esp. A/5023-5025 (collection José Campos de Figueiredo); Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Regional de Ponta Delgada (collection Natália Correia); Museu do Neorealismo (Vila Franca de Xira), ESP/LIT/ARA (collection António Ramos de Almeida); Fundação António Quadros (Rio Maior), collection António Ferro / Fernanda de Castro, collection António Quadros; Casa-Museu Vasco de Lima Couto (Constância); Centro de Estudos Regionais (Vila do Conde), collection José Régio; Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto, M-SER (collection Alberto de Serpa), M-AF (collection Antero de Figueiredo), ML (Museu de Literatura collection), M-EA-phm (collection Eugénio de Andrade – owned by Câmara Municipal do Porto, this last

concentrating on material aspects of his literary typescripts to briefly interrogate how that multimodal mechanical writing may have “structured or influenced [...] creativity” (Lyons, 2021, p. 4), enforcing potential stylistic changes in his poetry over the years.

2. Pedro Homem de Mello's uses of the typewriter

Although Pedro Homem de Mello's estate provides abundant material evidence of his typewriting, there is no precise information about the kind of machine(s) the author owned in his lifetime, whether he used only mechanical devices or tried the electromechanical models that became popular after the 1960s. In the absence of forensic examinations to identify typewriter brands or models,⁷ we may only assume he must have used some machines from Portuguese manufacturer Messa, with an HCESAR keyboard and dual-function keys.⁸

In July 1937, a protectionist measure of Salazar's dictatorial regime against foreign competition determined that any typewriter imported or produced in Portugal should adopt a specific keyboard (Figure 1), which differed from the international standards at the time.⁹ Until the early 1970s (when the French AZERTY and the English QWERTY designs were accepted again), many people managed to deceive the authorities, masking the keyboard configuration of imported typewriters for customs clearance (Pinheiro, 2021b), but that seems unlikely to be the case for our author, considering that he was close to the regime and worked in several official institutions during the dictatorship period (1932–1974).

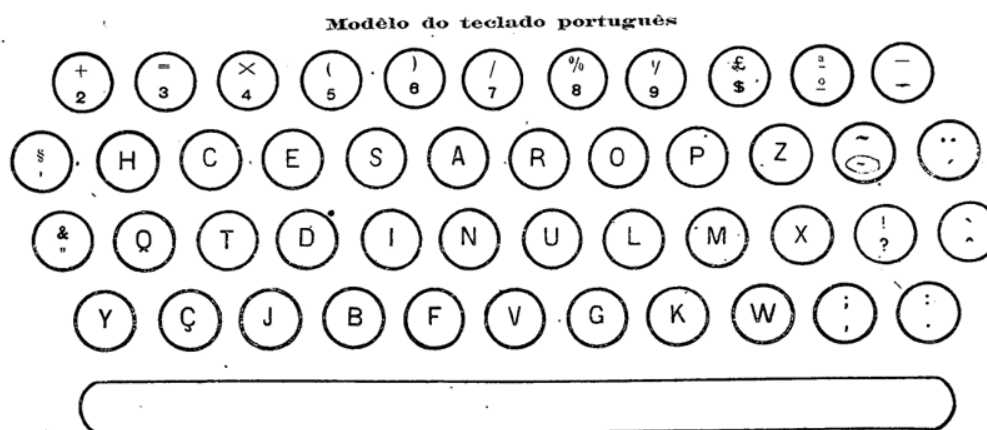
archive is presently housed at Casa dos Livros, under the custody of CECUP, although the article still follows the original identification system when BPMP was the custodian of the material. The various typescripts analysed within the research project range from the early 1930s to the late 1970s.

⁷ According to forensic science, “every typewriter and document written on it is identifiable” (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 33). “For many years, different typewriter manufacturers used different typefaces on their machines and the typefaces also changed in the course of time. With the help of a comprehensive collection of typeface samples, such as the Haas Atlas, it is possible to identify the manufacturer of the typewriter and its approximate date of manufacture” (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 41).

⁸ The Portuguese company was founded in Algueirão-Mem Martins in 1958 and ceased production in 1985 (Pinheiro, 2021a).

⁹ According to art 1 (2) of Decree-law no. 27:868, “the signs of the Portuguese keyboard diagram that are not alphabet characters, phonic notations (accents) or syntactic notations (punctuation marks) may be suppressed on typewriters that have less than forty-six keys” (translated from the Portuguese by the author of this article).

Figure 1. Portuguese HCESAR keyboard (Decree-law 27:868, of the 17th of July, 1937).



Besides inquiring about the device(s) employed by our author, we should also ask “how, when, and where” Pedro Homem de Mello used the machine (Lyons, 2021, p. 4).

While it is uncertain whether he always typed his texts or occasionally passed the task to a secretary, as did many contemporary writers,¹⁰ the author must have learned basic typing skills throughout his education, becoming self-sufficient and independent from a young age. Indeed, the machine already coexisted with pens and pencils in his earliest writings for publication during the 1930s.¹¹ Initially, it was employed only for fair copying and revision since typing up a manuscript often “modified the writer’s ‘point of view’”, introducing “a distance between the author and the text” that “allowed a more critical reading” (Viollet, 1996, p. 204).¹² However, the author also gradually started using the typewriter for primary composition, as his cursive became hasty and indecipherable.

When we compare manuscripts produced over the years,¹³ the handwriting deterioration is apparent and frequently mentioned in correspondence with friends and family. In 1938, for example, he admitted to fellow poet José Régio that his handwriting was “atrocious”,¹⁴ while his mother, Maria do Pilar, repeatedly complained of illegible letters one could hardly make out:

¹⁰ “Male writers depended on female typists – professionals, lovers, wives – to turn drafts into presentable texts. In so doing, they inherited work practices already enshrined in the corporate office world”. “Innumerable authors relied on the professional services of secretarial agencies. Literary associations with an office background were therefore numerous” (Lyons, 2021, p. 21). In Pedro Homem de Mello’s estate there is a letter from a typist woman offering her services in March 1967 (owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal – BNP, E14, cx. 16 [folder 3]), which suggests he may have resorted to assistance for specific commissions.

¹¹ Homem de Mello’s early publications took place in the family’s newspaper *Soberania do Povo* in 1926, even though his first book of poems, *Caravela ao Mar*, was printed only in 1933. The typescript of this book is currently owned by one of his granddaughters, Rita Homem de Mello.

¹² Translated from the French by the author of this article.

¹³ Compare, for example, the handwritten parts in the typescript of *Caravela ao Mar* (1933) and the manuscript of the book *Ecce Homo* (1974) – both documents owned by Rita Homem de Mello.

¹⁴ José Régio (1901–1969) was the founder of *Presença*, a journal published in Coimbra from 1927 to 1940, which is associated with a *Second Modernism* in Portugal. Adolfo Casais Monteiro (2003, p. 42), one of its most prominent members, recognised Pedro Homem de Mello as an indisputable member of this movement, despite being an occasional contributor at the end of series I (Mello, 1938). This quotation belongs to a letter answering Régio’s personal invitation to participate in *Presença* – Pedro Homem de Mello’s letter to José Régio, 7 January 1938. Owned by Centro de Estudos Regianos (CER, 7814).

Precisas de ver como escreves agora, pois é desconsolador precisar de ler as tuas cartas 2 e 3 vezes para as poder decifrar e nem sempre consigo fazel-o. É pelo sentido muitas vezes que descubro o que queres dizer, tu que tão boa letra tinhas.

[You must watch out how you are writing because it is heartbreaking to read your letters two and three times and not always be able to decipher them. I often guess the meaning from the context. You, who used to have such good handwriting.]¹⁵

Therefore, for the sake of legibility, he started using the machine to correspond with many of his acquaintances, typing letters straight onto the keyboard.

Researchers have already noted the “distancing effect of the typewriter and its disturbing ability to depersonalise texts” (Lyons, 2021, p. 22) by concealing “the hand, [...], character and identity of the writer” (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 36), which explains why it suited business letters over private correspondence as an individual form of expression and communication. For that reason, many 20th-century writers “felt a residual guilt about typing personal letters” (Lyons, 2021, p. 90), as seems to be the case with Pedro Homem de Mello. Typically, our author would write private missives to friends and family by hand and resort to the typewriter only for professional correspondence¹⁶ and formal purposes, such as dealing with debts¹⁷, family apologies,¹⁸ invitations to dinner parties,¹⁹ or addressing transcriptions of poems to literary peers.²⁰ However, after many complaints about deplorable calligraphy and letters returned as non-deliverable due to illegible

¹⁵ Maria do Pilar Homem de Mello's letter to Pedro Homem de Mello, 18 July 1943. Owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 2 [folder 11]). Translated from the Portuguese by the author of this article.

¹⁶ The author's archive at the Portuguese National Library holds several typescript letters from the 1950s and 60s, addressing the head of the general postal administration, Luís d'Albuquerque, about annual contracts for the publication of Christmas postcards with poems by Pedro Homem de Mello – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (e.g., BNP, E14, cx 1 [folder 13]; BNP, E14, cx 14 [folder 6]; BNP, E14, cx 16 [folder 1]). See also a typescript letter to a bookshop owner in Coimbra, addressing copies of his book *O Desterrado* for sale in 1971 – at Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 13 [folder 4]).

¹⁷ For example, typescript letter to Manuel Homem de Mello describing his numerous debts and the maturity of a letter of credit in 1969 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx 11 [folder 5]). See also a typescript letter to the head of the tax office of Viana do Castelo in 1961 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 13 [folder 4]).

¹⁸ For example, typescript missive on letterhead with the Mello coat of arms, expressing formal apologies on behalf of his family – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 13 [folder 4]).

¹⁹ For example, typescript letters to Ruben A., inviting this fellow writer to party dinners in September 1953 and September 1954 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E35, cx. 33 [folder II]; BNP, E35, cx. 33 [folder III]).

²⁰ For example, typescript letter accompanying poems addressed to José Régio on 28-01-1941 – owned by Centro de Estudos Regianos (CER, 7818); typescript letter with the poem “Esperança”, addressed to Ruben A. on 05-02-1958 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E35, cx. 33 [folder V]); typescript poem “A História da Negra Farda” accompanying a manuscript missive to Natércia Freire on 12-09-1953 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E48, cx. 24). Among other examples, we will highlight a typescript letter to Eugénio de Andrade, dated 02-05-1953, asking his dear friend in Lisbon to find a suitable publication outlet for a poem typed within the letter (owned by Câmara Municipal do Porto – BPMP, M-EA-phm[13-11], N.º INV 1159B). Eugénio de Andrade must have expressed some reservations about this poem, since Homem de Mello sent a corrected typescript version (BPMP, M-EA-phm[13-12], N.º INV. 1145B), which appeared in the literary magazine *Ler* a few weeks later (Mello, 1953, p. 5).

addresses, he also started typing trivial letters to family members²¹ and friends (including the respective envelopes²²). In such cases, though, the poet was careful to add a handwritten signature²³ – occasionally with a salutation line²⁴ or even a short personal message by hand – to preserve some mark of individuality and intimacy.

Many letters in the archives of his contemporaries demonstrate that Homem de Mello started writing correspondence on the typewriter even before midcentury, progressively embracing the new technology as a compositional tool in different spheres of activity over the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Some draft articles for newspapers and tourism magazines at the time, for instance, had lists of words typed on the back of sheets²⁵, suggesting that the author was already organising and planning part of his writing directly on the machine.

Like other 20th-century writers who worked as journalists, he must have become “accustomed to fast typing to meet short deadlines, with little time for revision” (Lyons, 2021, p. 63), especially in connection to some experiences as an author and presenter of radio and television programs aired since the late 1950s, which made him work around the clock.²⁶ Clearly, “the typewriter did not eliminate handwriting” (Lyons, 2021, p. 200), and our author’s preference for writing in cafés²⁷ would keep him drafting verse as much as prose²⁸ and TV/radio scripts²⁹ in longhand before committing texts to the machine.³⁰

²¹ For example, typescript letter to Maria do Pilar Homem de Mello on 24-08-1960 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 1 [folder 4]).

²² For example, typescript letter and envelope addressed to Eugénio de Andrade in February 1972 (owned by Câmara Municipal do Porto – BPMP, M-EA-phm[13-111], N.º INV. 1109B) after the previous handwritten version (BPMP, M-EA-phm[13-112], N.º INV. 1110B) had been returned by the post office.

²³ For example, typescript letter to Eugénio de Andrade on 26-09-1953 (owned by Câmara Municipal do Porto – BPMP, M-EA-phm[13-16], N.º INV. 1171B).

²⁴ E.g. typescript letter to Eugénio de Andrade on 08-09-1954 (owned by Câmara Municipal do Porto – BPMP, M-EA-phm[13-23], N.º INV. 1142B).

²⁵ For example, typescript of an article about folklore dances in the village of Soajo, containing a typed list of place names and dances on the back of the sheet – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 9 [folder 5]).

²⁶ Besides the much popular “Danças e Cantares” (a folklore TV show aired every Sunday afternoon from 1958 until the 1974 Revolution), Pedro Homem de Mello was responsible for several TV and radio programs on the national broadcaster, such as the series “Poesia, Canto e Dança” and “Poetas Portugueses”. Additionally, he was involved in a TV drama adaptation of a short story penned by his own father, António Homem de Mello (Toy) – typescript owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 17 [folder 3]). Despite being “a lot of work”, Pedro Homem de Mello “tenaciously” grasped these jobs, because they were “very well-paid”. The confession is made in a letter to his mother on 13-02-1960, where he admitted: “I get my hands on anything that will give me money” – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 2 [folder 15]). Translated from the Portuguese by the author of this article.

²⁷ See, for example, notebook with manuscript poems dated from “Porto, Tivoli Café, 1 January 1953” – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 5 [folder 12]). See also a letter to his mother, on 28-12-1960, referring to some poems the author had composed in a coffee shop, while crying profusely, to the other people’s astonishment – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 14 [folder 7]).

²⁸ E.g. manuscript article “Liberdade” dated 16 January 1950 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 6 [folder 3]); manuscript article “Alberto de Serpa e eu” dated 1 January 1950 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 13 [folder 4]).

²⁹ For example, manuscript of a poetry recital for RTP – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 9 [folder 6]).

³⁰ For example, manuscript of a poem about Amália Rodrigues, accompanied by the respective typescript – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 13 [folder 3]); manuscript of the poem “Berço”, accompanied by a corrected typescript version – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 22 [folder 1]); manuscript of the article “A Crítica”, accompanied by the respective typescript – owned by

However, the two writing modes frequently coincided, as during “the 1950s and 1960s, drafting by hand and then typing up was artisanal, slow, deliberate, and often retrospective; working straight on to the machine was fluid, spontaneous, future-oriented, and not necessarily selective” (Sullivan, 2013, p. 255).

In our author's practice, correspondence, newspaper articles, and audiovisual scripts more likely tended to motivate generative typing, while poetry remained associated with longhand. Still, the experiences on radio and television were responsible for introducing a typing habit that would positively influence his poetic enterprise.

To facilitate teamwork and comply with protocols of the National Information Secretariat,³¹ which required prior approval of TV and radio scripts, Homem de Mello started typing on sheets of carbon paper³² to produce multiple copies simultaneously. In the next section, we will see that this procedure, imposed on his professional activity for pragmatic reasons, was assimilated into the poet's composition method as a favoured revision technique, indicating the tight imbrication of all his writing. Rather than compartmentalised uses of the machine attached to specific text genres, one should thus regard Pedro Homem de Mello's multimodal typing as a network ecology of writing “in which anything that affects one strand of the web vibrates throughout the whole” (Cooper, 1986, p. 370).

We will now briefly examine his literary typescripts to question how that multifaceted mechanical writing may have led to stylistic changes in his poetry over the years.

3. The materiality of literary typescripts

It has been noted how the technical and mechanical complexities of the typewriter posed numerous challenges, never fully overcome “until the word processor enabled immediate correction as well as the wholesale manipulation of texts” (Lyons, 2021, p. 39). The machine was most unsuitable for complex corrections or “vertical revisions” (Tanselle, 1990, p. 53), such as displacements of text, but even small deletions could be problematic as they implied interrupting the writing course to reverse the text.³³

Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 3 [folder 17]); manuscript of an article about the inclusion of Toy in a school textbook, accompanied by the respective typescript – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 9 [folder 6]).

³¹ During the dictatorial regime Estado Novo (1932–1974), censorship, propaganda, and popular culture were controlled by a governmental institution called SPN (Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional), later SNI (Secretariado Nacional de Informação), and also SEIT (Secretaria de Estado da Informação e Turismo) (Côrte-Real, 2002).

³² The author's archive at the Portuguese National Library holds numerous duplicated scripts. We list just a few examples: two copies of a radio script about poet António Sardinha, approved by the National Information Secretariat on 01/04/1961 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 6 [folder 5]); three copies of a TV script entitled “Folclore da Ribeira de Ovar”, dated 18/12/1965 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 4 [folder 6]); two copies of a TV script entitled “Rancho Folclórico de Vila das Aves (Santo Tirso)”, dated 27/02/1972 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 3 [folder 12]).

³³ Veijo Pulkkinen notes that “[w]hen working on the typewriter, composing and editing are two distinct activities, while with longhand or a word processor these textual operations blend together. It is not easy to correct and revise a typescript on the run with a typewriter, even more so once the paper has been removed from the machine” (Pulkkinen, 2020a, p. 206).

Many 20th-century authors developed specific techniques to address correctability either by performing “a sort of ‘blind revision’” (Pulkkinen, 2020a, p. 206)³⁴ or using Tipp-Ex strips (developed in West Germany around the 1970s) and attaching new typed sections over the pages with the help of “scissors and glue (or pins, staples)” (Viollet, 1996, p. 203).³⁵ Pedro Homem de Mello, however, preferred a different approach: he would type “xx” over small mistakes for immediate corrections while resorting to carbon paper to duplicate his typescripts and experiment with retrospective layers of revision³⁶ in several copies. The method, apparently developed while working on radio and television, was soon incorporated into his poetry, providing the ideal multiple canvases for revision since “the very existence of this visually intermediate stage” was “a better spur to rewriting than [...] a homogeneous manuscript” (Sullivan, 2013, p. 8).

Pedro Homem de Mello’s documentary estate, housed at the Portuguese National Library and in the hands of his family, affords abundant material evidence of this practice throughout the 1960s and 70s. He would provide up to five mechanical copies for many such typed poems and experiment with handwritten revisions, introducing local corrections but also structural adjustments, such as additions and transpositions of entire stanzas connected through metamarks (usually arrows and numbers).³⁷

The author’s revision occurred within a network of different media, going back and forth between the typewriter and pens or pencils in consecutive editing campaigns.³⁸ However, not all handwritten corrections consisted of “substantive” revisions (i.e. “readings of the text [...] that affect the author’s meaning or the essence of his expression” – Greg, 1951, p. 22); sometimes, they would only correct “errors by execution”³⁹; i.e. accidents caused by technical challenges of the machine – what Walter Greg (1951, p. 22) calls “the accidentals”. In fact, the typewriter was particularly prone to typos due to the proximity of keys and the disconnection of one’s eyes, fingers, and inscription, “located in a place entirely apart from where the hand works” (Beyerlin as cited in Kittler, 1990, p. 195).

A previous article (Pereira, 2018) already identified Homem de Mello’s most frequent typewriting errors by execution, involving the addition, repetition, suppression, or exchange of words and characters. Among these, special mention goes to punctuation marks, capital letters, and diacritics, which the author often avoided by adding them only by hand due to the mechanical complexity of such characters in the Portuguese dual-

³⁴ Pulkkinen (2020a) calls “blind revision” to a specific sort of generative typing practiced by such writers as D. H. Lawrence and Jalmari Finne, who “did not read and correct previous drafts but rather inserted a blank paper in the machine and typed an altogether new version of the text without copying the previous version”.

³⁵ Translated from the French by the author of this article.

³⁶ In the French bibliography, immediate corrections are often referred to as *writing variants* (“variantes d’écriture”) and retrospective revisions as *reading variants* (“variantes de lecture”) – Grésillon (1989, p. 184).

³⁷ For example, typescript of the poem “Conquista” with handwritten corrections and transpositions – owned Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 21).

³⁸ According to genetically oriented scholars, each folio contains “traces of written works that usually represent the outcome of a continuous and specific working session [...] to which other sequences may have been added afterwards, in the form of consecutive editing campaigns” (De Biasi, 1999, pp. 16–17).

³⁹ Dionísio (2021, p. 118) defines “errors by execution” as authorial errors resulting from momentary or mechanical distractions while writing.

function keyboard. Also recurrent was a series of spacing errors, such as line-break and stanza-break cancellations, motivated by page management strategies to save paper⁴⁰ and avoid introducing new sheets in the typewriter's receptor – as that would interrupt the workflow.

For the same reason, instead of adding a new folio, the poet sometimes folded his typed sheet in half and fed the machine with a revised version of the poem under composition, applying different page orientations for better differentiation.⁴¹

When ink faded out in the middle of the text, Homem de Mello would also switch to the red ink option of the machine instead of replacing the bicoloured ribbon in use.⁴² Even though only headings were intentionally red highlighted in his *modus scribendi*,⁴³ he would take on the coloured option to complete the task without pausing the work session and keep using the red side of the ribbon in the following typescripts⁴⁴, both for economy and practicality.

To all these material considerations, briefly drawn from text genetics and palaeographic analysis of authorial documentation, typewriter forensics could add yet another layer of information on such things as misaligned characters (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 38) or the force employed in pressing keys onto the keyboard (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 37), which allegedly reveal much about the mental state of the operator of a typewriter,⁴⁵ contributing to further insight into one's writing. We shall now conclude by questioning whether the author's increased use of typewriters might have impacted creativity, enforcing potential stylistic changes in his poetry.

4. Impact on literary creativity

Genetic critics often underestimate the interaction between the typewriter and literary creativity (Viollet, 1996, p. 206). Throughout the 20th-century, the machine initiated “a

⁴⁰ In an effort to save paper, Pedro Homem de Mello also reused typewritten sheets from previous articles and TV scripts to compose his poems. For example, typescript of the article “Pássaro Azul” (1 f.), with a handwritten poem on the back of the sheet – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 9 [folder 6]); typescript of the article “Mapa das danças do Alto-Minho” (6 ff.), with a handwritten poem on the back of f. 6 – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 17 [folder 1]); typescript of an article about Arcádia's confectionery, with the handwritten poem “Esperança” on the back of the sheet – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 22 [folder 16]).

⁴¹ For example, two versions of the poem “Ave-Maria” with different page orientations on the same document – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 14).

⁴² For example, typescript of the poem “Canção Futura”, with the title and the last verses in red ink – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 21). Bicoloured typewriter ribbons, patented by Samuel A. Neidigh in 1921, usually comprised black and red inks applied “at opposite sides of the alkali line” (Neidigh, 1919).

⁴³ Among the numerous poems with headings typed in red uppercase, see, for example, a typescript of the poem “Triângulo”, dated 1957 (owned by Câmara Municipal do Porto – BPMP, M-SER-554); typescript of the poem “Cruz” owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 21 [folder 46]); typescript of the poem “Cântaros” owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 22).

⁴⁴ See, for example, a typescript of the poem “Canção Futura”, which starts in black and changes to red in the middle of the text – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 21 [folder 130]) – and the following version of the same poem “Canção Futura”, typed only in red – owned by Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP, E14, cx. 22 [folder 111]). The author's archive at the Portuguese National Library holds numerous other typescripts entirely in red.

⁴⁵ This type of forensic analysis follows in footsteps of graphology and other allied approaches to handwriting, according to which distress and mental disorders often interfere with a person's writing style.

fundamental mutation in the mode of existence of language” (Wellbery, 1990, p. xiv) and “changed compositional practices”, offering writers “new opportunities, for speed” as well as “critical distance” (Lyons, 2021, p. 5). Recent studies additionally demonstrate that many modernist writers used the new technology to challenge poetic conventions (Lyons, 2021, p. 200) and develop a style free of traditional constraints of rhyme, metre, line, and stanza (Lyons, 2021, p. 67).

As a poet whose outlook is closer to post-romantic traditions than to neo-modernist verse style,⁴⁶ Pedro Homem de Mello never really sought freedom from verse and rhyme patterns from the oral tradition – which he diligently studied as a folklorist. His composition drafts also remained primarily attached to longhand, as many notebooks with manuscript poems in his estate demonstrate.⁴⁷ For him and many other poets,⁴⁸ pens seemed like a more natural form of lyrical expression – just like some writers who had reflected their memories on paper saw it “more natural to try and recover the past with a pen in your hand than with your fingers poised over a keyboard”, since it materially worked “like a tool, a cutting or digging tool, slicing down through the roots, probing the rock bed of memory” (Lodge, 2011, p. 260).

Still, one could wonder whether the typewriter contributed to enforcing freer modes of expression in the traditional poetic forms of his choice. Comparing some poems from the 1920s with other compositions written in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s,⁴⁹ we realise that the author’s style has become more diverse. Discursive poems adhering to strict formal constraints never disappeared from his work but were gradually combined with a loosened style of composition, with short, concatenated rhythms that bear a resemblance to the sound of a keyboard and could evoke T.S. Eliot’s letter to Conrad Aiken in 1916, referring to the impact of the typewriter on the length of his sentences:

Composing on the typewriter, I find that I am sloughing off all my long sentences which I used to dote upon. Short, staccato, like modern French prose. The typewriter makes for lucidity, but I am not sure that it encourages subtlety (Eliot, 2009, p. 158).

⁴⁶ Many critics have noted that Pedro Homem de Mello’s poetry is characterised by a “psychological accent and dramatization associated with the resumed romantic tradition” (Guimarães, 1982, p. 84 – translated from the Portuguese by the author of this article).

⁴⁷ One of his latest manuscript notebooks, dating from the mid-1970s, was posthumously published in facsimile, under the title *Eu, Poeta e Tu, Cidade* (Mello, 2007).

⁴⁸ Fernando Pessoa, for instance, considered typeface to be unpoetic: “É pena que vá tudo em letra de máquina, que torna a poesia pouco poética, mas assim é mais rápido e nítido” [It is a shame that this is all in typefont, which makes poetry less poetic, but it is faster and clearer this way] (Pessoa, 1985, p. 43, letter to Armando Cortês-Rodrigues on Janeiro 19th, 1915) and even his heteronym Álvaro de Campos, the futurist poet of technology, refers to the “banally sinister” clicking of typewriters in a poem entitled “Dactilografia” [Typewriting] (Pessoa, 1993, p. 301). However, Pessoa also admitted that the typewriter accelerated his thoughts and expression, for writing on the machine was almost like speaking: “Em eu começando a falar – e escrever à máquina é para mim falar –, custa-me a encontrar o travão” [When I start speaking – and writing on a typewriter is speaking for me –, it’s difficult to find the brake] (Pessoa, 1999, p. 342, letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 13 January 1935).

⁴⁹ Compare, for example, the sonnet “Não choreis os mortos” (Mello, 1926) and the poem “Melodia” (Mello, 1974, p. 79). For copyright reasons, this article cannot reproduce the texts.

The correlation between writing technologies and literary creativity is difficult to assess. While Nietzsche noticed the link as early as the late 19th-century,⁵⁰ we cannot say if this more diverse style of composition that emerged in Pedro Homem de Mello's oeuvre around the 1950s was materially structured by the daily use of typewriters or otherwise reflected environmental literary and cultural changes. The only safe assumption is that the author's multimodal typewriting has significantly impacted his work of revision, favouring continual improvement of texts and presumably changing his perception of the "textual ecology – the shape of the poem on the page, the spatial and sonic relationship that its parts bear to one another" (Weston, 2016), as the machine "supposes (or implies) page management strategies, visual effects, rewriting systems, a specific connection between semantics and semiotics" (Viollet, 1996, p. 208).⁵¹

So far, "interdisciplinary fields [...] particularly interested in managing the discourse" of time and materiality (Layne, 2014, p. 63) have rarely explored 20th-century literary typescripts,⁵² and further research into the archives of our authors is necessary for a systematic comparative outlook, since "the way [...] authors use a typewriter can differ significantly, and its role in the genesis of a work by a single author may change from one project to another as well" (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 33). Meanwhile, the material evidence collected from Pedro Homem de Mello's textual and documentary heritage will be instrumental in helping us evaluate how literary creativity was "supported, inspired, and restricted by writing technologies" (Pulkkinen, 2023, p. 33) in 20th-century Portugal.

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⁵⁰ Nietzsche "observed in one of his few typed letters that 'Our writing tools are also working on our thoughts' [...]. When the progressively myopic retired philologist began using a typewriter [...] he [...] began to change his way of writing and thinking from sustained argument and prolonged reflection to aphorisms, puns, and 'telegram style'" (Wutz & Winthrop-Young, 1999, p. xxix).

⁵¹ Translated from the French by the author of this article.

⁵² Among those few publications is Lawrence Rainey's (2005) study of T.S. Eliot's typescripts of *The Waste Land* from 1921–1922 and Veijo Pulkkinen's genetic analysis of typescripts by Finnish writers Jalmari Finne (Pulkkinen, 2020a), Juha Mannerkorpi (Pulkkinen, 2020b), and Elina Vaara (Pulkkinen, 2023).

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