Costumed Selves and Sheep Coats: Mimetic Translation in Erin Mouré's *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person*

by Tina Northrup

Erin Mouré's *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* is a puzzle from the front cover. The text labels itself "A Transelation of Alberto Caeiro / Fernando Pessoa's *O Guardador de Rebanhos*," and readers accustomed to reading Mouré's work are greeted immediately by a strange new signature, that of Eirin Moure. Inside, the strangeness continues: an inner sleeve attests that the book catches Mouré "at her most playful and ingenuous," "and wearing her Galician name," while the prefatory "Notes" seem to describe Mouré's authorial experience, but are signed like the cover, by that odd cipher Moure. Although the volume hints at the heteronymic system inspiring it—signposts that include a citation of Pessoa at the beginning of the "Notes," an interview between Caeiro and Alexander Search at the book's conclusion, and a brief summary of Pessoa's heteronymic aesthetic following that—the sophistication of the schema into which Mouré has inserted herself is left for the reader to discover through extraneous reading alone. Moreover, the ease with which Mouré seems to adopt Pessoa's heteronymic habit belies the subtlety of her own program: though the book is marked (and marketed) by having been defined as playfully ingenuous, its composition represents more than ludic mimesis on Mouré's part.

Pessoa has been called Portugal's greatest modernist poet, and though his life and writings have been analyzed to a lesser extent in the English-speaking academy than they have in Europe and South America, some scholars have defined this lack of recognition as the result of limited English-language translations of his texts (Klobucka and Sabine 3). The latest publication to collect contemporary research on him is *Embodying Pessoa: Corporeality, Gender, Sexuality* (2007), a volume of twelve essays whose analyses treat the lesser known and lesser discussed aspects of his "multifaceted and labyrinthine body of work" (3). Although the volume's editors Anna M. Klobucka and Mark Sabine claim that it responds to "the scarcity of published Pessoa criticism in English" (3) and attempt to

present a comprehensive bibliography of English-language translations of Pessoa's work, *Sheep's Vigil* is noticeably absent from their lists. Though it is not a conventional translation—the pastoral setting of the original is transposed from the fields of Portugal to the streets of downtown Toronto, shifting not only images and metaphors but also the personality and experiences of the narrating *I*—the volume received wide recognition and acclaim. Moure/Mouré's "transelation" was shortlisted for both the 2002 Griffin Poetry Prize and the 2002 City of Toronto Book Prize, and it fuelled, within the community of Canadian poets and thinkers at least, new discussions on the nature of translation itself.

As an artist, Pessoa has been unique in creating a massive body of work written by a variety of imagined figures—alternate personae whom he called heteronyms—and these creations function as more than mere pseudonyms, existing in some cases as fully developed characters who interact within their literary scenes and with each other both textually and physically. Properly speaking, *The Keeper of Sheep* should not be called Pessoa's: as Pessoa himself claimed, the series was composed by the heteronymic Caeiro. Not only does Pessoa's work exist through the masses of alternate identities created by him, but because so much of his writing was left unpublished before his death, his literary personality is also heavily dependent upon those critics who study him. As the philosopher and literary critic Zbigniew Kotowicz describes,

> No poet exists as much through the work of others as Pessoa. He is a creation of those who arrange his manuscripts, prepare definite versions of his works and publish unknown material; of those who write critical studies, and of the translators. They decipher the masks and create the vast readership. To read Pessoa is to enter the labour of others. The timid Pessoa has drawn into his world many people. (86)

Operating upon two levels, Kotowicz's summary evokes both the created and performed nature of Pessoa's literary existence as it is determined by those who collect, translate, prepare, and publish his material. It also suggests, implicitly, that as he draws so many people into his world, Pessoa requires his scholars and literary critics to perform his personhood: to enter his "drama in people" as if his work were the empty stage upon which his pupils might enact not just scholarship, but the portrayal of Pessoa himself. Moure/Mouré's translation positions her as an actor within Pessoa's dramatic world, and in it, she effects the very movement that Klobucka and Sabine identify as a much needed factor in Pessoa criticism: "the concomitant movement towards impersonation: the diversified multiplication and

exploration of embodied subjective experience that the heteronyms make possible" (4). In this way, the *Vigil* is more than an unserious attempt to shepherd Caeiro's language into a new linguistic site: it is a careful and deeply considerate sequence of poems in which their author's movements between her self and another's result in the elated transformation of multiple personae.

Moure/Mouré's lax linguistic fidelity to Pessoa's text is the most probable reason for the book's exclusion from *Embodying Pessoa*'s select bibliography, and it is an unfortunate rejection. Her methods in the *Vigil* allow Mouré to perform and embody the most important tenets of another poet's lifestyle and thought, and what the volume lacks in translative conservatism is made up for through the translation of identity. Moreover, echoing within the *Vigil* are the vestiges of Mouré's earliest poetic voice and bents, and as a whole, the book serves as an example of her own complex translative and poetic aesthetic.

Moure/Mouré makes it clear in her "Notes" that the volume's poems are meant to be more than linguistic mediations of meaning between languages, writing:

> I see this book as translation, as faithful, even if different. That's why it appears in a bilingual edition with the Portuguese originals—my deflections of Pessoa's texts are thus *visible*, even if you do not read Portuguese. I want this book to be judged not just as my poetry but as translations of Pessoa. Trans-*e*-lations. Trans-eirin-elations. Transcreations. *A sheep's vigil, of a fervent person*. (ix)

What is remarkable about this mandate is that the translative nature and faithfulness attributed by Moure/Mouré to her poems does not necessarily refer to their translation of and faithfulness to Caeiro/Pessoa's poetry, but rather, to their interpretation of Pessoa himself. Thus, she states that the poems should be judged not simply as hers, but as "translations of Pessoa," and does not insist that they ought to be read as a translation of *O Guardador de Rebanhos*, as the volume's cover suggests they should. The book, then, is not so much a translation of Caeiro's text as it is a translation of Pessoa's personhood. This perspective is also corroborated by Moure/Mouré's description of her poems as a response to Pessoa rather than to the textual lines of *The Keeper of Sheep*. In the "Notes," she writes: "I translated Pessoa by responding to him as a person. I, a person, and Pessoa, a person. For in Portuguese, *pessoa* is person" (viii). The *Vigil*'s most prominent example of Moure/Mouré's person-to-person response to Pessoa is the signature that graces the cover: Eirin Moure is a translative response to

Caeiro's existence as an alternate persona, and indeed, Mouré has admitted that while writing the poems she found herself "becoming a kind of heteronym myself. Which is why the book, the transelation, is signed Eirin Moure" ("Crossings" 10). Mouré's experimentation with Pessoa's heteronymic aesthetic would be facile if it went no further than the creation of a pseudonym for the purposes of one book of poems, but her work is more nuanced than that. As so many of the *Vigil*'s earliest reviewers point out, the volume really is gregariously playful; its ingenuousness, however, may be questioned. Though innocence and a lack of dissimulation do mark the *Vigil*'s poems, the book is neither artless nor naive, and Mouré's interpretations of the nature of translation have been woven into the text with extreme care and craft.

An article by Sherry Simon on the poetics of the transcultural highlights both the playfulness of the *Vigil* as well as its theoretical and cultural implications. Not only does Simon call attention to Mouré's transformation, through the act of translation, into Moure, but she also spotlights the moment in Moure/Mouré's prefatory "Notes" in which the poet describes her coming to Pessoa's text as if nearly by accident, in a moment of illumination (117). Moure/Mouré's "Notes" begin with an epigraph that cites Pessoa's letter describing the appearance of Caeiro in him: the Portuguese poet's "In me, there appeared my master" is the first voice that the reader encounters in Moure/Mouré's text (vii). The "Notes" continue: "It started on March 20, 2000. In Providence, Rhode Island, I decided not to read anything for five days and just think. But I couldn't help it. Back in Toronto, I read *Garrison Creek* in brass letters in the pavement outside the liquor store on St. Clair Avenue and could see its trajectory southward to the lake, under an avenue" (vii). "Later," Moure/Mouré writes, "I opened Alberto Caeiro's *O Guardador de Rebanhos*, a bilingual version I'd bought in Providence on my first day of not-reading because it was red. I looked at the verso side and realized: *I can read Portuguese*. Whoosh!" (vii-viii). As Simon so rightly points out, Moure/Mouré's description of this moment is bedecked in imagery no less epiphanic than that in which Pessoa cloaked his conception of Caeiro; unsurprisingly, the "Notes" allow the parallels to collide as Moure/Mouré claims: "In me, there appeared my master. Finally I could feel joy" (viii). Moure/Mouré's evocation of Caeiro's mastery is not left within the confines of the "Notes" either: as Maureen Harris points out in her review of the book, the *Vigil*'s final poem claims Caeiro as master yet again (92). "A whole winter here, such bleakness, and / I did not die" writes Moure/Mouré in "Sometimes life occurs to me in French" (6-7). "But how I bewildered my friends with my direness and imprecations. /

Then, *então*, everywhere I learned to see again, *do meu mestre Caeiro*" (8-9).

Simon's article concerns itself with more translations than Mouré's, but along with the other examples that she analyses—Jacques Brault and E.D. Blodgett's renga series *Transfiguration* (1999), Gail Scott's *My Paris* (1999), Agnes Whitfield's *O Cher Emile, Je T'aime* (1993), and Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve* (1987)—she takes the volume as symptomatic of the transformation of the mandate of translation in Canada (118). Simon suggests that, whereas Canada's translators of the 1970s and '80s insisted above all on translation's capacity for mediation and transmission, sometimes-deviant translation has now become, for some authors, the means of achieving different goals. Through various methods occasioning movement and multiplicity and bringing translation to the work's core, Simon sees her exemplary writers as using translation to express fragmented affiliations and to construct a hybrid culture (118). In this capacity, Moure/Mouré's *Vigil* represents more than ludic translation for Simon: the text is, ultimately, both the product of and potential catalyst for a shifting method of translation amongst Canada's creative writers.

Simon is not the only critic who has connected *Sheep's Vigil* to larger, burgeoning trends in Canadian writing. In a review treating both the *Vigil* and Lisa Robertson's *The Weather*, Charles Barbour balances commentary on the *Vigil*'s identity as a translated work with his analysis of the meanings effected by Moure/Mouré's poetic efforts and decisions. As his introduction makes clear, Barbour is of the opinion that although much scholarly criticism on Canadian literature has focused upon the themes of wilderness, geography and spatiality, not enough focus has been directed towards displacement, dislocation, and deterritorialization (172). It is the latter set of themes that he sees as most operative within Moure/Mouré's text, and he claims that in the *Vigil*, the author "attempts to come to terms with an irreducible moment of dislocation that resides at the heart of every location, or an unsettling experience of displacement that relentlessly haunts every sense of place" (172). As Barbour explains, *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* was composed by Moure/Mouré during a relocation (and forced confinement due to an injury) in Toronto; thus, in his opinion, the text sets out "to discuss, not the great modernist theme of exile or alienation from one's authentic home, but the more complicated issue of originary exile, or constituent alienation—a homelessness that precedes and conditions every aspect of home, of friendship, and of the familiar" (172). Barbour is not without textual support for his interpretation: in the interview between Caeiro and Search included near the book's conclusion,

Search claims that a friend sent him Caeiro's poems as an attempt to ease his exile while in Vigo (125). As Moure/Mouré explains in the footnote to the passage: "This exile perplexed me, for Alexander Search was English: how could poems in Portuguese ease his exile in Vigo? Then Liz said: It's about sheep, and England is full of sheep! Trust me!" (125).

Despite this nod to homesickness from Moure/Mouré, Barbour's emphasis on homelessness is most convincing when the metaphor is applied more broadly to the methods of the text's composition. Barbour makes this leap as well, associating the above-mentioned images with the movement required and effected by the act of translation. He writes that:

> Actively and deliberately dislocating the poem's original context, Mouré translates, "trans-*e*-lates" or "transcreates" Pessoa's lines on a solitary male shepherd living amidst the pastoral simplicity of the Portuguese countryside, from the perspective of a displaced female nomad temporarily residing amidst the historically layered and culturally dense urban landscape of twenty-first century Toronto. (172)

What is particularly interesting about Barbour's analysis is that it seems to apply only to Mouré's work within the *Vigil*, and not to the rest of her poetic corpus. Though it could easily be argued that the themes of displacement, dislocation, and deterritorialization exist in much of Mouré's poetry published before the *Vigil*, Barbour draws a thick distinction between *Sheep's Vigil* and the forms of language poetry for which Mouré is well known. He claims that when a volume such as *Sheep's Vigil* is taken into consideration, her characterization as a language poet is "entirely misleading," and speaks most explicitly about the fact that the volume demonstrates no traces of trying to "suspend reference, to string together empty signifiers, or to slide effortlessly across the slippery *glissement* of pure language" (173). What Barbour does not acknowledge is that the suspended referents, empty signifiers, and slipperiness of Mouré's language poetry have as much to do with displacement, dislocation, and deterritorialization as do the *Vigil*'s more obvious allusions to exile. Mouré's work as a language poet is rooted in her self-identification as female, feminist, and lesbian, and her poetic interpretations of language's instability are the result of her efforts to find a place for women within an inherently patriarchal tongue (or, at the very least, to demonstrate woman's inability to exist comfortably within that structure).

Barbour's evocation of "*glissement*" is a telling move: by pairing "slippery" with a term that might be translated as "slippage," he avoids redundancy only by virtue of the fact that it is an allusion to Mouré's known

association with traditions of Québécoise feminist literature. Mouré has described the Women & Words conference of 1983 as "a real catalyst or turning point" in terms of her poetic style, and also in terms of giving her a feminist community that "opened up my thinking about women and language" (*Poets Talk* 48). She has also acknowledged feminist literary journals such as *Kinesis* and *Tessera* as having contributed to her development as a feminist thinker and poet, despite the fact that during the early-'80s period of her writing career she was still uncomfortable in the French language. At that time, her only access to meaning in French was through the mediation of Gail Scott, whom she met at Women & Words in 1983 (*Poets Talk* 48), and though Mouré has long been associated with Montreal, she is Calgary-born, and not a native speaker of French.

That her poetry so often slips between English and French (not to mention the variety of other languages that she has added to her repertoire over time) marks more than Mouré's intentional attempt to explore woman's confinement within language: it also signals her transition from displacement within a strange language to a level of comfort within previously unfamiliar territory. Thus it is that in *Sheep's Vigil*, not only does Moure/Mouré sometimes retain the representations of certain ideas in Portuguese, she often uses French as well. In "There's enough metaphysics in not thinking at all…," she asks: "What are my ideas about *choses*? / And my opinion on causes and effects? [...] The mystery in *choses*? / Useless to ask me" (5-12). In the same poem, the word *choses* changes to *coisas*, but the French term occurs throughout the rest of the volume, and Moure/Mouré also writes of a pontificating man's *soi-disant* compassion ("Late yesterday in the Agora…" 10), a neighbour's *pommier*, and the fact that "*Un jour, Amérique, je te tournerai le dos*" ("Sometimes life occurs to me in French" 2-3; 16).

Mouré has been described as a poet who "writes in excess of signification; refuses conventional word order and usage; redeploys grammar, punctuation, syntax and spelling; juxtaposes as many as ten versions of a poem; and ignores the conventions of pronominal and prepositional reference" (Butling and Rudy 205). In *Sheep's Vigil*, the themes of displacement and dislocation that surface within the poems are extraordinarily appropriate to conceptualizations of Mouré as a language poet, and indeed, that qualification of Mouré's poetic bent is not so much "entirely misleading" as it is a powerful means of illuminating vastly interesting interpretations of the translated text. Without the consideration of Mouré's long history of experimental, alternative writing, critical readings of *Sheep's Vigil* are lessened. Moreover, the volume is informed not only by Mouré's taste for

female, feminist, lesbian writing, but also by her ever-broadening theoretical scope.

Simon and Barbour are not the only scholars who have taken Mouré's *Vigil* as emblematic of changes in Canadian literature: in "'Global/local': Montreal in the poetry of Robyn Sarah, Mary di Michele and Erin Mouré," Lianne Moyes suggests that "Anglo-Quebec writing has begun to situate itself, on the level of the text as well as on the level of the literary institution, as part of a field of writing and intellectual work which is global as well as local" (254). Not only does Moyes exemplify the *Vigil* as a marker of such shifting locales, but she also goes on to provide an astute reading of the instability of reference in *O Cidadán* (2002), a book that appears under the name of Erín Moure. Listing the various "shifts in voice and typography," as well as the "charts, fractions and diagrams" that constitute *O Cidadán*, Moyes suggests that "language is not the only conceptual grid through which place is produced. The body too, is key," and is "the subject's most unmistakeable locale—whether she travels intertextually, hypertextually or physically" (257).

Although "internal folds and seams are enacted on the page through a geometry of disparate grammars, discursive frames, typographies, vectors, shapes and poetic forms" in *O Cidadán* (Moyes 270), they exist no less importantly in *Sheep's Vigil* as Moure/Mouré drifts in and out of occasional Portuguese and French, and even goes so far as to slip into the words of poets other than Moure or Caeiro. Indeed, *O Cidadán*'s claim that "To make one's own inviolable seam permeable: this act a citizen's act" (42) is as lucid a description of *Sheep's Vigil* as it is of the volume in which it appears. Some of the *Vigil*'s most startling and lovely moments occur when Moure/Mouré's poetic self is breached by the sudden appearance of another's, such as in "At times on days of such honed and perfect light," where she writes:

> Does a random flower have beauty?
> A fruit? Random?
> No, they have colour and form
> And existence, barely.
> Beauty is the name of terror we can scarcely endure,
> Oops, that's a poem by Rilke.
> Beauty is the name of some inexistent *chose*,
> That I give to *choses* for they give me pleasure.
> It's meaningless.
> They calmly disdain to destroy me, oh go away, Rilke.

So why do I say again: they are so beautiful!
(6-16)

Throughout the *Vigil*, Moure/Mouré's self is no less permeable than the nation state explored by Mouré in her later work, and it is for this reason (as well as the happy proximity of their respective publications) that *Sheep's Vigil* and *O Cidadán* have often been taken as a pair. *Sheep's Vigil* is no anomaly in Mouré's corpus: though it may differ from the modes of translation enacted by her in her treatments of other texts, for Mouré, the *Vigil* represents an alternative method of exploring the themes and theoretical issues that have occupied her poetry for decades.

In the acknowledgments included in the *Vigil*'s "Notes," Moure/Mouré dedicates the poems to Liz Kirby, "who listened and who said 'that's not Pessoa, it's you'" (ix). Mouré's poetic disposition is evident in the very underpinnings of the *Vigil's* composition, and correspondingly, though her voice's presence within the book's individual lines is less obvious, it is there nonetheless. The *Vigil*'s poetic voice is reminiscent of the narration found in some of Mouré's earliest work, and moreover, the volume makes use of images that surface throughout much of her poetry. The best example of this is in Moure/Mouré's poetic attention to clothing, a recurring motif that usually bears thick metaphoric connotations.

T-shirts appear early on in the *Vigil*, and the book's second poem reads: "I feel like a child in a T-shirt / Amazed by just being born / and realizing 'hey, I'm born'… / [...] To love is to abide in innocence, / hey, I'm still amazed… / And I'm 45, just pulling my T-shirt on…" ("My sight's sharp as a sunflower" 8-26). In Caeiro's poem, themes of innocence and youthfulness are prominent, and Moure/Mouré harnesses them in her version as well. In it, cool T-shirts hang beside the easy natures of childish souls, and such associations call to mind some of Mouré's earlier work. In *WSW* (1989), references to T-shirts float from Mouré's lines—"Today I want to lie in the sun & cannot, she said, I want to pull my shirt up / over my head & cannot, & cannot" ("The Fire Road" 7-8)—and in *Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love* (1992), we see that "There were children & the tips of their clavicles / showed thru their t-shirts; they stood / at the door & when they turned / their shoulder blades were folded origami wings" ("SEA, or GERMAN REMINISCENCE" 4-9). Aside from being the costumes of youthfulness, wonder, and nostalgic reminiscence, shirts in Mouré's poetry are usually more than mere articles of clothing: as attested by the woman who wants to pull her shirt up over her head and cannot, they are metaphysically and metaphorically attached to the deepest selves of those who wear them.

T-shirts are not the only pieces of clothing to take the fore in Mouré's work: in *WSW* there is a jacket able to encapsulate history and dwelling,

> [...] its small threads fallen from the wrist,
> the child on the bus who could be me, but how can you meet
> yourself once you're grown, the wrist from which the torn
> cuff falls what the hell the jacket is green & worn & the threads
> are the cords holding the jacket onto the body, keeping the
> heat in, the phenomenal difference of the body from the world
> the body/world split that is henceforth impossible to overcome
> or predict
>
> ("Site: The Cord" 19-26)

Similarly, when Virgil pops into the *Vigil* as a "sheepish kid rushing once again down Winnett Ave" wearing a too-tight shepherd's jacket, he is at once childish and as old as nature: "saint Virgil, / You're a natural, and Nature is beautiful when it's old ("Virgil's shepherds played novenas and other things" 1-6).

Writing "The body with its blue shirt & memory" (*WSW,* "Goodbye To The Hat" 21), Mouré's poetry produces clothing that is worn not only by the shoulders, but also by the soul. Correspondingly, by rendering unfamiliar articles familiar and of the self, her poems suggest that the opposite is possible as well. In *The Book of Disquiet*, the heteronymic Bernando Soares muses that "Whenever I see a dead body, death seems to me a departure. The corpse looks to me like a suit that was left behind. Someone went away and didn't need to take the one and only outfit he'd worn" (41). In the same vein, when Moure/Mouré quips in the *Vigil*: "And you cat, who asked you, still wearing that fur coat" ("Compared to a bird, whose flight leaves no path" 10-11), the cat's fur is suddenly disassociated from its felinity and transformed into an article of clothing, allowing Mouré to display yet again her reluctance to define the self by boundaries too little diffuse for her tastes.

Mouré's noted tendency to sometimes juxtapose "as many as ten versions of a poem" (Butling and Rudy 205) does not manifest solely within individual volumes of poetry, but often means that a poem will resurface, years later, in an entirely different text. Repetition is, like translation, a noticeable feature of Mouré's poetry, and is related to her translative practice. Although translation between languages allows her to demonstrate the ripped seams in her own language and prod English to go where it might not otherwise venture ("Crossings" 7), the slightly altered repetitions of poems and lines throughout Mouré's work allow her to show up the gaps

in her own ability to describe and represent experience. Much like Soares's *Book of Disquiet* was for Pessoa, *Sheep's Vigil* may be read as a repository in which a plenitude of Mouré's favourite ideas and themes exist, and in such light, the book is not merely a transelation of Caeiro/Pessoa's text, it is also an intralingual translation, and a true "trans-eirin-elation:" a translation, that is, not only of Erin herself, but also of her previous work.

The list of theorists acknowledged by Mouré at the conclusion of *O Cidadán* is long, and though they are not credited at the end of the *Vigil*, the influence of some of those thinkers is as noticeable throughout that work as it is in the later volume. Although the Moure of *Sheep's Vigil* follows Caeiro in her rejection of overly theoretical thought—"Do we really need a concept just yet, Mr. Derrida, / Can you wait just one minute / While things are really what they seem to be" ("The mystery of things, where is it?" 13-15)—the Mouré who remains, ultimately, behind the translation cannot resist mimicking Derrida now and again. In "Rhymes get on my nerves. Rarely," Moure/Mouré writes: "I've got nothing to do with rhymes. Rarely / Are two trees equal, one beside the other. / 'I think and write', and 'flowers have colours'— / What do you think of those two ~~trees~~ rhymes?" (1-4). The overwritten "trees" is the only instance in the *Vigil* that nods explicitly to Mouré's visually experimental poetry, and, most emphatically, it recalls the Derridian model of writing under erasure.

Derrida's work on translation is copious, but his retelling of the Tower of Babel story is a particularly useful compliment to Moure/Mouré's text. In it, he claims that when God pronounces the word "Babel" he pronounces his own name, and that moreover, because "Babel" can be translated as meaning "confusion," God has demanded something impossible: "Translate my name, says he, but at the same time he says: You will not be able to translate my name because, first of all, it's a proper name and, secondly, my name, the one I myself have chosen for this tower, signifies ambiguity, confusion, et cetera" (101-2). According to Derrida, "this desire is at work in every proper name: translate me, don't translate me. On the one hand, don't translate me, that is, respect me as a proper name, respect my law of the proper name which stands over and above all languages. And, on the other hand, translate me, that is, understand me, preserve me within the universal language, follow my law, and so on" (102). As Moure/Mouré's "Notes" make clear, her intent in writing the *Vigil* was to respond not simply to Caeiro's poem, but to "Pessoa" as a person; and, the fact that Pessoa's proper name *means* "person" means that in translating "Pessoa," Moure/Mouré is always translating personhood, and in translating her master's personhood, she is always translating the proper name.

Derrida suggests that what we learn from translation, "rather than the meaning contained in the translated text, rather than this or that particular meaning," is that "there is language, that language is of language, and that there is a plurality of languages which have that kinship with each other coming from their being languages," and that this "is what Benjamin calls pure language... the being-language of language" (124). Benjamin's "pure language" envisions language as that which "no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages" (80). For him, "to regain pure language fully formed in the linguistic flux, is the tremendous and only capacity of translation" (80). Both thinkers speak of translation's ability to reveal the inherent kinship of languages by exposing their differences and navigating the spaces between their discrepancies, and in Moure/Mouré's most skilful moments, her translation does not move solely through the spaces between the various languages encompassed by it, but also through the odds and affinities between the poet and her master. The *Vigil* operates in an arena of translation in which the kinship between languages is less of a focus than the kinship between persons: Moure/Mouré's response to Pessoa oscillates between her own practiced poetic devices and his interpretations of identity, and in the movement between those selves, a fundamental connectivity between two personhoods is affirmed.

Exploring the seams between Mouré, Moure, and Pessoa may not result in the creation of "pure identity" in the way that Benjamin believes pure language might result from translation; however, as linguistic translation does for language, so too does the translation and exploration of self defamiliarize the concept of the *I*. Benjamin's pure language is the non-existence of the gap between signifier and signified: language no longer meaning or expressing anything because it *is*, purely, that which is said and meant (80). Just as language is unattached to the concepts or material creatures it strives to represent, Moure/Mouré's *Vigil* demonstrates that notions of selfhood may be as arbitrary as the attachment of signifiers to ideas. It is a lesson that Mouré has certainly taken to heart: since the *Vigil*'s publication, she has continued to experiment with the heteronymic aesthetic, and has created another character of her own. *Little Theatres* (2005), which appeared under the name of Erín Moure, features a number of quotes from a writer called Elisa Sampedrín; and similarly, "Airways," Mouré's collaborative series of poems written with Oana Avasilichioaei, credits Sampedrín's presence as well. While the list of contributors concluding the volume of *Open Letter* in which "Airways" appears describes Sampedrín as having been raised in Galicia, as living currently in Bucharest, and,

since 2000, as doing work that mixes text, translation, and performance, she is a fictitious invention of Mouré's, and a most Pessoan one at that (151).[1] It is no triviality that Caeiro, in *The Keeper of Sheep*, wishes for God to make him "him," simply. As much as he sets his poetic masterpiece the goals of unity, purity and wholeness, he knows as well as Pessoa and Mouré do that the self is a fickle, transitory thing.

Notes

1 I am indebted to Zachariah Wells's review of *Little Theatres* (2005) for alerting me to the fact, previously unrealized by myself, that Sampedrín is an alternate persona created by Mouré.

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