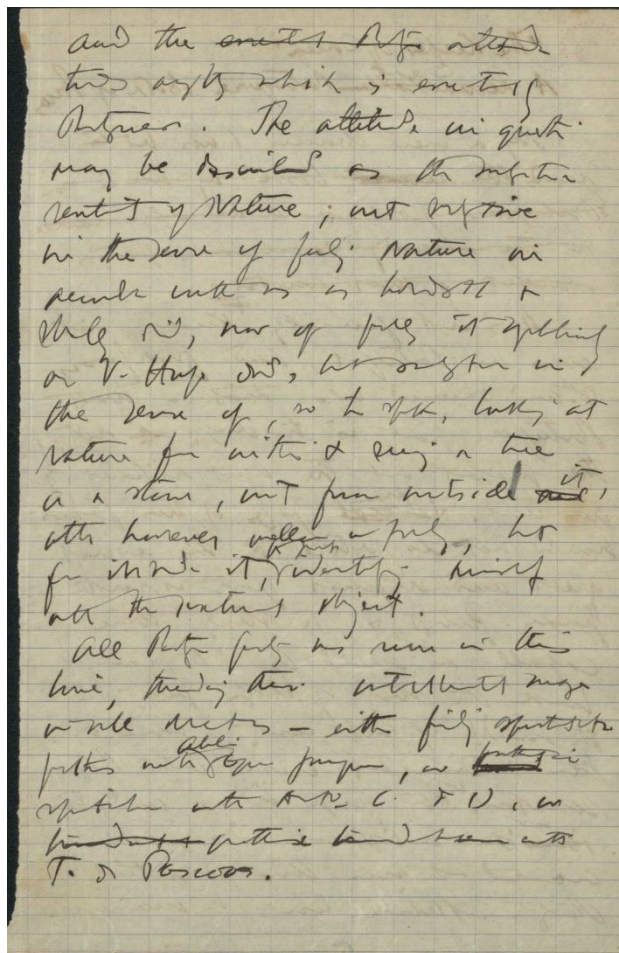


"The Keeper of Sheep"

A Remarkable Great Portuguese Book of Poems

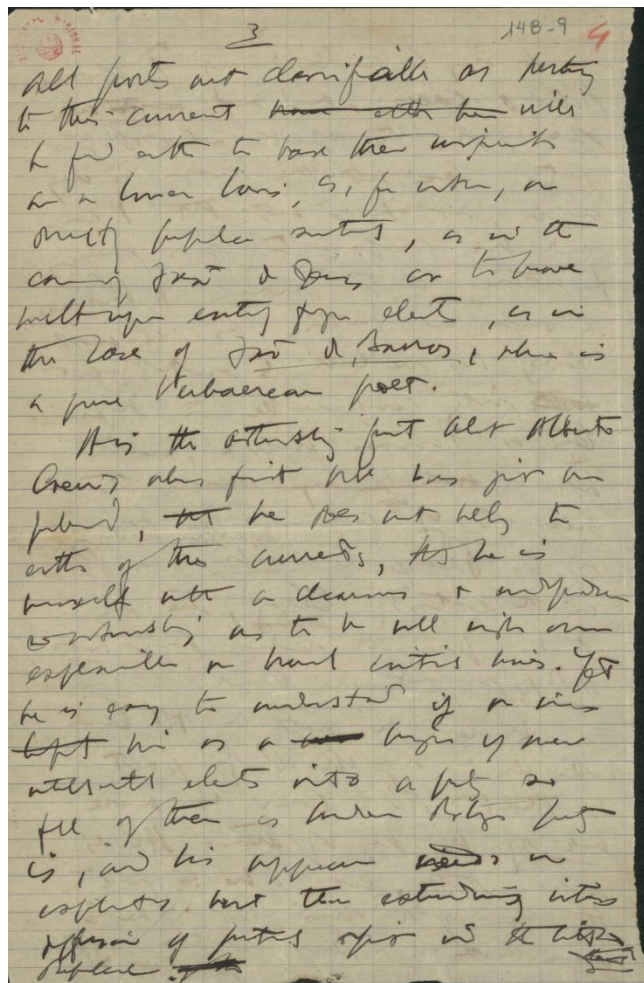
By a mere chance I was led to read the recent book by which a young Portuguese poet made his appearance in the already ~~crowded~~ ^{*exceptional*} poetry market of that country.

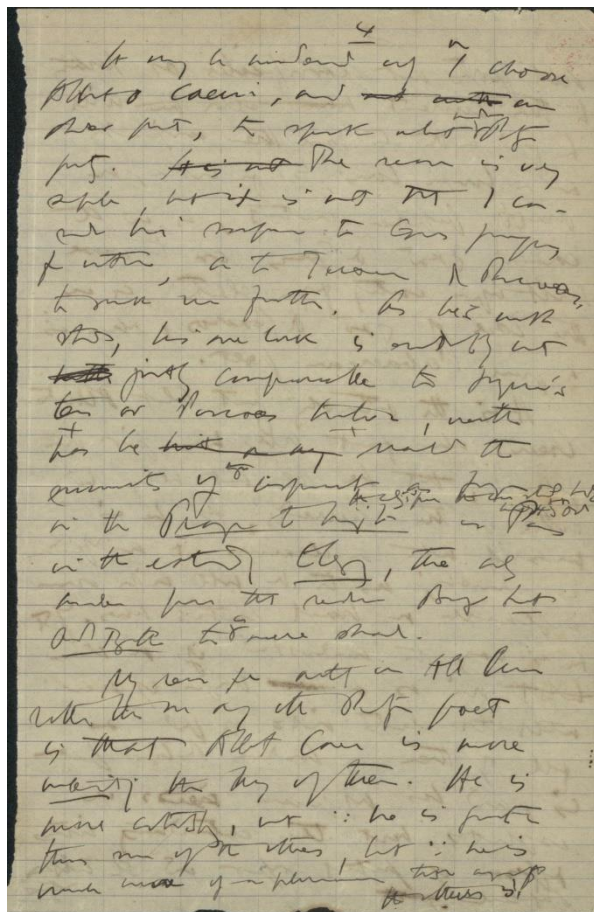
It is not generally known - not even in Portugal, and foreigners stand excused upon that - that Portuguese poetry is to-day, if not only the greatest but the most original of our time. Several Many pages of this paper would not do justice to the several great and original poets of contemporary Portugal, and, to study these capably, we would have to carry back the study of Portuguese poetry to the middle of the last century, when Antero de Quental broke with Portuguese sanctioned ways to forge ideas and to ~~ideas~~ convey sub-metaphysical ideas, and created at once the essential Portuguese attitude towards the universe



and the essential Portuguese attitude towards anything which is essentially Portuguese. The attitude in question may be described as the subjective sentiment of nature; not subjective in the sense of feeling Nature in accordance with us as Wordsworth and Shelley did, nor the feeling it symbolically as Victor Hugo did, but subjective in the sense of, so to speak, looking at Nature from within and seeing a tree or a stone, not from outside ~~nor~~ it, with however mellow a feeling, but from inside it, the poet identifying himself with the natural object.

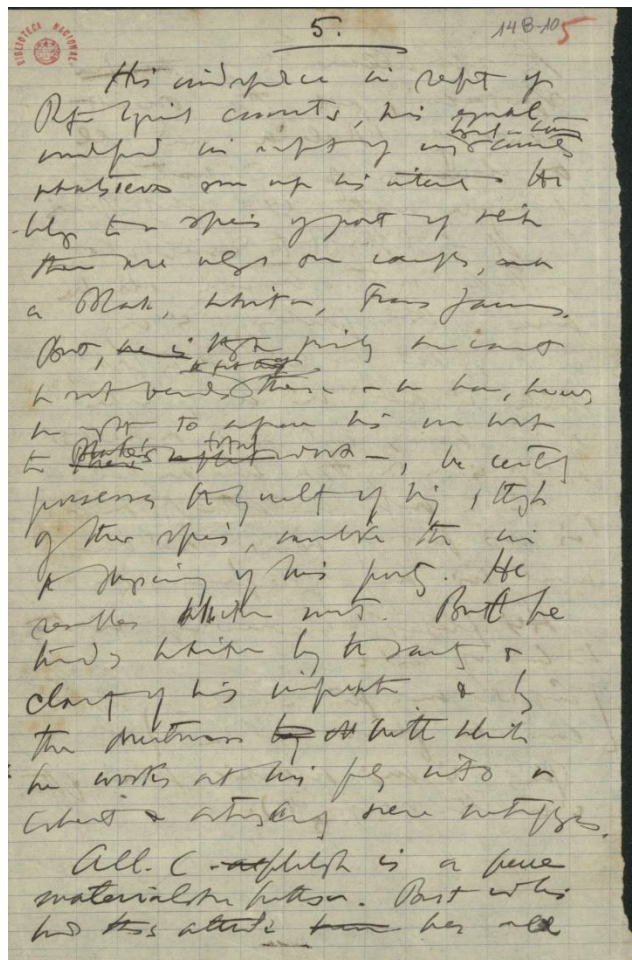
All Portuguese poetry has run in this line, threading this intellectual image in all directions - either finding spiritualistic paths with Abilio Guerra Junqueiro, or ~~pan~~ pantheistic spiritualism with Antonio Correia d'Oliveira, or ~~transcendental~~ pantheistic transcendentalism with Teixeira de Pascoaes.





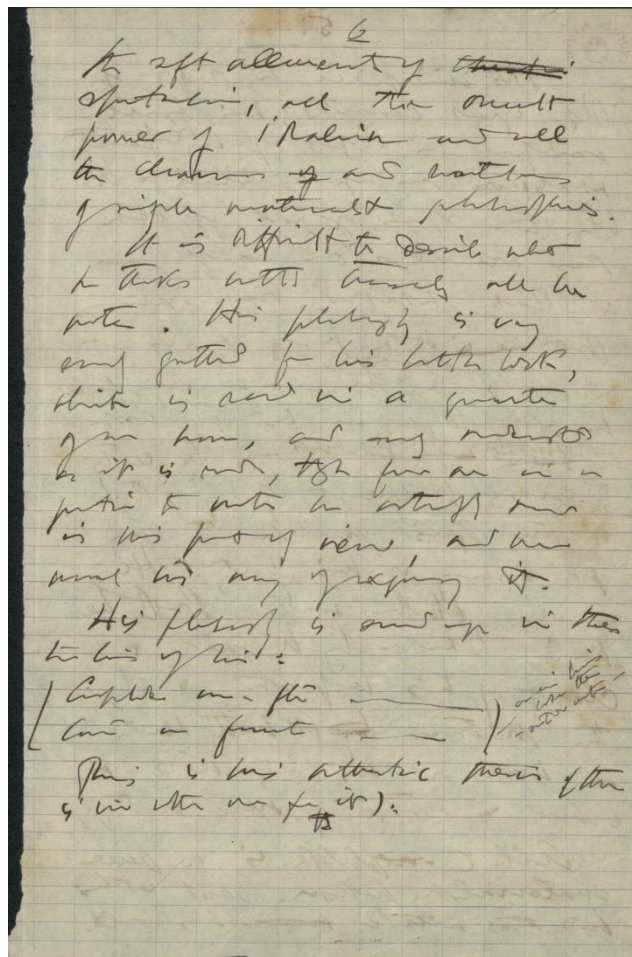
It may be wondered why we choose Alberto Caeiro, and not another an older poet, to speak about Modern Portuguese poetry. ~~It is not~~ The reason is very simple, but it is not that I consider him superior to Guerra Junqueiro, for instance, or to Teixeira de Pascoaes, to seek no further. As his work stands, his one book is evidently not ~~with~~ justly comparable to Junqueiro's ten and Pascoaes' |twelve|, neither has he ~~hit on any~~ reached the summits of lyric inspiration as Junqueiro in the *Payer to Light*, the only modern poem that can stand today against Wordsworth's ode or Pascoaes in the extraordinary *Elegy*, the only modern poem that renders Browning's *Last Ride Together* to a mere shade.

My reason for writing on Alberto Caeiro rather than on any other Portuguese poet is that Alberto Caeiro is more *interesting* than any of them. He is more astonishing, not because he is greater than some of the others, but because he is much more of a phenomenon than any of the others is.



His independence in respect of Portuguese lyrical currents, his equal independence in respect of any lyrical or literary currents whatsoever sum up his interest. He belongs to a species of poet of which there are only some examples, such as Blake, Whitman, Francis James. But, he is though possibly he cannot be set besides the first of these - we have, however, no right to compare his one book to the complete Blake's total work -, he certainly possesses the quality of being, though of other species, remarkable too in the shaping of his poetry. He resembles Whitman most. But he transcends Whitman by the sanity and clarity of his inspiration and by the directness by which he works out his feelings into a coherent and astonishing new metaphysics.

Alberto Caeiro's philosophy is a pure materialistic pantheism. But in his words this attitude have has all



the soft allurements of ~~Christian~~ spiritualism, all the occult power of idealism and all the clearness of and naturalness of simple materialist philosophies.

It is difficult to describe what he thinks without translating all he wrote. His philosophy is very easily gathered from his little book, which is read in a quarter of an hour, and only understood as it is read, though far are in a position to note how astonishingly new is his point of view, and how normal his way of expressing it.

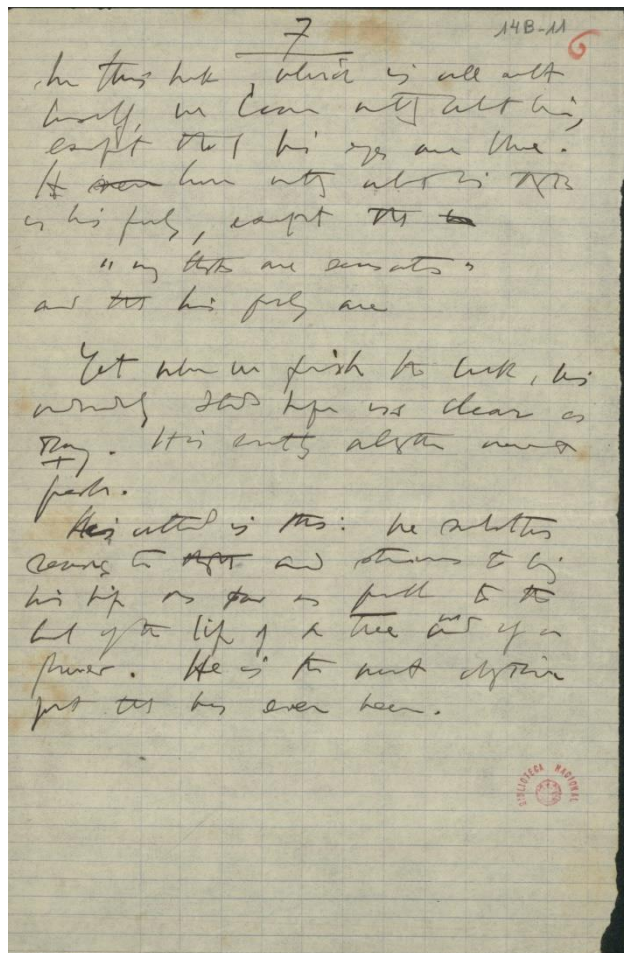
His philosophy is summed up in these two lines of his:

Compreender uma flôr {...}
Comêr um fructo {...}

Or lines like these

Sentido intimo {...}

This is his authentic thesis (there is no other one for it).



In this book, which is all about himself, we have nothing about him, except that his eyes are blue.

It never have nothing about his thoughts or his feelings except that

"my thoughts are sensations"

and that his feelings are {...}

Yet when we finish the book, his understanding stands before us clear as day. It is something altogether new and fresh.

His attitude is this: he substitutes senses to thought and strives to bring his life as far as possible to the level of the life of a tree and /or\ of a flower. He is the most objective poet that has ever been.

DIREITOS ASSOCIADOS

O trabalho MODERNISMO - Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu de <https://modernismo.pt/> está licenciado com uma Licença [Creative Commons - Atribuição-NãoComercial-CompartilhaIgual 4.0 Internacional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).