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Literary Recycling as Post-Literary Re-Reading

Started in March 2023, the project “To See the Tree and the Forest” examines the poetry of António Ramos Rosa (Portugal, 1924-2013) from a computationally-based perspective. The research project is organized around four critical components dedicated to re-reading Rosa’s poetry: (1) computational text analysis, (2) data visualization, (3) ecocriticism, and (4) digital creative works. In other words, we are recycling Rosa’s poetry in several different ways. When applied in re-reading our corpus, each component serves as an interpretative device on its own: (1) text analysis offers us statistical data on the corpus and traces some patterns from it; (2) data visualization illustrates these patterns allowing us to go back and query the corpus again with new questions; (3) the ecocritical approach re-interprets these patterns from an angle that has received little and piecemeal attention so far; (4) the works created by invited artists from the project’s datasets offer a different approach to delve into the corpus. When put together, these components offer a speculative approach to rethinking digital humanities processes of examining literature and literariness. Thus, the epistemological problem I will consider in my presentation emerges from the tension we find in current digital humanities practices that import methods from engineering sciences to explore humanistic research problems.

How can we mix methods? Does it make sense to go hybrid? Can we recycle these approaches and create something new out of them? Is it even possible to explore quantitative digital methods without being a numerical reductionist? Can we embrace artistic research-creation practices and still look at data as evidence? Are these methodologies worth recycling anyway? Besides trying to answer some of these epistemological-theoretical-practical questions, in my talk, I will demonstrate that the entire project’s framework is post-digital in the sense that these examinations are only made possible because the “digital” is already an assimilated condition and not an emergent environment anymore. In addition, and more counter-intuitively, I will also argue that these re-readings are already post-literary and, as such, they demand post-readers to make sense of them.