

THE WHITMAN/PESSOA CONNECTION

SUSAN MARGARET BROWN

ONE OF THE MORE INTRIGUING INSTANCES of Whitman's legacy is still scarcely known in this country. The poetic exchange occurs with Fernando Pessoa, Portugal's best known modern poet. Born in 1888 and dead by the time he turned forty-seven (he died in 1935 of hepatitis), he only gradually became known in his own country as his poems, essays, plays, and letters were slowly brought to light and published in the 1940s and 1950s. Roughly two decades later he began accruing a certain reputation in the rest of Europe—particularly France, Spain, Italy and Germany. Yet it is only in recent years that he has finally made his way across the Atlantic to be read by those who can perhaps best appreciate his affinity with Whitman. This being the case, we would best begin by asking the simplest of questions: Who is this man? Who is Fernando Pessoa? I attempt at least a partial answer—or better an introduction to an answer—by offering what I consider one of the finest brief descriptions of the poet:

Anglomaniac, myopic, courteous, evasive, dressed in black, reticent and familiar, cosmopolitan who preached nationalism, *solemn investigator of useless things*, a never-smiling humorist who chills our blood, inventor of other poets and destroyer of himself, author of parodies clear as water and, like parody, dizzying: *to fake is to know oneself*, a mysterious man who makes no effort to cultivate mystery, mysterious like the moon at midday, taciturn ghost of the Portuguese noon, who is Pessoa?¹

Twenty-five years after Octavio Paz first posed the question, many still find it difficult to formulate even the sparest of answers. There are those who begin by looking at his name. His secret, as Paz reminds us, is at least partially there: *pessoa*, meaning “person” in Portuguese, has associations with the actor's face mask, with personae, with disembodied voices of an anonymous somebody. And, like the actor in his various roles, Pessoa does indeed don masks to unmask, dress to undress, conceal to reveal.² Through the creation of his heteronymic coterie he becomes the other and, in so doing, takes leave of himself; he becomes a no-body, an evanescence, an absence. One could continue in this vein, trying to define the particularity of Pessoa by way of his heteronymic strategy, his creation of other poets (each of whom wrote entire books of poetry in his own distinctive voice).³ But there is another way of initiating a discussion about Pessoa, a way that is seldom explored and, to my mind, a way that sheds light on both the poet and his poetry. I

want to suggest that the connection with Whitman is enormously revelatory; by looking at the impact of Whitman upon Pessoa, we can uncover much that has lain concealed behind the mask.

Though scarcely known to the outside world for more than fifty years, Pessoa (1888-1935) was determined to become Portugal's major theorist as well as major poet and, to that end, he read nearly all the major English writers. But perhaps he read no one as feverishly as he did Whitman (and he read him in the original, having spent his formative years in Durban South Africa speaking, reading, and writing English).⁴ Anyone who examines Pessoa's copies of *Leaves of Grass* can imagine the excitement with which he must have experienced Whitman's poetry, for a sense of inspiration and discovery pervades the detail and originality of his many annotations to the poems. One imagines Pessoa feeling, as Keats did upon reading Chapman's Homer, that he was "some watcher of the skies/ When a new planet swims into his ken." Certainly this sense of an overwhelming and momentous awakening is inscribed at many points in Pessoa's ode, "Salutation to Walt Whitman," written in 1915 under the name of Álvaro de Campos, Pessoa's most obvious Whitmanian heteronym. Take, for example, these lines evoking the immediate impact upon Pessoa/Campos of reading Whitman:

Nunca posso ler os teus versos a fio . . . Há ali sentir demais . . .
Atravesso os teus versos como a uma multidão aos encontros a mim,
E cheira-me a suor, a óleos, a atividade humana e mecânica.
Nos teus versos, a certa altura não sei se leio ou se vivo,
Não sei se o meu lugar real é no mundo ou nos teus versos,
Não sei se estou aqui, de pé sobre a terra natural,
Ou de cabeça pra baixo, pendurado numa espécie de estabelecimento,
No teto natural da tua inspiração de tropel,
No centro do teto da tua intensidade inacessível.

[I can never read through all your poems . . . There's too much feeling in them . . .
I go through your lines as through a teeming crowd that brushes past me,
Smelling of sweat, of grease, of human and mechanical activity.
At a given moment, reading your poems, I can't tell if I'm reading or living them,
I don't know if my actual place is in the world or in your poems,
I don't know if I'm standing here with both feet on the ground
Or hanging upside down in some sort of workshop,
From the natural ceiling of your stampeding inspiration,
From the center of the ceiling of your unapproachable intensity.]⁵

With the reading of Whitman, Pessoa's "actual place" does indeed change. Dwelling within the imaginal space created by his reading of Whitman, Pessoa was able to act out his feelings and thoughts—in a way he had hitherto been incapable of expressing—as a response to Whitman's world. Whitman acted on Pessoa as an incitement to break

free, as an invitation to a larger, more spacious geography of the self. And it was ultimately the example of the all-inclusive and ever self-contradicting Whitmanian persona that provided Pessoa with a model for seeking solace and refuge (both *of* and *from* the self) by way of the heteronymic strategy.

Without the model of Whitman, Pessoa might very well have languished and died as a second-rate *fin de siècle* decadent searching in vain for the necessary poetic form to express his fragmented psychic condition. A quick look at the kind of poetry Pessoa was writing before his encounter with Whitman and his subsequent explosion into various voices gives some idea of the poet he might have been. The English poems written by Pessoa in his adolescent years (roughly 1903-1909) constitute his first experiment with voice. He gave the name Alexander Search to the author of these poems and, as a whole, they depict a poetry of crisis—crisis in the perception of self. Over and over we find the poems enacting the paralysis of an overweening self-consciousness and a quest for an anti-self, an antidote to the poet's acute solipsism. Such a solipsism derives from Search's inability to reconcile his essentially Romantic intention as a poet—to explore and express the full nature of individual consciousness—with his anguished understanding of that consciousness as the knowledge of two irreversibly sundered selves. The poet's agonizing awareness of this predicament is typically characterized in the following lines of a poem entitled "Epitaph":

He lived in powerless egotism,
His soul tumultuous and disordered
By thought and feeling's endless schism.

He of himself did ever sing,
Incapable of modesty,
Lock'd in his wild imagining.

He was a thing that God had wrought.
And to the sin of having lived
He joined the crime of having thought.⁶

Clearly the divisive nature of thought lies at the heart of Search's dilemma here, and this dilemma is reflected in the failure of his language. In such poems there is a sense of a frustrated poetic sensibility that, while confined to convention and artifice on the surface, indicates beneath the words a need to erupt into more unrestrained forms of self-expression. The basic problem for Alexander Search is the following: he is *in the process* of recognizing the world of difference and otherness while his mind continues to think in symbolic terms as if the universe were a reflection of some single divine entity. Search feels he is "condemned," as he himself states in another poem, to "think in

analogy” even though he knows the simplicity of a world of correspondences has collapsed with the death of God. Thus his view that the soul is a nontemporal static entity and that the external world is a hieroglyphic construct of symbols is no longer viable. He is aware of this inviability, yet he cannot think otherwise. Prisoner to this perspective, he is locked within a language not of his own making, a language of petrified forms and abstractions. It is this prison-house of language he desperately wants to flee, as we see in the middle of his poem entitled “Sonnet”:

Could I say what I think, could I express
My every hidden and too-silent thought,
And bring my feelings, in perfection wrought,
To one unforced point of living stress;

Could I breathe forth my soul, could I confess
The inmost secrets to my nature brought;
I might be great, yet none to me hath taught
A language well to figure my distress . . .⁷

Discovery of such a language—“A language well to figure my distress”—enabled Pessoa to move beyond Search’s aborted efforts at expressing a divided self. This discovery occurred some time around 1910 when Pessoa began reading Whitman. What in the American poet appealed to Pessoa was his ability to not only affirm the dual nature of the self but to actually generate from that duality promise of the self’s infinitude. As the following lines from Pessoa’s ode to Whitman suggest, it was Whitman’s multiple, self-contradicting and ever-expanding persona that inspired Álvaro de Campos, spurring him on to become a complex cosmos of *all* emotions, *all* perspectives, *all* thoughts:

Tu, o que eras, tu o que vias, tu o que ouvias,
O sujeito e o objeto, o ativo e o passivo,
Aqui e ali, em toda a parte tu,
Círculo fechando todas as possibilidades de sentir,
Marco miliário de todas as coisas que podem ser,
Deus Termo de todos os objetos que se imaginem e és tu!
Tu Hora,
Tu Minuto,
Tu Segundo!
Tu intercalado, liberto, desfraldado, ido,
Intercalamento, libertação, ida, desfraldamento,
Tu intercalador, libertador, desfraldador, remetente,
Carimbo em todas as cartas,
Nome em todos os endereços,
Mercadoria entregue, devolvida, seguindo...

[You who lived it, you who saw it, you who heard it,

Subject and object, active and passive,
 Here, there, everywhere you,
 Circle encompassing every possibility of feeling,
 Quintessence of all things that might still happen,
 God-Terminus of all imaginable objects, and it is you!
 You are the Hour,
 You are the Minute,
 You are the Second!
 You interpolated, liberated, unfurled, sent,
 Interpolating, liberating, unfurling, sending,
 You, the interpolator, liberator, unfurler, sender,
 The seal on all letters,
 The name on all addressed envelopes,
 Goods delivered, returned, and to follow ...]⁸

Eventually heeding Whitman's call to an unwieldy and multiform identity, Pessoa established a construct of plurality or, as he called them, a *coterie* of poets in 1914, thereby enacting a universe of different voices. In this way he resolved the fundamental problematic in his adolescent poetry, for he was able to get beyond Search's standstill: his inability to express the soul as an inner dynamic of *both* motion and non-motion, time and timelessness, linear progressive time and cyclical time so important in his post-Whitman writing. But what is of greatest interest to readers of Whitman is the way Pessoa carved two poetic figures from the Whitmanian construct of self ("I am large, I contain multitudes") so as to incarnate these two diametrically opposed and yet inextricably bound aspects of the self.

Not only did Whitman offer Pessoa a language capable of rendering consciousness within time as a living whole of contradictory impulses; he also provided Pessoa with a blueprint for the creation of two of his three heteronyms: Alberto Caeiro and Álvaro de Campos. Without the catalyzing force of Whitman, neither Caeiro nor Campos would have been possible. Whitman's mythic, all-encompassing persona offered Pessoa an open-ended epistemology of the self. His dialectical treatment of personal identity as a dynamic interaction between the timeless "Me myself" or cosmic consciousness and the "Walt Whitman, a kosmos . . . turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, and breeding" was paradigmatic for the freedom sought in the heteronymic design: the loosening of language and the making of poetry as a dialectical engagement between various aspects of the self. To truly appreciate the subtlety and complexity of the heteronymic scheme, we must see how this dialectic derives from the transformed Whitman as a double presence. That is, both the totality of the heteronymic subject (as embodied in Alberto Caeiro) and its fragmentation (as embodied in Álvaro de Campos) are two mutually contradicting personifications of self, and it is only the intertextual presence of *Leaves of Grass* that links these two, making each one an inextricable part of the other. The two personae function in

terms of one another, just as Whitman's body and soul do, thus guaranteeing the dynamic, never-ending nature of the heteronymic experiment.

Significantly, it was the emergence in 1914 of Alberto Caieiro that helped Pessoa make the decisive break from the Search poetry and initiate his ongoing, open-ended poetic process. Caieiro, the most enigmatic and most deceptively simple heteronym, appeared spontaneously as a voice. Pessoa's own account of its mysterious genesis is recorded in a now famous letter to his friend Adolfo Casais Monteiro:

One day—it was March 8, 1914—I went over to a high desk, and taking a piece of paper, began to write standing, as I always do when possible. And I wrote some thirty poems, one after another, in a sort of ecstasy, the nature of which I am unable to define. It was the triumphant day of my life, and never will there be another like it. I began with the title, *O Guardador de Rebanhos*. What followed was the appearance of someone in me to whom I immediately gave the name of Alberto Caieiro. Forgive the absurdity of the sentence: In me there appeared my master. . . .⁹

After writing thirty-odd poems, Pessoa proceeded to find disciples for his master Caieiro; he named them Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos, all the time vowing, in the letter, that it was as if this new “nonexistent coterie” all happened “independently of me.” Thus began the heteronymic project: personal epic of an abstract subject; dramatization, through various personae, of the act of consciousness itself. Above all, what makes this project so entirely novel is the way Pessoa created a fictional character to substitute his own self, the way he made a heteronym (Alberto Caieiro) play the central role in his drama of being. We need to ask ourselves what it is in Caieiro that justifies such a role, and how it is that he acts as master not only to the other two heteronyms but to Fernando Pessoa as well.

Viewed in the light of the earlier poetry, the poetic figure of Alberto Caieiro emerges in 1914 as a resolution to the fundamental problems of Alexander Search, particularly the aforementioned one of a schismatic consciousness. It was the “crime of having thought,” we recall, that victimized Search: his thoughts preyed on him, holding him captive to terrifying and obsessive fears, and his inability to control these thoughts brought him in a poem after poem to the brink of madness, a madness caused by a sudden and unconscious confrontation with what he calls in “Horror” the “sense of the mystery of all”: “The sense of the mystery of all,/ When it flashes on me full as can be,/ Doth my maddened soul appal.” The poems of Caieiro read as a refutation of this dilemma. Indeed, Caieiro's forty-nine poems present a keenly woven argument against the validity of thought as a basis for knowledge, in this way denying the very existence of the mystery that had haunted Alexander Search. In Poem V for instance, beginning “Há metafísica bastante em não pensar em nada.” (“There's metaphysics enough in not thinking

about anything”), Caetano says: “O mistério das cousas? Sei lá o que é mistério! O único mistério é haver quem pense no mistério.” (“The mystery of things? How should I know? The only mystery is there being people who think about mystery.”) And a bit later in the poem he again alludes obliquely to poets such as Search:

“Constituição íntima das cousas”...

“Sentido íntimo do Universo”...

Tudo isto é falso, tudo isto não quer dizer nada.

É incrível que se possa pensar em cousas dessas.

É como pensar em razões e fins

Quando o começo da manhã está raiando, e pelos lados das árvores

Um vago ouro lustroso vai perdendo a escuridão.

[“The inner constitution of things. . . .”

“The inner meaning of the Universe. . . .”

All of it’s false, all of it doesn’t mean a thing.

Incredible that such things can be thought about.

It’s like thinking of whys and wherefores

When morning daylight breaks through the trees

A misty golden lustre forces the dark to vanish.]¹⁰

It is as if Pessoa created in Caetano the god whose absence he had so grieved in the Search poetry, the Orphic god capable of communing with Nature. Again I quote from Poem V:

Não acredito em Deus porque nunca o vi.

Se ele quisesse que eu acreditasse nele,

Sem dúvida que viria falar comigo

E entraria pela minha porta dentro

Dizendo-me, *Aqui estou!*

(Isto é talvez ridículo aos ouvidos

De quem, por não saber o que é olhar para as cousas,

Não compreende quem fala delas

Com o modo de falar que reparar para elas ensina.)

Mas se Deus é as flores e as árvores

E os montes e sol e o luar,

Então acredito nele,

Então acredito nele a todo a hora,

E a minha vida é toda uma oração e uma missa,

E uma comunhão com os olhos e pelos ouvidos.

[I don’t believe in God because I never saw him.

If he wanted me to believe in him,

He’d certainly come and speak with me,

Come in through my door

And tell me, *Here I am!*

(This may sound ridiculous to those
Who, not knowing what it means to look at things,
Cannot understand someone who speaks of things
In that way of speaking that the awareness of things teaches.)

But if God is the flowers and the trees
And the mountains and sun and the moonlight,
Then I believe in him,
Then I believe in him each and every moment,
And my entire life is one prayer and one Mass,
And, with eyes and ears, one communion.]¹¹

Personifying what Pessoa will refer to as the pagan ideal of self, Caeiro renews the world of the senses and, in particular, he restores the soul's blindness to perfect sight. In so doing he symbolizes the new God of a paradise regained. Both Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos, in commenting on the essential paganism of Caeiro, emphasize the importance of seeing. The first quote is from Reis, the second from Campos:

Caeiro is his total objectivity, or better, in his constant tendency toward, objectivity, is frequently more Greek than the Greeks . . . I was as a blind man at birth in whom the possibility to see was given; and my knowledge of *The Keeper of Sheep* acted as the surgical instrument that opened my eyes to seeing.¹²

What master Caeiro taught me was clarity; equilibrium and organization in my delirium and bewilderment, and he also taught me to seek no other philosophy than that of the soul.¹³

What is so intriguing about Caeiro is how he was able to learn this philosophy of the soul, this phenomenological approach to reality which he calls his "science of perception" in the following account of how one ought to look at things: he wants to

Vê-las até não poder pensar nelas,
Vê-las sem tempo, nem espaço,
Ver podendo dispensar tudo menos o que se vê.
É esta a ciência de ver, que não é nenhuma.

[See them until I can't think about them,
See them, without time or space,
See, and be able to put aside all but the seeable.
This is the science of perception, which is no science at all.]¹⁴

If the sequence of forty-nine poems reads as one long declaration of independence of the self, an assertion of its imaginative and transcendent freedom, we must ask ourselves how it is that the innocent shep-

herd poet learned all he learned. Who was his master? Who revealed to him this “science of perception”? Who taught him how to sing his “Song of Myself”?

Answers to these questions become possible once the hidden presence of Whitman is discerned. Once that intertextual presence/absence in *The Keeper of Sheep* is recognized, the key to unlocking the mystery of Caeiro as master begins to turn. What ultimately sustains the myth of Caeiro as master is the curious apparition of the Child Jesus in Poem VIII. Here, in the image of the new God, “o deus que faltava” (“the God that was missing”), we find the reincarnation of Whitman. It is *his* lesson to Alberto Caeiro that so crucially shapes the poems of the shepherd poet. The long narration of Poem VIII generates the entire sequence of poems; without that poem there would be no basis for the rest. In Poem VIII Alberto Caeiro has an epiphany similar to the one Whitman had in Section 5 of “Song of Myself.” And it is as an explanation of what that epiphany meant to Caeiro that the other poems are to be read.

Poem VIII recounts Caeiro’s dream-vision of Jesus Christ. He tells us how the figure of the Child Jesus escaped from Heaven and descended from the sky on the first available light beam, appearing to the innocent shepherd as “the God that was missing”. What then ensues between Caeiro and the Child Jesus, alternately called the New Child and the Eternal Child, can best be grasped if we see it in the light of Whitman’s awakening in Section 5 of “Song of Myself.” The relationship between Caeiro and the Child Jesus is really one between the self and the Me myself, to use Whitman’s terms, and the episode in Poem VIII is Pessoa’s reinscription of Whitman’s communion scene with his soul. Those twenty lines in Section 5—beginning with the line “I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,”—stand to Poem VIII in the relation of a model to a copy, and Caeiro’s encounter with the Child Jesus is really a rendezvous with his own soul. Furthermore it is Whitman, in the guise of the Child Jesus, who facilitates this union. What inspires Caeiro’s song and illuminates its meaning, then, is the dream vision of Whitman ambiguously alive within his soul: asleep throughout the sequence but briefly brought to life in a flash of recollection in Poem VIII where Caeiro recounts the communion with his (Whitmanian) soul and, simultaneously, his self-discovery as a poet:

A mim ensinou-me tudo.
Ensinou-me a olhar para as cousas.
Aponta-me todas as cousas que há nas flores.
Mostra-me como as pedras são engraçadas
Quando a gente as tem na mão
E olha devagar para elas.

...

E a criança tão humana que é divina
É esta minha quotidiana vida de poeta,
E é porque ele anda sempre comigo que eu sou poeta sempre,
E que o meu mínimo olhar
Me enche de sensação,
E o mais pequeno som, seja do que for,
Parece falar comigo.

[He taught me everything.
He taught me to look at things.
He points out everything there is inside flowers.
He shows me how funny rocks are
When people take them in hand
And look slowly at them

...
And the child who's so human he's divine
Is this, my daily life as a poet,
And it's because he's always with me that I'm always a poet,
And that the slightest glance
Fills me with feeling,
And the tiniest sound, whatever it may be,
Seems to speak to me.]¹⁵

The essence of Whitman's message here—or his secret, as Caieiro will have it—concerns the nature of poetic identity described in “There Was A Child Went Forth.” The first line of that poem, “And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,” (a line that Pessoa marked in his copy of Whitman) becomes the basis for the persona of the innocent shepherd poet. Like Whitman's child, Caieiro will seek his true self, his poetic self, by immersing himself so intensely in the immediate sensation of an object that he becomes that very object. In this way Caieiro secures the poetic freedom necessary for exploring personal identity as process. Like Whitman, he is constantly becoming the object of his immediate perceptions, thus unleashing an unending dynamics whereby unending contact with external reality produces a constant metamorphosis of itself. In this way Caieiro's identity approximates Whitman's “Nature without check with original energy.” One could even hypothesize that just as Emerson's poet of Nature turned out to be Walt Whitman, so Pessoa's turned out to be Alberto Caieiro:

Procuro despir-me do que aprendi,
Procuro esquecer-me do modo de lembrar que me ensinaram,
E raspar a tinta com que me pintavam os sentidos,
Desencaixotar as minhas emoções verdadeiras,
Desembrulhar-me e ser eu, não Alberto Caieiro,
Mas um animal humano que a Natureza produziu.

[I try divesting myself of what I've learned,
I try forgetting the mode of remembering they taught me,

And scrape off the ink they used to paint my senses,
Unpacking my true emotions,
Unwrapping myself, and being myself, not Alberto Caeiro,
But a human animal that Nature produced.]¹⁶

From this selfless, poetic stance Caeiro becomes, like Whitman before him, Adamic man, capable of naming and thus making his own world. This way of perceiving the world not only situates the poems of Caeiro within the Whitmanian reality of a subjective universe illuminated by Soul, but it also serves to locate the entire heteronymic narration of consciousness within the ambiguous realm of real dream, since the whole of Poem VIII and thus the knowledge given to Caeiro occurred in a dream.

If it is the act of dreaming the real/unreal or dreaming the dream that characterizes the persona of Caeiro, it is the tormented and frenzied act of awakening from the unconscious that characterizes the figure of Álvaro de Campos. In the persona of Álvaro de Campos we find the personification of being-in-time, the lacerated consciousness of being's contingency, being bound by time. As such he is irreversibly severed from Caeiro's gnostic knowledge of the self's divinity. The real drama takes place within the "hysteria-attack verses" of Campos—the "Walt Whitman with a Greek poet inside," as Pessoa called him in a surprisingly revealing essay.¹⁷

If Campos is Walt Whitman with Caeiro inside, the principal drama of the heteronymic world resides in the implicit dialogue of two incompatible voices within the consciousness of Campos: the silent voice of the Poet as an all-seeing God, real as dreams are real (Caeiro), and the manic-depressive voice of a dangling consciousness, the voice in the wilderness. Emblematic of the modern poet in a destitute time, Campos searches in vain for traces of the fugitive god, finding nothing but his own dismantled image, his own disbelieving voice. His is the poet's frantic struggle against time to regain the "self-transcending calm" of Pessoa's *essential* Whitman, the master Caeiro. Campos' condition only begins to make sense in the light of the loss, in the light of his bitter nostalgia for the extinguished Me myself of Alberto Caeiro, the vanished God.

Once we begin to understand this complex network of relationships (between Caeiro and Campos and the way in which Whitman is both present and absent in both), we can begin to see the parallels between the way in which Campos cries out to Caeiro and the way in which he cries out to Whitman. Take a look, for example, at the way Campos addresses Caeiro in the following lines of a poem entitled "Master, my dear master":

Mestre, meu mestre!
Na angústia sensacionista de todos os dias sentidos,
Na mágoa quotidiana das matemáticas de ser,
Eu, escravo de tudo como um pó de todos os ventos,
Ergo as mãos para ti, que estás longe, tão longe de mim!

[O Master, my master!
In the sensationist anguish of all my felt days,
In the daily pain inflicted by the mathematics of being,
I, a slave to all things, like dust to all winds,
Lift up my hands to you, so far away, so far from me!]¹⁸

Now compare this evocation of Caieiro with Campos' evocation of Whitman in the latter part of "Salutation to Walt Whitman." There we see a crescendo into an almost total identification between Campos and his master Walt and then an abrupt falling off as he recognizes the impossibility of ever attaining the self-transcending calm:

Meu velho Walt, meu grande Camarada, evohé!
Pertença à tua orgia báquica de sensações-em-liberdade,
Sou dos teus, desde a sensação dos meus pés até à náusea em meus sonhos,
Sou dos teus, olha pra mim, de aí desde Deus vê-me ao contrário:
De dentro para fora . . . Meu corpo é o que adivinhas, vê a minha alma—
Essa vê tu propriamente e através dos olhos dela o meu corpo—
Olha pra mim: tu sabes que eu, Álvaro de Campos, engenheiro,
Poeta sensacionista,
Não sou teu discípulo, não sou teu amigo, não sou teu cantor,
Tu sabes que eu sou Tu e estás contente com isso!

. . . .
Sem dúvida teve um fim a minha personalidade.
Sem dúvida porque se exprimiui, quis dizer qualquer coisa.
Mas hoje, olhando para trás, só uma ânsia me fica—
Não ter tido a tua calma superior a ti-próprio,
A tua libertação constelada de Noite Infinita.

Não tive talvez missão alguma na terra.

[Walt, dearest old man, my great Comrade, evohe!
I belong to your bacchic orgy of freed sensations,
I am yours, from the tingling of my toes to the nausea of my dreams,
I am yours, look at me—up there close to God, you see me contrariwise,
From inside out . . . You divine my body, you see my soul—
You see it properly, and through its eyes you take in my body—
Look at me: you know that I, Álvaro de Campos, ship's engineer,
Sensationist poet,
Am not your disciple, am not your friend, am not your singer,
You know that I am You, and you are happy about it!

. . . .
Surely my personality had some purpose.
Surely it meant something since it expressed itself,
Yet looking back today, only one thing troubles me—

Not to have had your self-transcending calm,
Your liberation like star-clustered Infinite Night.

Maybe I had no mission at all on earth.]¹⁹

In the end, Campos knows that the attempt is imaginary and tentative, and the poem's closure makes it all too clear that he ultimately fails in achieving the stature of Walt, just as he is incapable of achieving the stature of Caieiro. Walt, Caieiro: in essence, they are the same.

In one of the more startling poetic transformations, Pessoa divided and conquered the myth of his predecessor, his "irmão em Universo" ("brother in the Universe") as he calls him in "Salutation to Walt Whitman." When the contact with Whitman was finally made (circa 1909-1910), Pessoa was shattered and revived, emptied and replenished. What emerged as a consequence was a new Pessoa, a heteronymic Pessoa. Unlike Whitman—who could weave together the wild hysteric yawp and the quiet lull of the "valvèd voice"—Pessoa needed to make of himself a modernized Whitman; he needed to undo that duality, thereby creating Campos and Caieiro. The quiet voice of Pessoa, the voice of one who was able to sit quietly and wait—the voice of one who *knew* that his mission as a poet was precisely to do so—that voice had to be self-consciously wrought, and deliberately construed as the unconscious source of inspiration, as the master. And that is the loudest irony of all: that the quiet voice of the innocent shepherd poet Caieiro, Pessoa's very center (modeled on the spontaneous communion of Whitman's soul in the grass in Section 5 of "Song of Myself"), existed as a fiction, as a place within Otherness where he learned—not naturally (*à la* Whitman) but as if it were second nature (*from* Whitman)—to be himself.

Rhode Island College

NOTES

1 Octavio Paz, "El Desconocido De Si Mismo," in *Cuadrivio* (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, S.A., 1965), 135. This is my own translation. For a complete translation of the article, see the Introduction to Edwin Honig's translations of Pessoa in *Selected Poems* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1971), 1-21.

2 This idea of masking to unmask, dressing to undress, concealing to reveal is taken from the Introduction of Edwin Honig's book of translations of Pessoa's selected prose. See *Always Astonished*, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), i-ix.

3 The full explanation of this device is considered in my dissertation, "The Poetics of Pessoa's *Drama em Gente*: The Function of Alberto Caieiro and the Role of Walt Whitman," University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1987.

4 In Pessoa's private library one can find his copy of the *Poems of Walt Whitman*, the Penny Poets XXVII, Master Library series (London: Review of Reviewer's Office,

n.d.). The book is not dated and is signed by Alexander Search, the pre-heteronymic persona, and the only persona to be granted a library of his own. His other copy of Whitman is entitled *Leaves of Grass*, The People's Library Edition, 1909. It is signed "Fernando Pessoa" with the date 16. 5. 1916. This book contains all the poems of Whitman's definitive "deathbed" edition of *Leaves of Grass* except for the two annexes, "Sands at Seventy" and "Good-bye My Fancy."

5 Fernando Pessoa, *Poems of Fernando Pessoa*, trans. Edwin Honig and Susan M. Brown (New York: Ecco Press, 1987), 73-74. Hereafter cited as *Poems*.

6 Georg Rudolf Lind, "A Poesia Juvenil de Fernando Pessoa (Alexander Search)," in *Estudos Sobre Fernando Pessoa* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1981), 379.

7 Lind, 352.

8 *Poems*, 77.

9 This translation is taken from the Introduction to the book of translations of Alberto Caeiro entitled *The Keeper of Sheep*, trans. Edwin Honig and Susan M. Brown (New York: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1987). Hereafter cited as *Keeper*. The original letter can be found in Pessoa's *Obra em Prosa*, ed. Cleonice Berardinelli (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1982), 96-98.

10 *Keeper*, 11.

11 *Keeper*, 11-12.

12 *Obra em Prosa*, 112. My translation.

13 *Obra em Prosa*, 153. My translation.

14 *Poems*, 29.

15 *Poems*, 13-15.

16 *Poems*, 23.

17 The reference to Campos as a "Walt Whitman with a Greek poet inside" appears in an English preface written by Álvaro de Campos for a never-realized project, an anthology of Sensationist poets. The relevant passage for our purposes is the following: "Álvaro de Campos is excellently defined as a Walt Whitman with a Greek poet inside. He has all the power of intellectual, emotional, and physical sensation that characterized Whitman. But he has the precisely opposite trait—a power of construction and orderly development of a poem that no poet since Milton has." For the original see Fernando Pessoa, *Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação*, ed. Georg Rudolf Lind and Jacinto do Prado Coelho (Lisbon: Ática, n.d.), 140-142.

18 *Poems*, 92.

19 *Poems*, 73, 78.