

Introduction: Denaturalizing Pessoa's Alberto Caeiro

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This issue of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* offers the most recent criticism on Alberto Caeiro's poetry and influence. It is the first time that at this level an entire critical volume has been devoted to the Master of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms. This work undercuts the well-established habit of publishing a book on that constructed unity called Pessoa, whatever Pessoa means, and it probably does not mean anything. Paraphrasing what Caeiro says about Nature, this book presupposes that Pessoa is "simply parts, nothing whole."

Fortunately, the set of articles that follows cannot be easily rescued by a unity. A construction of a unity probably has to be found in the somewhat negative title above "Denaturalizing Caeiro." In fact, Caeiro's poems appear *prima facie* as natural or naturalized and may be read as part of a story or a history. Nature is not history-free in the detailed reading of Caeiro's poems. In the first lines of the first poem of *The Keeper of Sheep* he writes:

I never kept sheep,
But it's as if I'd done so.
My soul is like a shepherd.
It knows wind and sun
Walking hand in hand with the Seasons
Observing, and following along.
All of Nature's unpeopled peacefulness
Comes to sit alongside me
(*The Keeper of Sheep* 3).¹

Caeiro is presented in this initial poem as a thought experiment, an *as if self*. Therefore, Caeiro's world is an *as if world*. Nature, even capitalized, is

above all virtual; this is the best of Caeiro's insights and a good reason why Pessoa, in a letter to João Gaspar Simões dated February 25, 1933, ranked *The Keeper of Sheep* as "the best I have done" ("o melhor que eu tenho feito"). However, the link between Nature and the self is not primarily a representational one; the fact that "Nature ... / Comes to sit alongside me" suggests a contiguity between Caeiro's *me* and "All of Nature's unpeopled peacefulness." In other words, the link between Caeiro and Nature is one of contingency.

In Caeiro's implicit poetics, the movement of naturalizing poetry writing appears at a naive level of reading:

I keep writing my poems without wanting to,
 As if writing weren't something made up of gestures,
 As if writing were something that happened to me
 Like the sun outside shining on me.
 (*The Keeper of Sheep* 111)

However, the denaturalizing strategy towards Caeiro allows a reading according to which writing is "something made up of gestures." Caeiro is describing again the thought experiment of his favorite *as if world* called Nature. The main rhetorical device of his *modus operandi* is comparing something with something else. That allows the reading process to split and highlight each component of what is compared: a) the sun shining; b) Caeiro writing a poem; and against Caeiro's project these two components never overlap.

In this context, Nature should be historicized, i. e., it should be recognized that Caeiro's virtual natural world and his self belong to history, including a history of the use of the term *Nature*. In this sense, Caeiro is the most interesting failure of the project of being natural as opposed to historical. Even better, the signs of his failure are detailed as inscribed in his poetry, and the signs of his failure are what Caeiro at his best is all about. Seen from the opposite standpoint, Caeiro is a survival guide to dealing with the question: 'How can I live in the unreality of everything, even the unreality of Nature?' Eduardo Lourenço's article follows another of Pessoa's heteronyms, Bernardo Soares, and answers this question by saying that reconstructing meaning through grammar is the solution. In other words, concepts such as nature, reality, and truth are expanded in the direction opposite to

representation to co-opt the level of thought experiment as virtual nature. This is clearly the case of the new presentation of Jesus Christ in *The Keeper of Sheep*, poem VIII. Reading Caieiro seeing (or daydreaming) shows that there is no Nature, and reading Caieiro in detail leads to the conclusion that Fernando Pessoa as an author cannot be seen as a naturalized unity either.

This volume begins with three articles on the contextualization of Alberto Caieiro. The first, “Caves e Andares Nobres,” by Miguel Tamen, gives a critical reading of the well-known letter of Pessoa to Adolfo Casais Monteiro of 1935 on the genesis of the heteronyms. The second, by Darlene J. Sadlier, “Fernando Pessoa and International Modernisms,” situates Pessoa in modernist literary technique in general and Caieiro as a tentative modernist who seeks to “divest poetry of sentimentality or rhetoric.” Fernando J.B. Martinho, in “Partidas, caixeiros-viajantes, encontros e desencontros—Caieiro e alguma poesia portuguesa contemporânea,” seeks to describe the influence of this heteronym of Pessoa in twentieth-century Portuguese poetry.

George Monteiro, in “Alberto Caieiro and the “Poetic Fallacy,” interprets Caieiro in opposition to Coleridge’s anthropomorphosed ideal of Nature, superseded by Ruskin. Ken Krabbenhoft, in “Fernando Pessoa’s Metaphysics and Alberto Caieiro e companhia,” suggests a link between Pessoa and the “evolutionary metaphysics of these post-Darwinian philosophers” as a philosophical justification for Caieiro. In the same area of philosophy, Catarina Pedroso de Lima writes on “Rorty em Caieiro: Uma aprendizagem de desaprender” in which she links Rorty and Caieiro in a shared anti-essentialist perception of the world. Richard Zenith, in “Alberto Caieiro as Zen Heteronym,” investigates the “Zen quality” of the poetry of Caieiro and arrives at a conclusion that revises Leyla Perrone Moisés’s approach.

Silva Carvalho, in “A Procura de uma Tradição—Alberto Caieiro, A Linguagem Porética e a Estética de Imperfeição,” writes within a tradition in which the commentator is the culminating point. Fernando Cabral Martins analyzes Caieiro from the point of view of an affirmation of complex sensation in the picture of “A Ciência das Imagens.” José Sasportes investigates the poet’s premature death in “Alberto Caieiro, An Assassinated Poet” and offers valuable reasons for Caieiro’s death from the perspective of Pessoa’s daily life. K. David Jackson’s “Adverse Genres in Pessoa: Alberto Caieiro’s Other Version of Pastoral,” places Caieiro in the Western metaphysical tradition, leading to Caieiro’s interesting false pastoral. Finally,

Eduardo Lourenço suggests that the main topic of Pessoa's work is the "absence of Meaning and the unreality of Everything," and that Caeiro is located in "O Lugar do Anjo."

Furthermore, this issue on Alberto Caeiro offers an updated and extensive bibliography on the heteronym, compiled and annotated by José Blanco in "A fortuna crítica de Alberto Caeiro." Given that Pessoa is one of the best critics of his own work, Richard Zenith has translated "Notes for the Memory of My Master Caeiro and a Random Note," by another of Pessoa's heteronyms and a disciple of Caeiro, the poet and engineer Álvaro de Campos.

In the section Review-essays, two of the texts are related to Pessoa. The first one is António Ladeira's review of Darlene Sadlier's book, *An Introduction to Fernando Pessoa: Modernism and the Paradoxes of Authorship*, 1998. The second one is on Portugal's most prominent modernist painter, Amadeo Souza Cardoso, whose works are contemporary with Pessoa's; Memory Holloway reviews the catalogue of *At the Edge. A Portuguese Futurist: Amadeo Souza Cardoso*, an exhibition held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. in 1999. Most of the other reviews are devoted to the renewal that is taking place in the fields of the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Portuguese-speaking world, through new and ground-breaking American books. Most of these reviews were written by promising young scholars in the field of Literatures and Cultures of Portuguese. The publication of these scholars represents the commitment of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* to stimulate and publish qualified research, and to establish networks between the United States and the Portuguese-speaking countries and communities.

Work Cited

- Fernando Pessoa. *The Keeper of Sheep*. Trans. Edwin Honig and Susan M. Brown. Riverdale-on-Hudson, N.Y.: The Sheep Meadow Press, n.d.