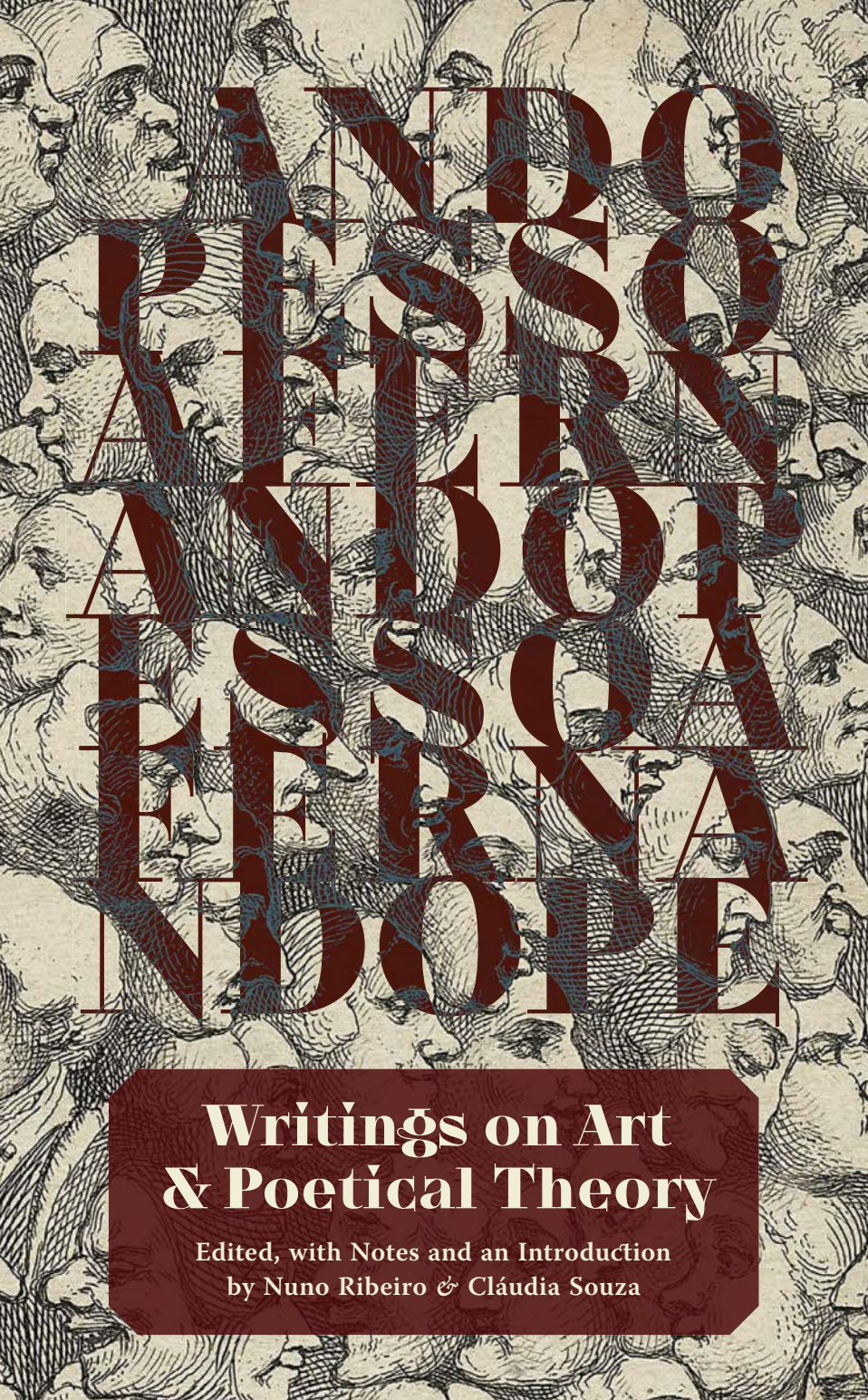
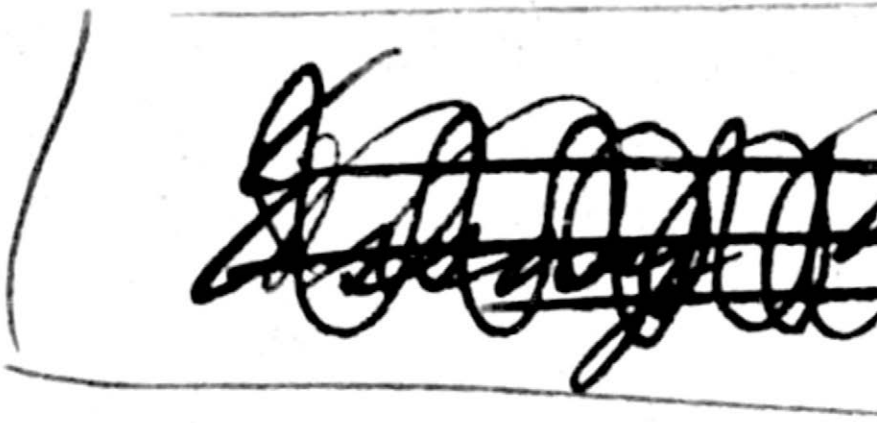
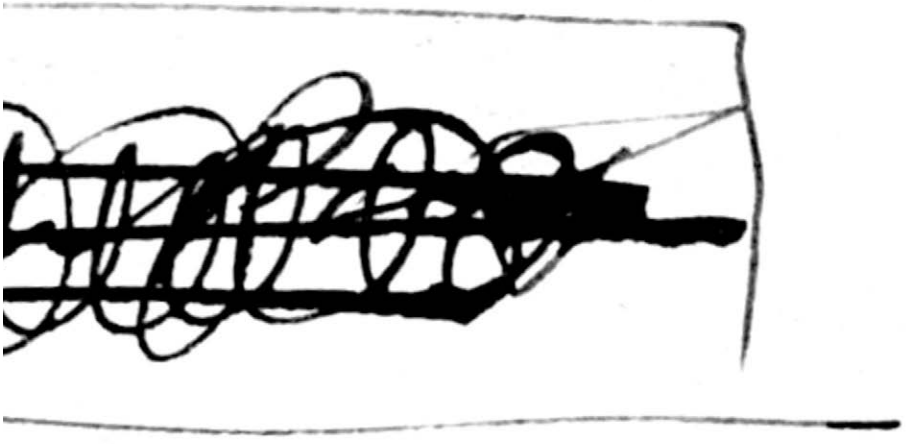


Writings on Art & Poetical Theory

Edited, with Notes and an Introduction
by Nuno Ribeiro & Cláudia Souza

From an objective standpoint, the Cube of Sensation is composed of:
Ideas = lines
Images (internal) = planes
Images of objects = solids





Essay on Poetry

Fernando Pessoa

Writings on Art and Poetical Theory

Fernando Pessoa

Writings on Art and Poetical Theory

Edited, with Notes and an Introduction
by Nuno Ribeiro & Cláudia Souza

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Introduction

NUNO RIBEIRO & CLÁUDIA SOUZA

1 ☞ Pessoa's Education in Durban and His English Writings

Writings on Art and Poetical Theory contains a selection of Fernando Pessoa's writings (1888–1935) on art and poetical theory, originally written in English. In Pessoa's work one finds not only literary and fictional works but also a multiplicity of theoretical texts on the most diverse subjects concerning artistic movements, literature, and writers. One of the most important dimensions of Pessoa's writing corresponds to his critical and essayistic texts. Throughout his life, Pessoa published a series of critical and theoretical writings — mostly in Portuguese[1] — that were important for the establishment of modernism in Portugal. In addition to his Portuguese writings, the Pessoa Archive also contains a series of English texts on literary criticism that he left unpublished but intended to publish abroad.

Pessoa's English texts are the result in part of his education. Pessoa spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Durban, South Africa, where he lived between 1896 and 1905 and received an English education, following the marriage of his mother, Maria Madalena

1. An exception to this is a juvenile work about "Macaulay," published in *The Durban High School Magazine*, in December 1904. For further information about this, see: Pauly Ellen Bothe, *Apreciações Literárias de Fernando Pessoa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional — Casa da Mœda, 2013) 169–174.

Pinheiro Nogueira, to Pessoa's stepfather, João Miguel Rosa, who was a Portuguese consul in Durban. The importance of Pessoa's English education is highlighted by Hubert D. Jennings in the book *Fernando Pessoa: The Poet with Many Faces*:

> It was an "*exutoire providentiel*," as Armand Guibert describes it, which took Fernando Pessoa to South Africa. On January 6, 1896, he and his mother left Lisbon for Durban, where he was to spend the next ten years of his life. The experience, and particularly the English education he received there, was to transform his life, permeate his work, and leave a marked influence upon the literary trends of modern Portugal.[2]

In Durban, Pessoa first studies in the Convent School of Saint Joseph's (1896–1899) and is transferred in 1899 to Durban High School, where he is a peer of "young graduates from Oxford or Cambridge."[3] During this period, Pessoa reads the most diverse authors of the English literary tradition, who would become an everlasting presence in his work. In a letter written in 1932 to José Osório de Oliveira, Pessoa — referring to the books &

2. See the chapter "Fernando Pessoa in South Africa" in Hubert D. Jennings, Fernando Pessoa: *The Poet with Many Faces*, ed. Carlos Pitella (Lisbon: Tinta-da-China, 2019) 31.

3. *Ibid.*, 43.

authors that most influenced him — provides us with a relevant testimony of how important English literature was to him during his formative period in South Africa:

> In my childhood & early adolescence there was for me, who lived and was educated in English lands, a supreme and engaging book — Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*; even today, & for that reason, I read and reread it as if I did nothing more than remember.
>
> In my second adolescence, Shakespeare and Milton dominated my spirit, as well as, incidentally, those English romantic poets who are irregular shadows of them; among these, Shelley was perhaps the one whose inspiration I most lived with.
>
> In what I can call my third adolescence, spent here in Lisbon, I lived in the atmosphere of the Greek and German philosophers, as well as that of the decadent French, whose action was suddenly swept from my mind by Swedish gymnastics and by reading *Dégénérescence*, by Nordau.[4]

4. Fernando Pessoa, *Correspondência: 1923–1935*, ed. Manuela Parreira da Silva (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 1999) 278–279. The translations from Portuguese are our own whenever we quote an original Portuguese edition, except in the cases we've been able to identify an English translation. In the latter case, we quote from existing translations.

In a document entitled "Influências" ["Influences"], Pessoa provides a detailed account of other poets who were important to him during his stay in South Africa:

> 1904–1905 — Influences of Milton and the English poets of the romantic period — Byron, Shelley, Keats & Tennyson. (Also, a little later, and influencing initially the *short story writer*, Edgar Poe.) Slight influences also from Pope's school. In prose, Carlyle. Remains of influences of Portuguese sub-poets read in childhood. — In this period the order of influences was, more or less: 1) Byron; 2) Milton, Pope and Byron; 3) Byron, Milton, Pope, Keats, Tennyson and Shelley somewhat; 4) Milton, Keats, Tennyson, Wordsworth & Shelley; 5) Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats and Poe.[5]

Both the letter sent to Oliveira and the document entitled "Influências" present just some of the English poets read by Pessoa in Durban. Throughout his Private Library and the documents present in the Pessoa Archive there are several other clues that enable us to understand the impact of English literature on Pessoa goes

5. Fernando Pessoa, *Escritos Autobiográficos, Automáticos e de Reflexão Pessoal*, ed. Richard Zenith (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2003) 150.

beyond the names referenced in those two texts. Indeed, throughout his life, Pessoa never abandons the English language. The Portuguese author works, in Lisbon, as a translator of English (and French) commercial letters. He also publishes translations into Portuguese of English-speaking poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Elizabeth & Robert Browning, and Poe.[6] That the Pessoa Archive contains thousands of pages written by Pessoa originally in English testifies to his continued engagement with English literature. The aforementioned evidence enables us to understand the impact of Pessoa's English education not only on his work but also on his life.

2 ☞ The Plural Literary Space and the Writings on Art and Poetical Theory

Pessoa's writings on art and poetical theory must be considered in the context of the development of a plural literary space. In a random note written by Pessoa one reads: "Be plural like the universe!"[7] This is precisely what he tries to achieve with his work through the

6. For further information regarding Pessoa's translations, see: Arnaldo Saraiva, *Fernando Pessoa Poeta — Tradutor de Poetas* (Porto: Lello Editores 1996).

7. Fernando Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*, ed. & tr. by Richard Zenith (New York: Grove Press, 2001) 237.

creation of a multiplicity of literary fictional authors[8] entrusted with the task of signing different texts and assuming a plurality of literary tasks, which is what one finds underlying Pessoa's heteronymic theory.

The concept of the heteronym as created by Pessoa is different from a simple pseudonym. In a "Bibliographical Summary" published in the literary journal *Presença* (December 1928), one reads:

> Fernando Pessoa's writings belong to two categories of works, which we may call orthonymic and heteronymic. We cannot call them autonymous and pseudonymous, for that's not in fact what they are. Pseudonymous works are by the author in his own person, except in the name he signs; heteronymic works are by the author outside his own person. They proceed from a full-fledged individual created by him, like the lines spoken by a character in a drama he might write.
>
> The heteronymic works of Fernando Pessoa have been produced by (so far) three people's names — Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos. These individuals should be considered distinct from their author.[9]

8. For further information regarding the term "fictional authors" to characterize Pessoa's creation of literary personalities, see: Fernando Pessoa, *Eu sou uma antologia: 136 autores fictícios*, Jerónimo Pizarro and Patricio Ferrari (eds) (Lisbon: Tinta-da-

According to this text, the writings of Pessoa can be distinguished by two categories: the orthonymic, signed by Pessoa in his own name, and the heteronymic, signed by literary fictional authors created by that author. The heteronymic works are different from the merely pseudonymous works, since the latter are written by the author in his own person, that is, with the simple shift of name, while the heteronymic works are written by each individual author and are distinct from his own persona. Thus, the creation of a heteronym corresponds to the creation of a different literary fictional author with its own writings, its own biography, its own way of seeing the world, and its own style, that is, as if the works a heteronym produces were written by a completely different person. In the text entitled *Aspects*, which was supposed to serve as an introduction to the publication of the works of the heteronyms, one reads:

> 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,

← China: 2013). Following this edition, we employ the term "fictional author" as a general one that encompasses all the different types of fictional personalities created by Pessoa: heteronyms, semi-heteronyms, and literary personalities.

9. Fernando Pessoa, *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe*, ed. and tr. by Richard Zenith (New York: Penguin Books, 2006) 3.

> 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.[10]

As asserted in the "Bibliographical Summary," the only fictional authors Pessoa considers having achieved the status of a heteronym correspond to the name of three of his literary creations: Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, & Álvaro de Campos. Besides these heteronyms, Pessoa attributes the name of the semi-heteronym to Bernardo Soares, a fictional author entrusted with the task of signing Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet* at its final stage.[11]

10. Fernando Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*, op. cit., 2.

11. Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet* has three distinct stages: 1st) between 1913 & 1914, corresponding to a period when this project is signed by Pessoa in his own name; 2nd) between 1915 & 1920, when Vicente Guedes assumes the authorship of this project; 3rd) the final stage, when the project becomes the property of Bernardo

In a letter — written January 13, 1935, sent to Adolfo Casais Monteiro — known as the letter on the genesis of the heteronyms, one reads the following description of Bernardo Soares as a semi-heteronym:

> 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

← Soares — between 1929 & 1935, after a period of silence regarding that project (between 1921 and 1928, Pessoa doesn't write any fragments for *The Book of Disquiet*). For further information regarding this, see: Nuno Ribeiro, "Poéticas do Inacabado — Pessoa, Wittgenstein e o Livro por Vir," in: Osmar Pereira Oliva (org.), *Literatura, Vazio e Danação* (Montes Claros: Editora Unimontes, 2013) 223–241; Nuno Ribeiro, "Wittgenstein and Pessoa: The Archive as 'Open Work' in Eco's Perspective," in Pamela Arancibia et al., *Philological Concerns: Textual Criticism Throughout the Centuries* (Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2016) 207–221.

> 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.[12]

According to this excerpt, the difference between the heteronym and the semi-heteronym corresponds to the manner of writing, that is, the style. Whereas the heteronym is different from its creator in his style, the semi-heteronym is only different in his way of thinking & perceiving the world, but with the same style of writing as his creator, for Pessoa explicitly says that, though Bernardo Soares is a *mutilation* of the Portuguese author's personality ("He's me without my logical reasoning and emotion"), his prose style is the same as his.

Nevertheless, Pessoa's creation of literary fictional authors doesn't come to an end with the creation of the heteronymic and semi-heteronymic works. In the Pessoa Archive one finds a multiplicity of other personalities created during the same period. Though there is considerable debate in Pessoa studies about how to name them — Pessoa himself doesn't offer a specific indication in that regard —, the general consensus is that they should be considered literary personalities.

12. Fernando Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*, op. cit., 258–259.

I

Writings on Art and Poetical Theory

1 ☞ Professor Trochee: Essay on Poetry

[100 — 4–6]

Essay on Poetry
Written for the edification of would-be verse-writers
by Professor Trochee [50]

When I consider the superabundance of young men & the great number of young women in the present century, when I survey the necessary and consequent profusion of reciprocal attachments, when I reflect upon the exuberance of poetical compositions emanating therefrom, when I bring my mind to bear upon the insanity and chaotic formation of these effusions, I convince myself that, by writing a good and convenient essay on the poetical art, I shall be greatly contributing to the emolument of the public.

Having, therefore, carefully considered the best and most practical way in which to open such a relevant discussion, I have most wisely concluded that a straightforward exposition of the rules and exceptions of poetry is the manner in which I shall present my most

50. In the original document, one reads: "*By Professor Trochee / ~~By Doctor Pancratium~~*." This indicates that this fragment version of the *Essay on Poetry* was first attributed to the pre-heteronym Doctor Pancratium and only, afterwards, to Professor Trochee.

orthodox ideas to the patient readers. I have thought it useless and inappropriate to refer myself too often to the ancient critics on the art discussed, one of my reasons for so doing being that I am unacquainted with anything beyond their names. I must therefore ask my kindly readers to appeal, during the perusal of this composition, to their common sense, or to whatever mental faculty occupies in their brains the place taken in ordinary mortals by that quality.

Firstly, I think it proper to bring to the notice of the would-be poet a fact which is not usually considered and yet is deserving of consideration. I hope I shall escape universal ridicule if I assert that poetry should, be susceptible of scansion. I wish it, of course, to be understood that I agree with □ in maintaining that strict scansion is not at all necessary for the success nor even for the merit of a poetical composition. And I trust I shall not be deemed exceedingly pedantic if I delve into the storehouse of time to produce, as an authority, some of the works of a certain William Shakespeare, or Shakspeare, who lived some centuries ago and even enjoyed some reputation as a dramatist. This person used often to take off, or add on, one syllable or more in the lines of his numerous productions, and, if it be at all allowable in the age of Kipling to break the tenets of poetical good-sense by imitating some obscure scribbler, I should dare to recommend to the beginner the enjoyment of this sort of poetic licence. Not that I should advise him to *add* any syllables to his lines,

but the subtraction of some is often convenient and desirable. I may as well point out that if, by this very contrivance, the young poet, having taken away some syllables from his poem, proceed on this expedient, and take all the remaining syllables out of it, although he might not thus attain to any degree of popularity, he nevertheless would exhibit an extraordinary amount of poetical common sense. If the poem under question be dedicated to some nymph or naiad, this magnificent condensation may not please her, but do you merely remind her that, if she will not accept the remainder of the poem, that is to say, your name, her love for you is not the thing you expected.

There are not many other useful remarks that I can make upon scansion; I might, of course, spend nights and days in the process of demonstrating to you its various eccentricities, but, since that would only be wasting your patience and my time, I beg, therefore, to proceed □

2 ☞ I. I. Crosse: "Álvaro de Campos is one of the very greatest rhythmists"

[14A — 66–67]

I. I. Crosse

Álvaro de Campos is one of the very greatest rhythmists that there has ever been. Every metric paragraph of his is a finished work of art. He makes definite, perfectly "curved" stanzas of these irregular "meters."

He is the most violent of all writers. His master Whitman is mild and calm compared to him. Yet the more turbulent of the 2 poets is the most self-controlled. He is so violent that enough of the energy of his violence remains to him to use it in disciplining his violence.

The violence of the *Naval Ode* is perfectly insane. Yet it is unparalleled in art, and because its violence is such.

His volcanic emotion, his violence of sensation, his formidable shifting from violence to tenderness, from a passion for great and loud things to a love of humble and quiet ones, his unparalleled transitions, his sudden silences, sudden pauses … his change from unstable to equable states of mind — none has ever approached him in the □ of this hysteria of our age.

The classic training of his early years, that never deserts him (for he is one of the most unified of poets, and ever a builder and a fitter-together of parts in an organic whole); his individual stability, his mathematical training and scientific training, adding another stabilizing influence (never too much for such a volcanic temperament) □

His feverous contempt of small things, of small people, of all our age, because it is composed of small things and of small people.

This quasi-Futurist who loves the great classical poets because they were great and despises the literary men of his time because they are all small.

His art of conveying sensations by a single stroke:

A fita cor de rosa deixada em cima da cómoda,

O último brinquedo partido (comboio ainda
com a fita suja para o puxar)

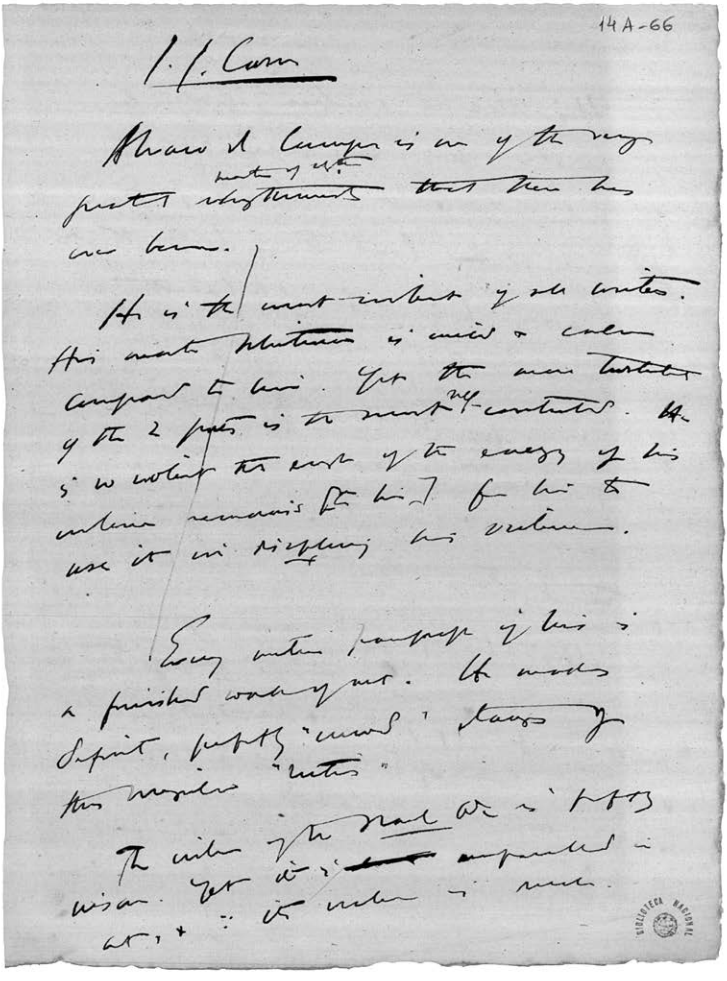
Da criança inevitavelmente morta, ó mãe de
preto a dobrar-lhe o fato.

[The pink ribbon left on top of the dresser,
The last broken toy (train still with dirty tape
to pull it)
Of the child inevitably dead, o mother dressed
in black folding the suit.]

His terrible self-analysis, making suddenly cold all his emotion, as in the "Salutation."

Facsimile of the First Page of
"Álvaro de Campos is one of the very greatest rhythmists"

[BNP/E3, 14A — 66r: facsimile]



3 ☞ I. I. Crosse: Cæiro and the Pagan Reaction

[143 — 7–9]

I. I. Crosse.

Cæiro and the Pagan Reaction

The first qualification for a critic of science or of art, that is to say, of an intellectual production which strives for an absolute value (truth or beauty) is that he should be able to distinguish between relative and absolute values. When a work of art pleases him, when he feels it is beautiful, his first intellectual movement, after that movement of sensibility, should be to ask himself: Do I find this beautiful as a man, or as a man of my time, or as a man of my country? Does this appeal, really, to the man in me, or to the modern man in me, or the Englishman, or Frenchman, or Italian that I am?

Very few are able to undertake such self-analysis, but we are optimistic enough about mankind to believe that the greater number of clever men are not able to undertake it because they have never been taught that they ought to undertake it.

If this principle of self-criticism before criticism of others, of analysis of impressions before analysis of the results of impressions, were more commonly put into practice, we would have been spared many follies. As it

is the sage of looking back at 40 on the foolish enthusiasm of 20 has no equal since the looking back at 60 to the equally foolish, though seeming-cooler, enthusiasm of 40.

I have even held it necessary to take this mental attitude. So when I first read Alberto Cæiro, I felt the enthusiasm of □

Here at last — said I to myself — is a work that appeals to me not as a man of to-day (no work could be further removed from every known current of contemporary art), not as an Englishman (no work could be less English), but indeed as a man of mankind.

The more I analysed my feelings, the more I came to accept this conclusion of mine as true.

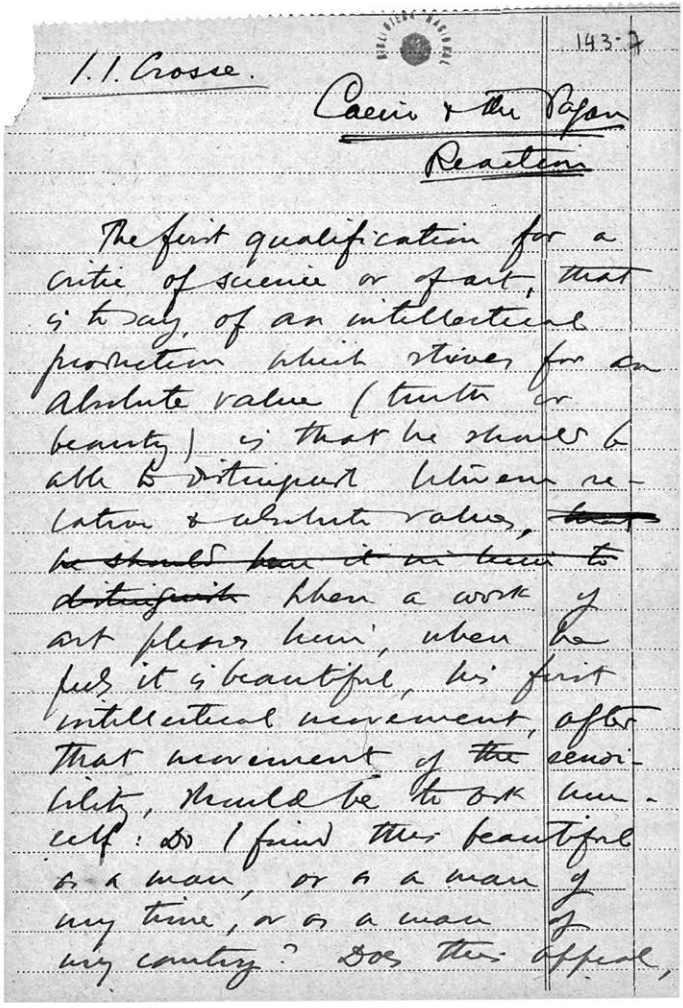
I am not so bold of my real opinion of Cæiro's works, as to tell the reader frankly how much I think of him.

> The great discovery of Cæiro — the mysticism of objectivity. As mystics see meaning in all things, Cæiro, in his own words, sees lack of meaning in all things,

See it and I love myself, because to be a thing is to mean nothing.

Facsimile of the First Page of
Cæiro and the Pagan Reaction

[BNP / E3, 143 — 7r: facsimile]



143-7

I. I. Crosse.

Caeiro & the Pagan Reaction

The first qualification for a critic of science or of art, that is to say, of an intellectual production which strives for an absolute value (truth or beauty) is that he should be able to distinguish between relative & absolute values, ~~he should have it in him to distinguish~~ when a work of art pleases him, when he feels it is beautiful, his first intellectual movement, after that movement of the sensibility, should be to ask himself: do I find this beautiful as a man, or as a man of my time, or as a man of my country? Does this appeal,

4 ☞ Thomas Crosse: Alberto Cæiro — Translator's Preface

[143 — 1–4]

Th. Crosse

But Cæiro displaces all our mental habits and puts all our notions out of drowsing.

He does it, first of all, by the philosophy which can hardly be said to be simply "at the bottom" of his poetry, because it is both at the bottom and at the top of it. Whatever a mystic may be, he is certainly a kind of mystic. But he is, not only a materialistic mystic, which is already strange enough, but still can be imagined, for there is some sort of a modern precedent in Nietzsche and of an ancient one in some Greeks, but a non-subjectivistic mystic, which is quite bewildering. Some of those ancient Greeks, already referred to, are something like that, but it is so difficult to conceive a recent "modern" being precisely like a primitive Greek, that we are not at all aided by the very analogy that does at first seem to help us.

Cæiro puts us out, next, by the secondary aspects of his philosophy. Being a poet of what may be called

"the absolute Concrete" he never looks on that concrete *otherwise than abstractly.* No man is more sure of the absolute, unsubjective reality of a tree, of a stone, of a flower. How it might be thought that he would particularize, that he would say "an oak," "a round stone," "a marigold." But he does not: he keeps on saying "a tree," "a stone," "a flower."

All these observations will be better understood after reading the poems.

But, if the matter is thus perplexing, the manner is more perplexing still.

The intellectual manner, to begin with. There is nothing less poetic, less lyrical than Cæiro's philosophical attitude. It is quite devoid of "imagination," of vagueness, of "sympathy" with things. Far from "feeling" them, his mental process, a hundred times explicitly put, is that he does not feel them, or feel with them.

Again, his simplicity is full of intellectual complexity. He is a poet purely of sense, but he seems to have his intellect put into his senses.

Then, again, his is absolutely self-conscious. He knows every possible weakness of his. Where there may be a logical fault, he hastens to the rescue with a simple & direct argument. Where □

This man, so purely an ancient — nay, a primitive — Greek that he is bewildering, is quite "modern" at the same time.

It is this man of contradictions, this lucidly muddled personality that gives him his complex & intense originality — an originality, in every way, scarcely ever attained by any poet; certainly never before attained by a poet born in a worn and sophisticated age.

Dr. Antonio Mora,[51] explaining him on the lines of a similar philosophy — on discipular lines, perhaps — has left this aspect of him out; and that is why I do not feel it supererogatory to call attention to it. Dr. Mora is also a Pagan, in the same complete and Greek sense that Cæiro is a Pagan. So, to Dr. Mora, Cæiro is a great poet, but hardly a *strange* poet. He is great because he has brought back the Pagan sense of the world; he is not strange because Dr. Mora thinks the Pagan sense of the world a *possible* sense in our time. Now the great point is that the Pagan sense of the world is impossible; and the formidable (there is no other word) originality of Cæiro lies in that he has realized this impossibility.

51. António Mora is a literary personality created by Fernando Pessoa. He was meant to be — along with Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos, and Fernando Pessoa — a disciple of the heteronym Alberto Cæiro. Pessoa entrusts Mora with the task of reducing into a philosophical system the thought present in the poetry of the master Cæiro. In the Pessoa Archive one finds several fragments about the reconstruction of paganism, which correspond to the attempt of philosophically explaining Cæiro's poems. Although Pessoa did not publish during his life the writings of Mora, one finds a reference to him in the text *Notas para a Recordação do Meu Mestre Cæiro* [*Notes for the Memory of My Master Cæiro*] signed by the heteronym Campos and published before Pessoa's death.

5 ☞ Thomas Crosse: "The Similarity of Spanish and Portuguese"

[143 — 13–14][52]

The similarity of Spanish and Portuguese is perhaps not easily imagined by anyone unacquainted with either or both; and I say "either or both" because to be acquainted with one is practically to be acquainted with the other. But a common phrase will show the close resemblance. Take the phrase "I have received your letter and thank you for it." Put down, one under the other the Spanish and the Portuguese for that; here they are:

Spanish: Recebí su carta, que agradezco.

Portuguese: Recebi sua carta, que agradeço.

52. *In the beginning of this document — before the text about* "The Similarity of Spanish and Portuguese" — *one reads the following list of possible articles, which Pessoa intended to write under the name of Thomas Crosse:*
Thomas Crosse's possible articles:
1. The conflict of languages and the universal language.
2. The birthplace of Columbus.
3. Epigrams.
4. Dictatorships.
5. King Sebastian.
6. The Legend of the Returning King.
7. The Old Portuguese Song-Books.
8. The Military Government in Portugal (based on Interregno).
[BNP/E3, 143 — 13]

Barring a letter or two, the words are the same. This is not so throughout the two languages, of course; there are surprising differences, chiefly in common words. But the fact remains that if you read one language, you can automatically understand anything written in the other; and if you speak one, you will be understood by anyone speaking the other, if you do not speak too quickly. The Portuguese automatically read and understand Spanish better and quicker than the Spanish-speaking peoples understand Portuguese; that is because Portuguese is the more difficult and complex, besides being by far the richer, of the two, and because the Portuguese are far more pliant and adaptable than the Spanish.

The final conflict between English and Spanish and Portuguese will resolve itself into

(1) England has a far greater and more varied literature than both Spain and Portugal put together.

(2) Portuguese was brought in the seventeenth century to a degree of exactness, purity and perfection which Spanish never attained and English seems never to have neared attaining.

(3) To-day, in spite of common English, common Spanish, and common Portuguese being equally flagrant departures from pure speech, yet the Portuguese react more against this, and the best Portuguese writers of to-day, however little they may be important intellectually, do write their language better than the best English and the best Spanish writers write theirs.

(4) English is more complex and concise than either Spanish or Portuguese. On the other hand, Portuguese has possibilities of shades of meaning which are undreamed of even in English. The Portuguese have, for instance, a personal infinitive. Thus the phrase which in English cannot be rendered in less words than "It is enough that we exist" or "that we be," can be given in Portuguese in only two words — "Basta sermos."

French has the advantage of its great simplicity. It has a very easy grammar, its rules are very simple and it is not difficult with some care to write it with at least comparative purity.

[143 — 10–12]

Th. Cr.

The fatal drawback of Spanish psychology (?) seems to be their tendency to division. This is very clearly seen in South America. Whereas the Portuguese part, enormous as it is in territory, has kept one under the name of Brazil, the Spanish portion has split up into several republics. This cannot be said to be a reflex of the essential division of Spain itself, for the two divisions are of a different type. The division of Spain proceeds from the fact that it incorporates several nations, speaking different languages, and not merely different dialects — Catalonia, the Basque Provinces and Galicia, neither of

6 ☞ Impermanence

[19 — 79]

Impermanence

The problem of the survival of literary works, and of the permanent elements of literature is, after all, a very simple one. All life is adaptation to environment, and all death inadaptation to it.

A work of art is therefore living or great by its approval as [it is] great by a critical environment. There are 3 environments of this kind. One is the immediate one — the nation to which the artist belongs or the strict epoch in which the work appears. The other is the larger environment of the whole course of the civilization to which the nation belongs, in whose language the literary artist wrote, or in which the artist was born (supposing him not a literary artist). The widest environment is that which is not that of a certain nation, nor even of a certain civilization, but of all nations in all times, and of all civilizations in all their eras — that basic human element which is present wherever an organized and cultured society exists, whatever its type of organization may be, of what kind soever its culture.

Certain ideas and forms of sensibility underlie each historical period qua such; certain □ underlie each nation qua such and distinguish it from other nations

throughout the space of its allotted life. An art adapted to the first of these environments dies out with its epoch and the small surviving influence of its typical ideas. If these ideas are important or civilizational rather than transitional, the work will make a greater bid for popularity; it will exceed the case we are discussing. An art adapted to a purely national environment, qua national, will only by the shadowy fame of hearsay pass the frontiers of space, and will only pass those of time in proportion as the national instinct it received is near to that basic human instinct which underlies all types of nations and of cultures. That is why Greek art is so rooted in the earth of Time; for ancient Greece was of all nations the one which the most closely conformed to the eternal laws of civilization and of culture. Even if national therefore its art was universal and eternal; since the national and the eternal met in Greece.

[19 — 80]

Impermanence

Some works die because they are of no worth; these, as they die at once, are stillborn. Others have the short day which their expression of a passing mood or fashion of society gives them; these die in infancy. Others, of a larger scope, coexist with a whole era of the country, in whose language they were written, and when that era ceases, they, too, cease; these die at the puberty of fame

and have no more than adolescence in the perennial life of glory. Others still, as they express fundamental things of their country's mind, or of the civilization, to which it belongs, last as long as that civilization lasts; these reach the manhood of universal glory. But others, as expressing though with the feelings of one civilization, the language of one country, the thoughts of one era and the style of a passing mood, the eternal substance of the soul of man, outlast the mood, where they drew their style, the age, where they learnt their ideas, the country, in whose speech they are written, the civilization, with whose feelings they speak. These reach that maturity of life which is but as mortal as the Gods, that began but do not end, as Time is; and are subject only to the final mystery which Fate forever veils even from the night that is all around, all between, and chaos that is before and after.

Tricks of style and ingenious turns of mind carry a work as far as infancy. Originality of thought takes it along an age. Depth and splendour of universal feeling make a work go as far as that universal feeling is really universal. Sureness of structure, truth of typical presentation, □ of imagination make a work truly immortal, as far as human things can go, for as near as that may be.

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7 ☞ Uselessness of Criticism

[18 — 42]

USELESSNESS OF CRITICISM.

That good work always comes to the fore is a worthless affirmation if it apply to really good work and by "coming to the fore" it refers to acceptance in its own time. That good work always comes to the fore on the course of its futurity, is true; that second rate good work always comes to the fore in its own age, is also true.

For how is a critic to judge? What are the qualities that make, not the casual, but the competent critic? A knowledge of past art or literature, a taste refined by that knowledge, and an impartial and judicious spirit. Anything less than that is fatal to the true play of the critical faculties. Anything more than that is already creative spirit, and therefore individuality; and individuality means self-centredness, and a certain imperviousness to the work of others.

How competent, however, is the competent critic? Let us suppose a deeply original work of art comes before his eyes. How does he judge it? By comparison with the works of art of the past. If it be original, however, it will depart in something — and the more original the more it will depart — from the works of art of the past. In so far as it does this, it will seem not to conform to the æsthetic canon which the critic finds established in

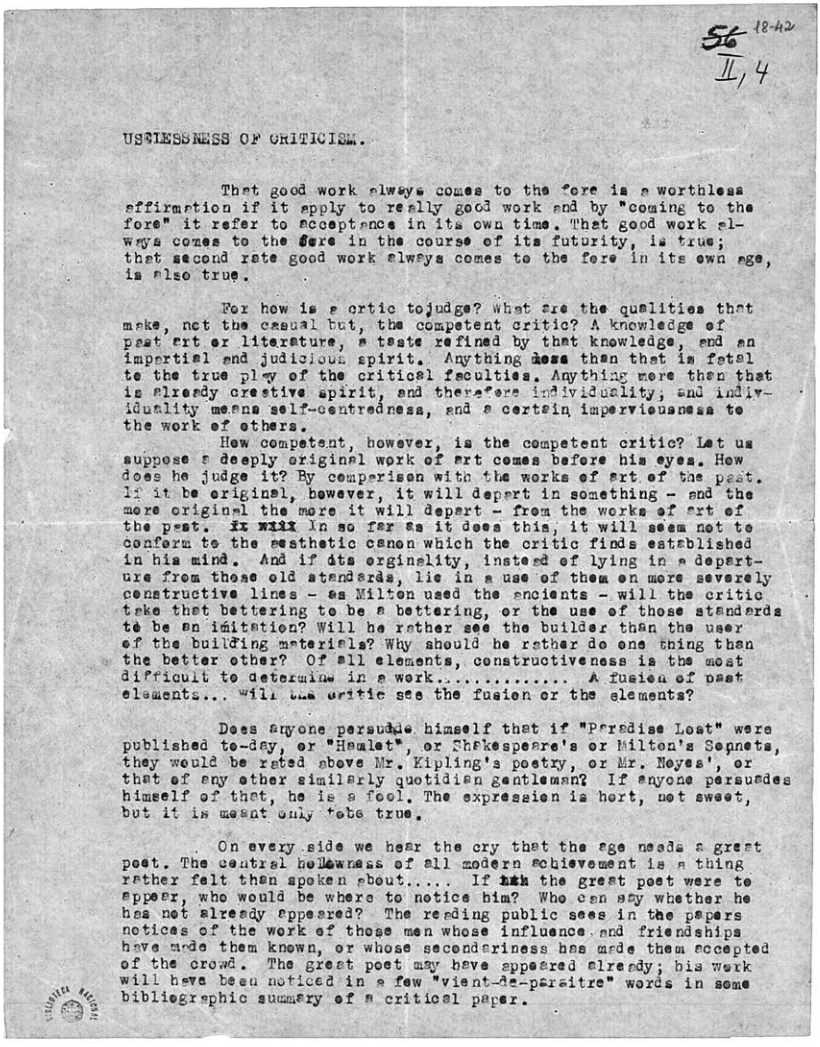
his mind. And if its originality, instead of lying in a departure from those old standards, lie in a use of them on more severely constructive lines — as Milton used the ancients — will the critic take that bettering to be a bettering, or the use of those standards to be an imitation? Will he rather see the builder than the user of the building materials? Why should he rather do one thing than the better other? Of all elements, constructiveness is the most difficult to determine in a work..... A fusion of past elements... Will the critic see the fusion or the elements?

Does anyone persuade himself that if *Paradise Lost* were published to-day, or *Hamlet*, or Shakespeare's or Milton's Sonnets, they would be rated above Mr. Kipling's poetry, or Mr. Noyes', or that of any other similarly quotidian gentleman? If anyone persuades himself of that, he is a fool. The expression is short, not sweet, but it is meant only to be true.

On every side we hear the cry that the age needs a great poet. The central hollowness of all modern achievement is a thing rather felt than spoken about..... If the great poet were to appear, who would be where to notice him? Who can say whether he has not already appeared? The reading public sees in the papers notices of the work of those men whose influence and friendships have made them known, or whose secondariness has made them accepted of the crowd. The great poet may have appeared already; his work will have been noticed in a few "vient-de-paraître" words in some bibliographic summary of a critical paper.

Facsimile of the *Uselessness of Criticism*

[BNP / E3, 18 — 42r: facsimile]



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8 ☞ Three Pessimists

[14 D — 23]

Three Pessimists.

The three are victims of the romantic illusion, and they are especially victims because none of them had the romantic temperament. All three were destined to be classicists, and, in their manner of writing, Leopardi always was, Vigny almost always, Quental only so in the perfect cast of his sonnets.[54] The sonnet is non-classical, however, though, owing to its epigrammatic basis, it should be so.

All three were thinkers, Quental most of all, for he had real metaphysical ability, Leopardi afterwards, Vigny

54. Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837) was an Italian poet and essayist of the Romantic period. In Pessoa's Private Library one finds two books by Leopardi: *Canti Scelti* [CFP, 8–315], and a book titled *Leopardi*, corresponding to a French translation by Alphonse Séché with a selection of poems and prose fragments of Leopardi's works. — Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863) was a French Romantic poet. Pessoa's Private Library contains one book with the *Poèmes* [CFP, 8–558] of Vigny. — Antero de Quental (1842–1891) was a Portuguese poet and thinker who lived in the XIX century and belonged to the so-called Generation of 70. His works include not only poetical compositions, but also philosophical writings.

last, but still far ahead in that respect of the other French romantics, with whom, naturally, he should be compared in that respect.

The romantic illusion consists in taking literally the Greek philosopher's phrase that man is the measure of all things, or sentimentally the basic affirmation of the critical philosophy, that all the world is a concept of ours. These affirmations, harmless to the mind in themselves, are particularly dangerous, and often absurd, when they become dispositions of temperament and not merely concepts of the mind.

The romantic refers everything to himself and is incapable of thinking objectively. What happens to him happens to the universality of things. If he is sad, the world, not only seems but is, wrong.

Suppose a romantic falls in love with a girl of a higher social station, and that his difference in class prevents their marriage, or, perhaps, even love on her side, for social conventions go deep into the soul, as reformers often ignore. The romantic will say, "I cannot have the girl I love because of social conventions; therefore social conventions are bad." The realist, or classicist, would have said, "Fate has been unkind to me in making me fall in love with a girl I cannot have," or: "I have been imprudent in cultivating an impossible love." His love would not be less; his reason would be more. It would never occur to a realist to attack social conventions on the score that they produce such results for him, or individual troubles of any kind. He knows that laws are

good or bad generally, that no law can fit every particular case come under it, that the best law will produce terrible injustices in particular cases. But he does not conclude that there should be no law; he concludes only that the people involved in those particular cases have been unlucky.

[14D — 24]

Three Pessimists.

To make realities of our particular feelings and dispositions, to convert our moods into measures of the universe, to believe that, because we want justice or love justice, Nature must necessarily have the same want or the same love, to suppose that because a thing is bad it can be made better without making it worse, these are romantic attitudes, and they define all minds which are incapable of conceiving reality as something outside themselves, infants crying for sublunary moons.

Almost all modern social reform is a romantic concept, an effort to invest reality with our wishes. The degrading concept of the perfectibility of man □

The very pagan concept of the origin of evil proclaims the pagan tendency to be conscious of objective reality. The pagan conceives this world as governed directly by gods, which are men on a larger scale, but, like men, good and evil, or good and evil in turns, who have caprices like men and moods as men have; and

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