

Wordsworthian Undercurrents in Álvaro de Campos's "Barrow-on-Furness"

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A collection that commemorates a collection is a very satisfying thing. Even the idea of such a work appeals to one's sense of symmetry. Therein lies part of the pleasure of the forgoing essays. Arranged as a sequence, they complement the sonnets that stand foremost in the collection this special issue celebrates: Wordsworth's *The River Duddon*. Not unlike the Duddon sonnets, each of the previous essays has provided an occasion to retrace the course of Wordsworth's collection: its composition, publication, and reception. In some cases, these essays have directed attention to previously overlooked topics; in other cases, they have shed new light on familiar associations and themes. For my part, now that this stream of commentary is nearing its end, I want to take a short detour by taking up a seldom-regarded aspect of the reception of the Duddon sonnets: their influence on the Portuguese modernist poet, critic, and journalist, Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935).

My interest in addressing this topic is twofold. In the first place, I think that a special issue such as this one should place Wordsworth's writings in a broader comparative context. In the second place, I believe that Pessoa's engagement with Wordsworth's sonnets highlights universal themes that belie the ostensible parochiality of the Duddon series. My contention, to take steering from Fiona Stafford's reading of Seamus Heaney's "Crediting Poetry," is that Pessoa's response to Wordsworth's sonnets affirms the ability of "local work" to transcend the boundaries of time and place (Stafford 4). Building on the appreciation of the Duddon sonnets offered by Stafford and other observant readers of Wordsworth's poetry, I also want to take the occasion of writing this essay to emphasize how an attentiveness to geography can afford a helpful counterpoint to the linguistic and chronological

preoccupations that conventionally govern the academic study of works of literature.

The reasoning underpinning this latter point will become more evident as I proceed. For now, I simply wish to emphasize that my approach to Pessoa's response to the Duddon sonnets is geographically informed and that, accordingly, I want to begin by panning westward from the Duddon towards the nearby town of Barrow-in-Furness: one of the principal industrial settlements on the coast of the region through which Wordsworth's river runs. The reader will, I hope, permit this brief deviation from the course this special issue has followed thus far. I shall return us to the Duddon before long, but beginning with Barrow is essential to my subject.

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The town of Barrow, or Barrow-in-Furness, stands a few miles south of the mouth of the Duddon on the seaward side of the Furness Peninsula. It is roughly 50 miles north of Liverpool and 50 miles east of the Isle of Man. Sheltered from the sea by the long crook of Walney Island, Barrow is a place set apart. Technically, the town sits in the modern county of Cumbria. By accent and identity, though, it is really part of Lancashire: the ancient palatinate to which Barrow historically belonged. Parts of Barrow look on the Lakeland fells, but its most prominent local industries are energy generation and nuclear defence. (The town is home to the Maritime–Submarine division of BAE Systems: the multinational arms manufacturer who builds and maintains the Royal Navy's *Vanguard*-class submarines.) Even Barrow's apparent marginality is less certain than it might seem. True, the town stands at the end of what is often called the longest cul-de-sac in Britain. But somewhere just east of Barrow lies the centroid (the geometrical center point) of the entire United Kingdom.

Allegedly, the name *Barrow* comes from the Old Norse for "bare island" (Richardson 214).¹ This toponymy hints at the Scandinavian heritage of the region, but it is also historically apt. As late as 1841, the settlement that stood where Barrow now stands

comprised scarcely one hundred and fifty people (Saunders 215). That changed in 1850, when a team of iron prospectors discovered the Park haematite deposit: a nine-million-tonne bed of iron ore that launched the locality into the industrial age. Over the course of the next generation Barrow's population grew rapidly. By the mid-1870s, when the burgeoning town appeared in the second Ordnance Survey, Barrow was home to more than 30,000 people, an expanding naval construction yard, and the largest steelworks in the world (Pevsner 55). By 1891, when the local population exceeded 50,000, the town was dubbed "The English Chicago" (Fisher).²

By the early 1920s shipbuilding outstripped steel as Barrow's major industry, with the Sheffield-based company of Vickers Ltd employing the largest share of the town's male workforce (Bainbridge 381). Walney Island, as noted above, forms a natural breakwater around Barrow, creating a protected channel well suited to become a shipyard. Thanks to this natural asset, shipbuilding – both military and civilian – became Barrow's main international claim to fame. Most of the men on Vickers's payroll came from either North West England or Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. But their number also included Englishmen from as far away as Cornwall, as well as a few immigrants from further afield. Among the latter was, as various sources attest, a Portuguese engineer and avant-garde poet named Álvaro de Campos (1890–1935).

Although he was highly regarded among Lisbon's literary vanguard, Campos was not well known as a poet in Britain during his lifetime. Yet, the cycle of five sonnets he composed about Barrow put the town's name on the map of European modernism – or at least nearly. Campos's sonnets did not come to light until the posthumous publication of his complete poems in 1944, where they appear not under the title "Barrow-in-Furness" but as "Barrow-on-Furness": a toponymic substitution which implies that Barrow lies not on the seaward side of the Furness Peninsula, but on the banks of a river called Furness. This feat of

geographical revision suits Barrow's character as a place that is difficult to pin down, and it makes for an uncanny complement to the town's other, more recent, claim to literary fame: the Reverend W. Awdry's *Railway Series* storybooks, the basis of the *Thomas & Friends* television series and entertainment franchise. The Island of Sodor, the main setting of Awdry's stories, supposedly lies just off the coast of Barrow, and the town is consequently where the Sodor Railway joins the British mainland (Edwards). Awdry's rationale for choosing Barrow as the bridging point between his imagined island and the actual world can be easily understood. His inspiration came from the name of the Diocese of Sodor and Man, which led him to envision Sodor as a large island situated between the Isle of Man and the northwest of England (Awdry).³ The reason why Campos chose to change Barrow's name and setting, by contrast, is rather less clear.

No manuscript of "Barrow-on-Furness" has yet been found among the thousands of Campos's papers preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon.⁴ So, one might reasonably surmise that the editors of his complete poems mistranscribed his "in" as an "on." Alternatively, one might speculate that the title "Barrow-on-Furness" stems from a typesetter's erratum that the editors failed to spot while inspecting their proofs. These theories have been proposed elsewhere (Monteiro *Fernando Pessoa*, 40). But the idea that the title "Barrow-on-Furness" is the result of an editorial mistake does seem redundant. Campos's sonnets explicitly invoke a "rio Furness" and thereby indicate that the reimagining of Barrow's geography is essential to their idiom.

Even more curious than the circumstances surrounding the title of Campos's sonnets, though, is their provenance. According to Campos, he composed this "chain" of sonnets in Barrow in the mid-1920s while "sitting atop a barrel on an abandoned quay" after "finishing a job of tonnage" ["depois de um trabalho de arqueação, estava eu sentado sobre uma barrica num cais abandonado. Acabava de escrever um soneto – elo de uma cadeia de vários – em

que o facto de estar sentado nessa barrica era um elemento de construção.”] (Campos 4).

This assertion accords with what is known of Campos’s biography: a Glasgow-trained naval engineer and employee of the Forsyth company, he is thought to have spent time in many of Britain’s major ports. But, as a few scholars have noted, the credibility of Campos’s claims is compromised by the fact that he did not actually exist, at least not in the flesh: his identity being a product of the mind and pen of his creator, Fernando Pessoa.

* * *

Pessoa’s use of alter egos – or what he called his heteronyms (*heteronômicos*) – remains the most distinctive aspect of his literary career, not least because of the staggering number of identities involved. In all, he is known to have written under the guise of some eighty discreet personae, some of whom composed works in more than one language. The most prominent of these heteronyms are Álvaro de Campos and his contemporaries Alberto Caeiro (1889–1915) and Ricardo Reis (1887–1936?), but Bernardo Soares (1888–1935) (the author of *Livro do Desassossego*, or *The Book of Disquiet*) also merits a place among the writers whom Pessoa called his “inexistent coterie” (*coterie inexistente*) (Pessoa 11).

One might be tempted to view these heteronyms in the manner of the “otro Borges” delineated in Jorge Luis Borges’s “Borges y Yo,” but Pessoa’s personae are not merely shadow-selves. Nor, for that matter, are they simply pseudonyms or signatures. They are authorial presences in their own right, and they have their own unique styles, personalities, and biographies. In the case of Campos, about whom Pessoa wrote extensively, we even know the precise day and time of his birth. As Pessoa explained in an often-cited letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro:

Álvaro de Campos was born in Tavira on October 15, 1890 (at 1:30 in the afternoon, Ferreira Gomes tells me, and it is so, since casting the horoscope for that hour

confirms it). As you know, Campos is a naval engineer, trained in Glasgow, but is now in Lisbon, unemployed. . . . Campos is tall (1.75 meters in height – 2 centimetres taller than I), slender with a tendency to a slight stoop. (Monteiro “Álvaro de Campos,” 68)

Álvaro de Campos nasceu em Tavira, no dia 15 de Outubro de 1890 (as 1,30 da tarde, diz-me o Ferreira Gomes; e é verdade, pois, feito o horóscopo para essa hora, está certo). Este, como sabe, é engenheiro naval (por Glasgow), mas agora está aqui em Lisboa em inactividade. . . . Álvaro de Campos é alto (1^m, 75 de altura, mais 2cm. do que eu), magro e um pouco tendente a curvar-se. (Pessoa 11)

Pessoa goes on to explain that Campos is “cleanshaven” and has a “vaguely . . . Portuguese-Jewish type” of complexion: “between fair and swarthy.” His hair, moreover, is straight and “normally parted on the side,” and he wears a monocle – an accessory that signifies his inquisitiveness as well as his dandyism and decadence. These latter facets of his character are also borne out by his literary tastes. In his later poems especially, Campos’s writings draw inspiration from poets ranging from Charles Baudelaire to Edgar Allan Poe to Maurice Rollinat. Each of these writers were also important to Pessoa, but their influence on Campos is even more evident.

The autonomy of Pessoa’s heteronyms gave them a curious kind of agency. Although their actions were confined to the written word, they nonetheless exerted an influence on Pessoa’s daily life. Campos even went so far as to write to Pessoa’s fiancée Ofélia Queiroz in order to break off their engagement (Monteiro “Fernando Pessoa and Álvaro de Campos,” 5). Pessoa’s heteronyms were not merely his servants, though. They were guided by their own convictions, tastes, and styles. Consequently, they could – and did – disagree with their

creator. Campos, for one, wrote a derisive squib about Pessoa's only published play, an experimental drama entitled *O Marinheiro* (1915). Campos evidently found the play to be dull and self-indulgent. He dismissed it as a work "In which the most agile and astute | Feel sleepy and brutish" ["Em que os mais ageis e astutos | Se sentem com somno e brutos"] (Pessoa 213).

It was Campos, moreover, the English-speaking engineer, who provided Pessoa with a Portuguese voice through which to stage his most notable engagements with the Anglo-American canon. His response to Walt Whitman is indicative. Rather than celebrating Whitman in his own words, Pessoa chose to pay tribute to him in Campos's early odes, including his outrageous homage "Saudação a Walt Whitman" (1915), which hails the great American poet as the "Pimp of all the Universe," "Prostitute of all the solar systems," and "Great pederast brushing-up against the diversity of things" ["Grande pederasta roçando-te contra a diversidade das coisas . . . Souteneur de todo o Universo, | Rameira de todos os sistemas solares"] (Pessoa 203). This poem, with its parodic appropriation of the stylistic routines of the poet it honors, prefigures what one finds in Campos's "Barrow-on-Furness." The sonnets that form this latter poem also constitute a kind of *saudação* (or salutation) to a towering figure in English literary history, but the salute they make is rather more oblique.

Although they are written in Portuguese, the five sonnets that comprise "Barrow-on-Furness" openly engage with the formal and thematic conventions of the English sonnet. In addition to including variations on standard English sonnet types (the Petrarchan and Shakespearean), there are intertextual echoes and allusions in Campos's cycle that call specific canonical sonnets to mind. Notably, the final line of his first sonnet – "Acaba já com isso, ó coração!" ["Stop all that right there, heart!"] (Pessoa 317) – recalls, by way of negation, the injunction that concludes the introductory sonnet of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*: "looke in thy heart and write" (Sidney 1). But it is not only by way of such acts of

misprision that “Barrow-on-Furness” engages with the conventions of the English sonnet.

As George Monteiro has noted, the very title of “Barrow-on-Furness,” with its invocation of an otherwise non-existent river, signals Campos’s recycling of the idiom of the English river sonnet: a fashionable application of the form that can be traced back at least as far as the latter eighteenth century (*Fernando Pessoa*, 35–37). Like the ruins that dot the landscapes portrayed in so much Augustan-era poetry, the rivers commemorated in many eighteenth-century sonnets serve as spatial figurations of passing time. They are devices that initiate and organize the poet’s thoughts and that, in doing so, connect the utterances of a specific lyric speaker to an identifiable setting. Thomas Warton’s “To the River Lodon” (1777) and William Bowles’s “To the River Itchen” (1789) are paradigmatic. But whereas Augustan descriptive poem tends to apostrophize places of public importance (hence, Alexander Pope’s *Windsor-Forest* and John Dyer’s ‘Grongar Hill’), the rivers memorialized in sonnets such as Warton’s and Bowles’s are landmarks endeared by personal attachments. These rivers, as David Fairer has demonstrated, are conventionally associated with the poet’s youth or place of birth, and they therefore lend an air of intimacy to the speaker’s brief soliloquy (Fairer 110–13).

Writing as a foreigner resident in Barrow, Campos does not claim the river Furness as his native stream. Nevertheless, other elements of the river sonnet motif are evident in “Barrow-on-Furness,” where the quayside of the make-believe river Furness provides a stage for Campos’s five-sonnet meditation. Consider the *mise en scène* presented in Sonnet II:

I sit at the docks, on a drum, understanding

No more than I would were I on my feet.

Why should I understand it at all?

Well, no, but then why shouldn't I?

Oh river below, running dirty and cold, I, too,

Pass this way, being of no greater worth. (Monteiro *Fernando Pessoa*, 40)

Estou sentado no cais, numa barrica,

E não compreendo mais do que de pé.

Por que o havia de compreender?

Pois sim, mas também por que o não havia?

Água do rio, correndo suja e fria,

Eu passo como tu, sem mais valer... (Pessoa 318)

Admittedly, these lines put one more in mind of *Les Fleurs du mal* or Eliot's *The Waste Land* than Thomas Warton. The thoughts the verse expresses are decidedly bleaker than those found in most eighteenth-century river sonnets. Still, Campos's apostrophe to the river is very much in keeping with the conventions of the river sonnet, as is his identification with the river and his position over-looking it. Campos does proceed to complicate the relationship with the river in Sonnet III, where the speaker damns the Furness and demands to know what its "elusive presence" has to do with him or his thoughts [Corre, raio de rio, e leva ao mar | A minha indiferença subjetiva! . . . Tua presença esquiva | Que tem comigo e com o meu pensar?] (Pessoa 319). Even here, though, the role of the river as an addressee is sustained. Campos's revision of Barrow's geography begins to make more sense once we recognize the function of the imagined river Furness in facilitating such interrogations. This invented English river not only provides a counterpart to his musings, but it also aligns those musings with an established, and distinctively English, literary pedigree.

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Yet, one is left wondering why Pessoa should have selected Barrow as the locus for Campos's sonnets. This setting accords with the biography he invented for Campos, who is supposed to have passed through many of Britain's major ports, including Newcastle, Cardiff, and Liverpool. But these connections only make one wonder at the poem's setting all the more. Why should Pessoa have set these sonnets beside a fictional river in Barrow, and not on the Tyneside or Merseyside or along the Severn, the Ely, or the Taff? Why go to the trouble of inventing an industrial river when one already has so many from which to choose? Any answer to these questions must necessarily be speculative, but George Monteiro has proposed a compelling hypothesis: namely, that Pessoa's selection denotes the influence of Wordsworth's Duddon sonnets (*Fernando Pessoa*, 36–39).

Notable readers of Wordsworth's poetry, including David Fairer (2009) and Daniel Robinson (2002), have previously characterized the Duddon sonnets as a self-conscious adaptation of the conventions of the river sonnet. Instead of delimiting the speaker's riparian meditation to a single fourteen-line frame, the thirty-three (later thirty-four) sonnets in the Duddon series exploit the forward-flowing momentum of the lyric sequence to chart the full course of the river they portray. This alignment of form and subject matter is noteworthy, and the sense of progression it lends to the Duddon series has led a number of commentators (including some of the contributors to this special issue) to compare Wordsworth's sonnets with the "Topographical Description" of the Lake District they initially appeared alongside. Such comparisons are apt, especially given the way the Duddon sonnets (and the notes that accompany them) foreground the history and character of the region they survey. But these sonnets also go farther than the "Topographical Description" in emphasizing Wordsworth's attachment to that region. The often-quoted declaration from the sestet of the first Duddon sonnet – "I seek the birth-place of a native Stream" – is a case in point (Wordsworth 3).

Wordsworth's own "native stream" is technically the Derwent, as Robinson has rightly pointed out (455). But whereas the Derwent rises near Sprinkling Tarn (NY 22782 09059), the Duddon's source is located in an even more eminent spot. It is found on Wrynose Fell (NY 27629 03259), near the point where the boundaries of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire once converged. From this node, the meeting place of the old Lake counties, the Duddon flows south-west to the outskirts of the Lakes region. For Wordsworth, this centripetal course distinguished the Duddon as the Lake District's defining river: as the waterway which emerges from the region's navel, and which therefore constitutes its "native stream." Wordsworth's decision to dedicate his sonnets to the Duddon can consequently be seen as complementary to the work that the Duddon collection is widely perceived to have performed: namely, proclaiming his status as the chief "poet, celebrant, and interpreter" of the Lakes region (Gill 334).

The fondness Wordsworth expresses for the Duddon in his sonnets is not merely a pretence, though. He genuinely appears to have regarded the Duddon as his "favourite river" (Selincourt 4), and the sense of the speaker's personal interest in the localities the Duddon sonnets describe seems utterly sincere. Thus, the serendipitous linking of place and memory in the twenty-first sonnet, where recollections of past journeys along the river steal upon the poet in the midst of his wandering:

Whence that low voice? —A whisper from the heart,
 That told of days long past when here I roved
 With friends and kindred tenderly beloved;
 Some who had early mandates to depart,
 Yet are allowed to steal my path athwart
 By Duddon's side[.] (Wordsworth 23)

In this sonnet the speaker is veritably side-tracked by the chance remembrance of previous rambles along the Duddon and, more especially, of the “beloved” but absent friends and family with whom those rambles were made. The act of retracing ground traversed in former days is here elevated to the status of an act of commemoration that forges an enduring connection with people and “days long past,” and now otherwise inaccessible. The Duddon in this instance becomes the locus of a spot of time that awakens dormant feelings of love and joy. “From her unworthy seat,” the sonnet continues, “the cloudy stall | Of Time, breaks forth triumphant Memory,” and “smother’d joys into new being start.” Such reminiscences, triggered, as though by chance, by the speaker’s reflections on the landscape, affirm the depth of his feeling for the valley through which he is passing. At points such as this one, the Duddon sonnets evince that depth of personal attachment that, as Fiona Stafford has stressed, proved pivotal to the widespread appeal of the Duddon series and helped to ensure its place among Wordsworth’s most widely read works (70–71). Significantly, this expressed attachment to the landscape of the Duddon valley also seems to have been the basis of Campos’s response to Wordsworth’s sonnets.

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Pessoa was certainly familiar with Wordsworth’s writings, which he would have encountered as a schoolboy.⁵ As both George Monteiro and Bernard McGuirk (1988) have shown, moreover, Pessoa engaged creatively with Wordsworth’s works during the early years of his literary career. As early as 1911, Pessoa translated three of Wordsworth’s “Lucy” poems for publication (Pereira et al. 8272–73), and five years later he adapted “The Solitary Reaper” in his poem “Ela canta pobre ceifeira” (1916). The works Pessoa credited to Campos, moreover, evince his knowledge of poems including Wordsworth’s “Intimations Ode” and *Peter Bell*. It therefore seems reasonable to infer that the setting of Campos’s

sonnets (the fictional river Furness) invites us to read “Barrow-on-Furness” not only as a response to the river sonnet tradition, but also as a specific response to Wordsworth’s Duddon series. Barrow, as noted above, lies just a few miles south of the Duddon Sands.

Pessoa may have come to know Barrow’s name on account of the international renown of its shipyards. Barrow-built vessels certainly docked in Lisbon during his lifetime. But he would only need to have glanced at a map to spot the town’s proximity to the lakes and fells portrayed in Wordsworth’s works. In any case, the apparent connection between “Barrow-on-Furness” and Wordsworth’s Duddon sonnets makes the setting of Campos’s poem all the more significant. Barrow’s prominence as a center of heavy industry stands at variance with the idyllic rural landscape that Wordsworth celebrates. The “dirty and cold” waters of Campos’s invented river are the very antithesis of Wordsworth’s Duddon, which is variously described as being “blue,” “pellucid,” and “bright,” and – most memorably of all – “remote from every taint | Of sordid industry” (Wordsworth 3, 10, 14). This contrast is doubly meaningful, though: in addition to foiling Wordsworth’s depiction of the Duddon, it also calls attention to the constructedness of that depiction, which, as numerous commentators have averred, fails to account for the many industrial uses to which the Duddon was historically put. The twentieth-century Cumbrian poet, Norman Nicholson (1914–1987), is particularly notable in this regard. His invocations of the Duddon respond to Wordsworth’s sonnets by vividly recording the river’s industrial past. “Even in Wordsworth’s day,” Nicholson affirms, “shallow-draft barges shot their ore . . . for the charcoal-burning furnace | Sited like a badger’s set deep in Duddon woods” (359). The import of this simile is plain. It refutes Wordsworth by naturalizing the presence of industry in the landscape.

Unlike Nicholson, though, Campos’s sonnets do not so much rebuke Wordsworth’s treatment of the Duddon as they ironically transpose the idiom of Wordsworth’s sonnets to a

contrasting locality in the same region apprehended at a different point in time. Viewed in this way, Campos's river Furness might be said to constitute a modernist revision of Wordsworth's Duddon. It is a treatment that reworks Wordsworth's subject matter in a manner responsive to the themes of industrialization and alienation in which Campos took an interest. Such differences between the two sonnet cycles complement the different ways Wordsworth and Campos figure the speaker's relationship with the river. Whereas Wordsworth portrays the Duddon as the poet's "native Stream" and guide, in "Barrow-on-Furness" the imagined river is a foreign presence that can only ironically accompany the stationary poet. This point is made explicit in Campos's final sonnet, where the speaker professes his strained but sustained attachment to his distant homeland:

How long, how long, my Portugal, have we
 Gone our separate ways! Ah, but the soul,
 This equivocal soul, never calm or strong,
 Is not even remotely distracted from you.

I, an occult hysteric, dream – an empty niche.
 Ironically, the Furness, the river washing
 These shores, keep me company, I who stand
 Still while the river runs on at such speed. (Monteiro *Fernando Pessoa*, 38)

Há quanto tempo, Portugal, há quanto
 Vivemos separados! Ah, mas a alma,
 Esta alma incerta, nunca forte ou calma,
 Não se distrai de ti, nem bem nem tanto.

Sonho, histérico oculto, um vão recanto...
 O rio Furness, que é o que aqui banha
 Só ironicamente me acompanha,
 Que estou parado e ele correndo tanto. (Pessoa 324)

The irony to which the speaker refers here seems deliberately ambiguous. It potentially refers to the fabricated nature of Campos's identity, to the status of the river Furness as a fiction, or to the fact that Campos is self-consciously writing an English sonnet in Portuguese (and the final sonnet is a Shakespearean, or English, sonnet). It may even refer, to a varying degree, to all three of these factors simultaneously. But readers familiar with Wordsworth's Duddon sonnets will appreciate that the irony on which the speaker remarks also runs contrary to the free-flowing forward movement described in Wordsworth's penultimate sonnet. There, the emptying of the Duddon estuary into the Irish Sea finds its spiritual analogue in the poem's assertion of the soul's progression into the infinite. "And may thy Poet, cloud-born Stream!", writes Wordsworth, "be free":

The sweets of earth contentedly resigned,
 And each tumultuous working left behind
 At seemly distance, to advance like Thee,
 Prepared, in peace of heart, in calm of mind
 And soul, to mingle with Eternity! (Wordsworth 34)

Campos's sonnet, in remarking on the speaker's intransigence, subverts these sentiments of serene resignation. His thoughts are also directed towards a place beyond his immediate

surroundings: his native Portugal. Instead of being propelled towards his homeland, though, he remains motionless – his “equivocal soul” [*incerta alma*] wracked with quandariness by a conflicting desire to pass on and stay put. The speaker’s final words frame this indeterminacy of will as an insight into the human condition: “Ah, what a human yearning,” he concludes, “to be a river or a quay” [“Ah, que ânsia humana de ser rio ou cais!”] (Pessoa 324).

For George Monteiro, this final utterance constitutes Campos’s attempt to do “homage” to Wordsworth by “out-romanticiz[ing]” him (*Fernando Pessoa*, 38). This claim is compelling, though one should be careful to observe the difference between Wordsworth’s idealism and Campos’s ironic detachment. Whereas Wordsworth’s peripatetic meanderings “by Duddon’s side” culminate in an avowal of the “high[er] purpose of the river’s flow,” Campos’s dockside broodings on the Furness serve “only to put the ironies of the poet’s life into relief.” The location of the assumed setting of Campos’s sonnets, the outer edge of the region most strongly associated with Wordsworth’s works, not only complements this difference of register, it also underpins it.

Campos’s “Barrow-on-Furness” is, in sum, a poem that is as geographically allusive as it is illusive. On the one hand, it is a sonnet cycle based on a fictitious recasting of an actual place and written by the imagined identity of an actual poet. On the other hand, it is a cycle whose fictitious recasting of an actual place aligns it – both spatially and idiomatically – with a specific precursory work. Campos’s “Barrow-on-Furness” creatively exploits a locality already freighted with literary associations in order to project a new set of associations over that locality. This act is well suited to Barrow’s enduring character as a place set apart from its surroundings, but the gesture Campos’s poem makes is also meaningful for the way it revises Barrow’s geography to stage its engagement with Wordsworth’s Duddon sonnets.

The terms of this engagement are riddled with contradictions. Nonetheless, the fact that geography forms the basis of the apparent relationship between “Barrow-on-Furness” and the Duddon sonnets affirms the degree to which the topographical investment of Wordsworth’s series captured the interest and imagination of readers in other places and at other times. Although Wordsworth’s Duddon series is one of his most regionally defined works, its appeal to readers across historical and linguistic boundaries indicates that it is by no means merely parochial. That Campos appears to have found sufficient inspiration in the setting of Wordsworth’s sonnets to compose five sonnets of his own affirms as much. Viewed as a literary artefact, Campos’s “Barrow-on-Furness” can be distinguished as a geographically self-conscious work of art, but the relation of its setting to the setting of Wordsworth’s Duddon sonnets also confirms how geography can function as a point of reference for revealing the interrelatedness of works of literature otherwise separated by language and chronology. Through his cycle of five sonnets, Campos made his mark among the many writers and artists who have drawn inspiration from Wordsworth’s sonnets. More so than most of those writers, though, Campos chose to answer Wordsworth’s collection of sonnets in that most satisfying manner – by creating a collection of his own.

NOTES

¹ Alternative interpretations have been proposed, including the more likely hypothesis that the name *Barrow* contains Celtic and Old Norse elements, and means ‘island summit’ (Ekwall 204).

² This nickname might provoke a wry smile today, but it reminds us that Barrow was one of Victorian Britain’s biggest boomtowns.

³ Historically, the Diocese of Sodor and Man included the Isle of Man and the Hebrides: the *Suðreyjar* or “southern isles” in Old Norse, from which the name of Sodor derives (Moore

38–39). The Hebridean portion of the diocese was split from Mann during the fourteenth century, but the name of the diocese remained unchanged (Bray 2–3), paving the way for Awdry to claim Sodor as the name of his island.

⁴ The Pessoa Archive (Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Espólio 3) includes some 27,000 documents as well as a portion of the more than 1,300 books, magazines and newspapers that comprised Pessoa’s personal library (Pizarro and Dix; Pizarro, Ferrari, and Cardiello). Most of the manuscripts in the archive were left unsorted at Pessoa’s death in 1935. These items have been the subject of extensive examination, but they have not been exhaustively documented, and many of Pessoa’s papers and other parts of his library are in private ownership or at the Casa Fernando Pessoa in Lisbon. It is possible therefore that a manuscript of “Barrow-on-Furness” will yet come to light.

⁵ Pessoa’s stepfather, João Miguel Rosa (c.1860–1919), was appointed the Portuguese consul in the British Colony of Natal in 1895, and Pessoa consequently received a formal English education at Durban High School between 1899 and 1904.

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