

ASPECTS

Pessoa probably wrote this preface, which would have appeared in the first volume of his complete heteronymic works, in the early or mid 1920s. In fact, Pessoa, as was so often the case, left several pieces for the preface—two of them typed, one handwritten—without articulating them into a final version. The handwritten fragment (not published here) explains that the heteronyms embody different “aspects,” or sides, of a reality whose existence is uncertain. For more details about the heteronyms and their origins, see “Preface to Fictions of the Interlude,” Thomas Crosse’s “Translator’s Preface to the Poems of Alberto Caeiro,” Álvaro de Campos’s Notes for the Memory of My Master Caeiro, and most especially Pessoa’s letter of January 13, 1935, to Adolfo Casais Monteiro.

The Complete Work is essentially dramatic, though it takes different forms—prose passages in this first volume, poems and philosophies in other volumes. It’s the product of the temperament I’ve been blessed or cursed with—I’m not sure which. All I know is that the author of these lines (I’m not sure if also of these books) has never had just one personality, and has never thought or felt except dramatically—that is, through invented persons, or personalities, who are more capable than he of feeling what’s to be felt.

There are authors who write plays and novels, and they often endow the characters of their plays and novels with feelings and ideas that they insist are not their own. Here the substance is the same, though the form is different.

Each of the more enduring personalities, lived by the author within himself, was given an expressive nature and made the author of one or more books whose ideas, emotions, and literary art have no relationship to the real author (or perhaps only apparent author, since we don't know what reality is) except insofar as he served, when he wrote them, as the medium of the characters he created.

Neither this work nor those to follow have anything to do with the man who writes them. He doesn't agree or disagree with what's in them. He writes as if he were being dictated to. And as if the person dictating were a friend (and for that reason could freely ask him to write down what he dictates), the writer finds the dictation interesting, perhaps just out of friendship.

The human author of these books has no personality of his own. Whenever he feels a personality well up inside, he quickly realizes that this new being, though similar, is distinct from him—an intellectual son, perhaps, with inherited characteristics, but also with differences that make him someone else.

That this quality in the writer is a manifestation of hysteria, or of the so-called split personality, is neither denied nor affirmed by the author of these books. As the helpless slave of his multiplied self, it would be useless for him to agree with one or the other theory about the written results of that multiplication.

It's not surprising that this way of making art seems strange; what's surprising is that there are things that don't seem strange.

Some of the author's current theories were inspired by one or another of these personalities that consubstantially passed—for a moment, for a day, or for a longer period—through his own personality, assuming he has one.

The author of these books cannot affirm that all these different and well-defined personalities who have incorporeally passed through his soul don't exist, for he does not know what it means to exist, nor whether Hamlet or Shakespeare is more real, or truly real.

So far the projected books include: this first volume, *The Book of Disquiet*, written by a man who called himself Vicente Guedes;* then

The Keeper of Sheep, along with other poems and fragments by Alberto Caeiro (deceased, like Guedes, and from the same cause),* who was born near Lisbon in 1889 and died where he was born in 1915. If you tell me it's absurd to speak that way about someone who never existed, I'll answer that I also have no proof that Lisbon ever existed, or I who am writing, or anything at all.

This Alberto Caeiro had two disciples and a philosophical follower. The two disciples, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos, took different paths: the former intensified the paganism discovered by Caeiro and made it artistically orthodox; the latter, basing himself on another part of Caeiro's work, developed an entirely different system, founded exclusively on sensations. The philosophical follower, Antônio Mora (the names are as inevitable and as independent from me as the personalities), has one or two books to write in which he will conclusively prove the metaphysical and practical truth of paganism. A second philosopher of this pagan school, whose name has still not appeared to my inner sight or hearing, will write an apology for paganism based on entirely different arguments.

Perhaps other individuals with this same, genuine kind of reality will appear in the future, or perhaps not, but they will always be welcome to my inner life, where they live better with me than I'm able to live with outer reality. Needless to say, I agree with certain parts of their theories, and disagree with other parts. But that's quite beside the point. If they write beautiful things, those things are beautiful, regardless of any and all metaphysical speculations about who "really" wrote them. If in their philosophies they say true things—supposing there can be truth in a world where nothing exists—those things are true regardless of the intention or "reality" of whoever said them.

Having made myself into what I am—at worst a lunatic with grandiose dreams, at best not just a writer but an entire literature—I may be contributing not only to my own amusement (which would already be good enough for me) but to the enrichment of the universe, for when someone dies and leaves behind one beautiful verse, he leaves the earth

and heavens that much richer, and the reason for stars and people that much more emotionally mysterious.

In view of the current dearth of literature, what can a man of genius do but convert himself into a literature? Given the dearth of people he can get along with, what can a man of sensibility do but invent his own friends, or at least his intellectual companions?

I thought at first of publishing these works anonymously, with no mention of myself, and to establish something like a Portuguese neopaganism in which various authors—all of them different—would collaborate and make the movement grow. But to keep up the pressure (even if no one divulged the secret) would be virtually impossible in Portugal's small intellectual milieu, and it wouldn't be worth the mental effort to try.

In the vision that I call inner merely because I call the "real world" outer, I clearly and distinctly see the familiar, well-defined facial features, personality traits, life stories, ancestries, and in some cases even the death, of these various characters. Some of them have met each other; others have not. None of them ever met me except Álvaro de Campos. But if tomorrow, traveling in America, I were to run into the physical person of Ricardo Reis, who in my opinion lives there, my soul wouldn't relay to my body the slightest flinch of surprise; all would be as it should be, exactly as it was before the encounter. What is life?

You should approach these books* as if you hadn't read this explanation but had simply read the books, buying them one by one at a bookstore, where you saw them on display. You shouldn't read them in any other spirit. When you read *Hamlet*, you don't begin by reminding yourself that the story never happened. By doing so you would spoil the very pleasure you hope to get from reading it. When we read, we stop living. Let that be your attitude. Stop living, and read. What's life?

But here, more intensely than in the case of a poet's dramatic work, you must deal with the active presence of the alleged author. That doesn't mean you have the right to believe in my explanation. As soon

as you read it, you should suppose that I've lied—that you're going to read books by different poets, or different writers, and that through those books you'll receive emotions and learn lessons from those writers, with whom I have nothing to do except as their publisher. How do you know that this attitude is not, after all, the one most in keeping with the in-scrutiable reality of things?

THREE LETTERS TO ADOLFO CASAIS MONTEIRO

individual is transformed by the intelligence into a small universe will he have, in the impression thereby produced, the raw material with which to make what we call art.

What we feel is only what we feel. What we think is only what we think. But that which, felt or thought, we think again as someone else is naturally transformed into art and, cooling down, acquires form.

Don't trust what you feel or think until you've stopped feeling or thinking it. Then you'll use your sensibility in a way that naturally works to your own and everyone else's benefit.

I sincerely enjoyed your book. And these remarks, naturally limited by my particular point of view, are intended only as a critique which, though it may be erroneous, at least has the advantage of being sincere, and the pleasure of being laudatory.

With kind regards from your ever grateful colleague,

Fernando Pessoa

Lisbon, 13 January 1935

My dear friend and colleague,

Thank you very much for your letter, which I shall answer at once and in full. But before I begin, I must apologize for this paper that's meant for carbon copies. It's the best I could do, as I've run out of good paper and it's Sunday. But inferior paper is preferable, I think, to putting off writing you.

My dear colleague,
Thank you so much for sending me a copy of your book *Confusão* [Confusion], for the kind words you wrote in it, and for the poem you dedicated to me.

Your book reveals a keen sensibility and a still immature use of it. Before an impression can be converted into the raw material of art, it must first be transformed—not partially but entirely—into an intellectual impression, an impression of the intelligence. And by intelligence I mean not our personality's highest expression but its abstract expression. In other and simpler words: only when an

letter, written on January 13, 1935. From the P.S. to that letter, it's clear that it was intended for posterity, and though Pessoa may have written it as fast as he could type, as claimed in the seventh paragraph, his story of the heteronyms was certainly not "off the cuff." Over the years he had been carefully plotting and refining it. A version of the story written around 1930—placed here after the letter—offers some rather different details about how it all happened and when.

Lisbon, 11 January 1930

My dear friend and colleague,

Thank you very much for your letter, which I shall answer at once and in full. But before I begin, I must apologize for this paper that's meant for carbon copies. It's the best I could do, as I've run out of good paper and it's Sunday. But inferior paper is preferable, I think, to putting off writing you.

Let me say, first of all, that I would never see "ulterior motives" for anything you might write in disagreement with me. I'm one of the few Portuguese poets who hasn't decreed his own infallibility, and I don't consider criticism of my work to be an act of "Iéze divinity." Though I may suffer from other mental defects, I haven't the slightest trace of persecution mania. And besides, I'm already well aware of your intellectual independence, which (if I may say so) I heartily endorse and admire. I've never aspired to be a Master, for I don't know how to teach, and I'm not sure I would even have anything to

teach, nor do I fancy myself a Leader or Chief,* for I don't know how to scramble an egg. So don't ever let what you might say about me worry you. I'm not one to look for trouble where there is none.

I completely agree with you that a book like *Mensagem* (*Message*) was not a felicitous publishing débüt. I am, to be sure, a mystical nationalist, a rational Sebastianist.* But I am many other things besides that, and even in contradiction to it. And because of the kind of book it was, *Message* did not include those things.

I began the publication of my works with that book simply because it was the first one, for whatever reason, that I managed to organize and have ready. Since it was all ready, I was urged to publish it, and so I did. I didn't do it, please note, with my eyes on the prize offered by the National Office of Propaganda,* though that wouldn't have been a serious intellectual sin. My book wasn't ready until September, and I even thought it was too late to compete for the prize, for I didn't realize that the deadline for submissions had been extended from the end of July to the end of October. Since copies of *Message* were already available by the end of October, I submitted the copies required by the Office of Propaganda. The book exactly met the conditions (nationalism) stipulated for the competition. I entered it.

When in the past I've sometimes thought about the order in which my works would one day be published, no book like *Message* ever headed the list. I was torn between whether to start off with a large book of poems—about 350 pages in length—that would encompass the various subpersonalities of Fernando Pessoa himself or whether to begin with a detective novel (which I still haven't finished).

I'm convinced, as you are, that *Message* was not a felicitous literary débüt, but I'm convinced that under the circumstances it was the best débüt I could have made. That facet of my personality—in a certain way a minor facet—had never been adequately represented in my magazine publications (except for the book's section titled "Portuguese Sea"), and for that very reason it was good that it be revealed, and that it be revealed now. Without any planning or

premeditation on my part (I'm incapable of premeditation in practical matters), it coincided with a critical moment (in the original sense of the word "critical") in the transformation of the national subconscious. What I happened to do and others urged me to complete was accurately drawn, with Ruler and Compass, by the Great Architect.

(No, I'm not crazy or drunk, but I am writing off the cuff, as fast as this typewriter will let me, and I'm using whatever expressions come to mind, without regard to their literary content. Imagine—for it's true—that I'm just talking to you.)

I will now deal directly with your three questions: (1) plans for the future publication of my works, (2) the genesis of my heteronyms, and (3) the occult.

Having been led by the aforementioned circumstances to publish *Message*, which shows just one side of me, I intend to proceed as follows. I'm now finishing up a thoroughly revised version of "The Anarchist Banker"; this should be ready in the near future, and I hope to publish it forthwith. If successful, I will immediately translate it into English and try to get it published in England. The new version should have European possibilities. (Don't take this to mean an imminent Nobel Prize.) Next—and I shall now respond directly to your question, which concerned my poetry—I plan to spend the summer collecting the shorter poems of Fernando Pessoa himself into one large volume, as indicated above, and will try to publish it before the year is out. This is the book you've been waiting for, and it's the one I myself am anxious to bring out. This book will show all my facets except the nationalist one, which *Message* has already revealed.

You will have noticed that I've referred only to Fernando Pessoa. I'm not thinking at this point about Caeiro, Ricardo Reis or Álvaro de Campos. I can't do anything about them, in terms of publishing, until (see above) I win the Nobel Prize. And yet—it makes me sad to think of this—I placed all my power of dramatic depersonalization in Caeiro; I placed all my mental discipline, clothed in its own special music, in Ricardo Reis; and in Álvaro de

Campos I placed all the emotion that I deny myself and don't put into life. To think, my dear Casais Monteiro, that all three of them, in terms of publication, must defer to Fernando Pessoa impure and simple!

I believe I've answered your first question. Let me know if some point is still hazy, and I'll try to clear it up. I don't have any more plans for now, and considering what my plans usually involve and how they turn out, I can only say "Thank God!"

Turning now to your question about the genesis of my heteronyms, I will see if I can answer you fully.

I shall begin with the psychiatric aspect. My heteronyms have their origin in a deep-seated form of hysteria. I don't know if I'm afflicted by simple hysteria or, more specifically, by hysterical neurasthenia. I suspect it's the latter, for I have symptoms of abulia that mere hysteria would not explain. Whatever the case, the mental origin of my heteronyms lies in my relentless, organic tendency to depersonalization and simulation. Fortunately for me and for others, these phenomena have been mentally internalized, such that they don't show up in my outer, everyday life among people; they erupt inside me, where only I experience them. If I were a woman (hysterical phenomena in women erupt externally, through attacks and the like), each poem of Álvaro de Campos (the most hysterically hysterical part of me) would be a general alarm to the neighborhood. But I'm a man, and in men hysteria affects mainly the inner psyche; so it all ends in silence and poetry . . .

This explains, as well as I can, the organic origin of my heteronyms. Now I will recount their actual history, beginning with the heteronyms that have died and with some of the ones I no longer remember — those that are forever lost in the distant past of my almost forgotten childhood.

Ever since I was a child, it has been my tendency to create around me a fictitious world, to surround myself with friends and acquaintances that never existed. (I can't be sure, of course, if they really never existed, or if it's me who doesn't exist. In this matter, as in any other, we shouldn't be dogmatic.) Ever since I've known

myself as "me," I can remember envisioning the shape, motions, character and life story of various unreal figures who were as visible and as close to me as the manifestations of what we call, perhaps too hastily, real life. This tendency, which goes back as far as I can remember being an I, has always accompanied me, changing somewhat the music it enchants me with, but never the way in which it enchantments me.

Thus I can remember what I believe was my first heteronym, or rather, my first nonexistent acquaintance — a certain Chevalier de Pas — through whom I wrote letters from him to myself when I was six years old, and whose not entirely hazy figure still has a claim on the part of my affections that borders on nostalgia. I have a less vivid memory of another figure who also had a foreign name, which I can no longer recall, and who was a kind of rival to the Chevalier de Pas. Such things occur to all children? Undoubtedly — or perhaps. But I lived them so intensely that I live them still; their memory is so strong that I have to remind myself that they weren't real.

This tendency to create around me another world, just like this one but with other people, has never left my imagination. It has gone through various phases, including the one that began in me as a young adult, when a witty remark that was completely out of keeping with who I am or think I am would sometimes and for some unknown reason occur to me, and I would immediately, spontaneously say it as if it came from some friend of mine, whose name I would invent, along with biographical details, and whose figure — physiognomy, stature, dress and gestures — I would immediately see before me. Thus I elaborated, and propagated, various friends and acquaintances who never existed but whom I feel, hear and see even today, almost thirty years later. I repeat: I feel, hear and see them. And I miss them.

(Once I start talking — and typing, for me, is like talking — it's hard to put on the brake. But I'll stop boring you, Casais Monteiro! I'll now go into the genesis of my literary heteronyms, which is what really interests you. What I've written so far will at any rate serve as the story of the mother who gave them birth.)

In 1912, if I remember correctly (and I can't be far off), I got the idea to write some poetry from a pagan perspective. I sketched out a few poems with irregular verse patterns (not in the style of Álvaro de Campos but in a semiregular style) and then forgot about them. But a hazy, shadowy portrait of the person who wrote those verses took shape in me. (Unbeknownst to me, Ricardo Reis had been born.) A year and a half or two years later, it one day occurred to me to play a joke on Sá-Carneiro—to invent a rather complicated bucolic poet whom I would present in some guise of reality that I've since forgotten. I spent a few days trying in vain to envision this poet. One day when I'd finally given up—it was March 8th, 1914—I walked over to a high chest of drawers, took a sheet of paper, and began to write standing up, as I do whenever I can. And I wrote thirty-some poems at once, in a kind of ecstasy I'm unable to describe. It was the triumphal day of my life, and I can never have another one like it. I began with a title, *The Keeper of Sheep*. This was followed by the appearance in me of someone whom I instantly named Alberto Caeiro. Excuse the absurdity of this statement: my master had appeared in me. That was what I immediately felt, and so strong was the feeling that, as soon as those thirty-odd poems were written, I grabbed a fresh sheet of paper and wrote, again all at once, the six poems that constitute "Slanting Rain,"** by Fernando Pessoa. All at once and with total concentration . . . It was the return of Fernando Pessoa as Alberto Caeiro to Fernando Pessoa himself. Or rather, it was the reaction of Fernando Pessoa against his nonexistence as Alberto Caeiro.

Once Alberto Caeiro had appeared, I instinctively and subconsciously tried to find disciples for him. From Caeiro's false paganism I extracted the latent Ricardo Reis, at last discovering his name and adjusting him to his true self, for now I actually saw him. And then a new individual, quite the opposite of Ricardo Reis, suddenly and impetuously came to me. In an unbroken stream, without interruptions or corrections, the ode whose name is "Triumphal Ode,"** by the man whose name is none other than Álvaro de Campos, issued from my typewriter.

And so I created a nonexistent coterie, placing it all in a framework of reality. I ascertained the influences at work and the friendships between them, I listened in myself to their discussions and divergent points of view, and in all of this it seems that I, who created them all, was the one who was least there. It seems that it all went on without me. And thus it seems to go on still. If one day I'm able to publish the aesthetic debate between Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos, you'll see how different they are, and how I have nothing to do with the matter.

When it came time to publish *Orpheu*, we had to find something at the last minute to fill out the issue, and so I suggested to Sá-Carneiro that I write an "old" poem of Álvaro de Campos's—a poem such as Álvaro de Campos would have written before meeting Caeiro and falling under his influence. That's how I came to write "Opairy,"** in which I tried to incorporate all the latent tendencies of Álvaro de Campos that would eventually be revealed but that still showed no hint of contact with his master Caeiro. Of all the poems I've written, this was the one that gave me the most trouble, because of the twofold depersonalization it required. But I don't think it turned out badly, and it does show us Álvaro in the bud.

I think this should explain for you the origin of my heteronyms, but if there's any point I need to clarify—I'm writing quickly, and when I write quickly I'm not terribly clear—let me know, and I'll gladly oblige. And here's a true and hysterical addendum: when writing certain passages of Álvaro de Campos's *Notes for the Memory of My Master Caeiro*, I have wept real tears. I tell this so that you'll know whom you're dealing with, my dear Casais Monteiro!

A few more notes on this subject. . . I see before me, in the transparent but real space of dreams, the faces and gestures of Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos. I gave them their ages and fashioned their lives. Ricardo Reis was born in 1887 (I don't remember the month and day, but I have them somewhere) in Oporto. He's a doctor and is presently living in Brazil. Alberto Caeiro was born in 1889 and died in 1915. He was born in Lisbon but spent most of his life in the country. He had no profession and practically

no schooling. Álvaro de Campos was born in Tavira, on October 15th, 1890 (at 1:30 P.M., says Ferreira Comes,* and it's true, because a horoscope made for that hour confirms it). Campos, as you know, is a naval engineer (he studied in Glasgow) but is currently living in Lisbon and not working. Caeiro was of medium height, and although his health was truly fragile (he died of TB), he seemed less frail than he was. Ricardo Reis is a wee bit shorter, stronger, but sinewy. Álvaro de Campos is tall (5 ft. 9 in., an inch taller than me), slim, and a bit prone to stoop. All are clean-shaven—Caeiro fair, with a pale complexion and blue eyes; Reis somewhat dark-skinned; Campos neither pale nor dark, vaguely corresponding to the Portuguese Jewish type, but with smooth hair that's usually parted on one side, and a monocle. Caeiro, as I've said, had almost no education—just primary school. His mother and father died when he was young, and he stayed on at home, living off a small income from family properties. He lived with an elderly great-aunt. Ricardo Reis, educated in a Jesuit high school, is, as I've mentioned, a doctor; he has been living in Brazil since 1919, having gone into voluntary exile because of his monarchist sympathies. He is a formally trained Latinist, and a self-taught semi-Hellenist. Álvaro de Campos, after a normal high school education, was sent to Scotland to study engineering, first mechanical and then naval. During some holidays he made a voyage to the Orient, which gave rise to his poem "Opriary." He was taught Latin by an uncle who was a priest from the Beira region.

How do I write in the name of these three? Caeiro, through sheer and unexpected inspiration, without knowing or even suspecting that I'm going to write in his name. Ricardo Reis, after an abstract meditation that suddenly takes concrete shape in an ode. Campos, when I feel a sudden impulse to write and don't know what. (My semiheteronym Bernardo Soares, who in many ways resembles Álvaro de Campos, always appears when I'm sleepy or drowsy, such that my qualities of inhibition and logical reasoning are suspended; his prose is an endless reverie. He's a semiheteronym because his personality, although not my own, doesn't differ from my

own but is a mere mutilation of it. He's me without my logical reasoning and emotion. His prose is the same as mine, except for a certain formal restraint that reason imposes on my own writing, and his Portuguese is exactly the same—whereas Caeiro writes bad Portuguese, Campos writes it reasonably well but with mistakes such as "me myself" instead of "I myself," etc., and Reis writes better than I, but with a purism I find excessive. What's hard for me is to write the prose of Reis—still unpublished—or of Campos. Simulation is easier, because more spontaneous, in verse.)

At this point you're no doubt wondering what bad luck has caused you to fall, just by reading, into the midst of an insane asylum. The worst thing is the incoherent way I've explained myself, but I write, I repeat, as if I were talking to you, so that I can write quickly. Otherwise it would take me months to write.

I still haven't answered your question about the occult. You asked if I believe in the occult. Phrased in that way, the question isn't clear, but I know what you mean and I'll answer it. I believe in the existence of worlds higher than our own and in the existence of beings that inhabit those worlds. I believe there are various, increasingly subtle levels of spirituality that lead to a Supreme Being, who presumably created this world. There may be other, equally Supreme Beings who have created other universes that coexist with our own, separately or interconnectedly. For these and other reasons, the External Order of the Occult, meaning the Freemasons, avoid (except for the Anglo-Saxon Freemasons) the term "God," with its theological and popular implications, and prefer to say "Great Architect of the Universe," an expression that leaves open the question of whether He is the world's Creator or merely its Ruler. Given this hierarchy of beings, I do not believe that direct communication with God is possible, but we can, according to the degree of our spiritual attunement, communicate with ever higher beings. There are three paths toward the occult: the path of magic (including practices such as spiritism, intellectually on a par with witchcraft, likewise a form of magic), which is an extremely dangerous path in all respects; the mystical path, which is not inherently dangerous but

is uncertain and slow; and the path of alchemy, which is the hardest and most perfect path of all, since it involves a transmutation of the very personality that prepares it, not only without great risks but with defenses that the other paths don't have. As for "initiation," all I can tell you is this, which may or may not answer your question: I belong to no Initiatic Order. The epigraph to my poem "Eros and Psyche,"* a passage taken (and translated, since the original is in Latin) from the Ritual of the Third Degree of the Portuguese Order of the Knights Templar, indicates no more than what in fact occurred: that I was allowed to leaf through the Rituals of the first three degrees of that Order, which has been extinct, or dormant, since around 1888. Were it not dormant, I would not have cited that passage from the Ritual, since Rituals in active use should not be quoted (unless the Order isn't named).

I believe, my dear colleague, that I have answered your questions, albeit with some confusion here and there. If you have other questions, don't hesitate to ask them. I will answer as best I can, though I may not answer so promptly, for which I offer my apologies in advance.

Warm regards from your friend who greatly admires and respects you,

Fernando Pessoa

P.S. (!!!)

14 January 1935

Besides the copy I usually make for myself when I type a letter that contains explanations of the sort found herein, I've made a second copy that will always remain at your disposal, in case the original gets lost or you need this copy for some other reason.

One other thing . . . It might happen in the future that for some study of yours or some other such purpose you will need to quote a passage from this letter. You are hereby authorized to do so, *but with one reservation*, and I beg leave to underscore it. The paragraph

about the occult, on page 7 of my letter, should not be reproduced in published form. In my desire to answer your question as clearly as possible, I knowingly overstepped the bounds that this subject naturally imposes. I had no qualms about doing so, since this is a private letter. You may read the paragraph in question to whomever you like, provided they also agree not to reproduce its contents in published form. I can count on you, I trust, to respect this negative wish.

I still owe you a long-overdue letter about your latest books. I few days in Estoril (I think it will be in February), I'll catch up on that part of my correspondence, writing not only you but similar letters to various other people.

Oh, and let me ask you again something you still haven't answered: did you get my chapbooks of poems in English, which I sent you some time ago?

And would you, "for my records" (to use business jargon), confirm for me as soon as possible that you've received this letter? Many thanks.

Fernando Pessoa

[Another Version of the Genesis of the Heteronyms]

Ever since I was a child, I've felt the need to enlarge the world with fictitious personalities—dreams of mine that were carefully crafted, envisaged with photographic clarity, and fathomed to the depths of their souls. When I was but five years old, an isolated child and quite content to be so, I already enjoyed the company of certain characters from my dreams, including a Captain Thibaut, the Chevalier de Pas, and various others whom I've forgotten, and whose forgetting—like my imperfect memory of the two I just named—is one of my life's great regrets.

This may seem merely like a child's imagination that gives life to dolls. But it was more than that. I intensely conceived those characters

with no need of dolls. Distinctly visible in my ongoing dream, they were utterly human realities for me, which any doll — because unreal — would have spoiled. They were people.

And instead of ending with my childhood, this tendency expanded in my adolescence, taking firmer root with each passing year, until it became my natural way of being. Today I have no personality: I've divided all my humanness among the various authors whom I've served as literary executor. Today I'm the meeting-place of a small humanity that belongs only to me.

This is simply the result of a dramatic temperament taken to the extreme. My dramas, instead of being divided into acts full of action, are divided into souls. That's what this apparently baffling phenomenon comes down to.

I don't reject — in fact I'm all for — psychiatric explanations, but it should be understood that *all* higher mental activity, because it's abnormal, is equally subject to psychiatric interpretation. I don't mind admitting that I'm crazy, but I want it to be understood that my craziness is no different from Shakespeare's, whatever may be the comparative value of the products that issue from the saner side of our crazed minds.

I subsist as a kind of medium of myself, but I'm less real than the others, less substantial, less personal, and easily influenced by them all. I too am a disciple of Caeiro, and I still remember the day — March 13th, 1914 — when I "heard for the first time" (when I wrote, that is, in a single burst of inspiration) a good many of the early poems of *The Keeper of Sheep* and then went on to write, without once stopping, the six Intersectionist poems that make up "Slanting Rain" (*Orpheu 2*), the visible and logical result of Caeiro's influence on the temperament of Fernando Pessoa.

Lisbon, 20 January 1935

My dear friend and colleague,

Many thanks for your letter. I'm glad I managed to say something of genuine interest. I had my doubts, given the hasty and

impulsive way I wrote, caught up in the mental conversation I was having with you.

You are quite right about the absence in me of any kind of evolution in the true sense. There are poems I wrote when I was twenty that are just as good — so far as I can judge — as the ones I write today. I write no better than I did, except in terms of my knowledge of Portuguese, which is a cultural rather than poetic particular. I write differently. This can perhaps be explained by the following . . .

What I am essentially — behind the involuntary masks of poet, logical reasoner and so forth — is a dramatist. My spontaneous tendency to depersonalization, which I mentioned in my last letter to explain the existence of my heteronyms, naturally leads to this definition. And so I do not evolve, I simply JOURNEY. (This word is typed in capital letters because I mistakenly hit the shift key, but it's correct, so I'll let it stand.) I continuously change personality, I keep enlarging (and here there is a kind of evolution) my capacity to create new characters, new forms of pretending that I understand the world or, more accurately, that the world can be understood. That is why I've likened my path to a journey rather than to an evolution. I haven't risen from one floor to another; I've moved, on a level plane, naïveté present in my adolescent poems, but that's not evolution, it's just me getting older.

These hastily written words should give you some inkling into the quite definite way in which I concur with your view that in me there has been no true evolution.

As to the forthcoming publication of my books, there are no obstacles to worry about. When I decide I want to publish Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos, I can do so immediately. But I'm afraid that books of this sort won't sell. That's my only hesitation. The publication of the large book of poems [of Fernando Pessoa] is likewise guaranteed, and if I'm more inclined to publish it rather than some other, it's because it has a certain intellectual advantage,