

ROTEIROS CULTURAIS DOS
AÇORES

Personalities



RAUL
BRANDÃO

«Here end the words, here ends the world I know; here in this tremendous isolation where artificial life is reduced to the bare minimum, only the eternal endures. One cannot evade the monotony of existence, the solitude surrounding us, the mountains' solid architecture, squeezing and crushing. [...] Corvo bares no weight on the world, but I have never felt, as I have here, the reality and the weight of Time.»

Raul Brandão

RAUL Germano BRANDÃO was born on Foz do Douro on March 12th, 1867, into a family with strong ties to the sea, and passed away in Lisbon, on December 5th, 1930. A military man by profession – he was trained in the Army School after having attended the then called Superior Course on Letters as an audit student – from a young age he devoted himself to journalism and literary writing, his true calling. In his Casa do Alto, in the Nespereira parish, near Guimarães, he managed to articulate his military life – which in truth was more administrative than operational – with writing and the occupations of the small rural landowner of patriarchal profile. This occupation gave him a deep knowledge of the people in that environment, laborers and earners, never losing, however, his ability to observe and comment on political and social reality, and reflecting upon society's great moral issues of the time. In 1912, he retired from his military career, as a Captain, and dedicated the rest of his life to writing.

His first published book – *Impressões e paisagens* [Impressions and Landscapes] (1890) – is a collection of naturalistic kind where he described and acted out, with refined humor, aspects of sea men and rustic types' lives. In the pages of *Correio da Manhã* he published, between 1895-1896, chronicles and impressionist reports about Portuguese political life, centered on Lisbon vices, literary criticism essays where he expressed and defended a concept of theater that “should debate a great social or psychological issue” and interest the greater audience with “popular and humane” plays – which he would later carry out in works like *O Gebo e a Sombra* [The Hunchback and the Shadow], *O Rei Imaginário* [The Imaginary King], e *O Doido e a Morte* [The Mad Man and Death], collected in the book *Teatro* [Theater], 1923.

His literary work, with twenty books, includes cult titles of which *História d'um Palhaço* (A Vida e o Diário de K. Maurício) [A Clown's Story (The Life and Diary of K. Maurício)] (1896), *Os Pobres* [The Poor] (1906), *Húmus* [Humus], his masterpiece (1917), the aforementioned *Teatro e Pescadores* [Theater and Fishermen] (1923), *As Ilhas Desconhecidas e A Morte do Palhaço e O Mistério da Árvore* [The Unknown Islands and Death of the Clown and The Mystery of the Tree] (1926), and *O Pobre de Pedir* [Poor from Begging] (1931, posthumous) stand out.

Choosing Raul Brandão as the face for this Route is justified by the fact that it was from his hands – and, before, from his attentive gaze and his great capacity for understanding simple rustic people and their relationships with their environment – that which is known by everyone as the best description and interpretation of Corvo Island and its people to this day, in which the writer (who visited the Island together with a group of Portuguese intellectuals in the context of the autonomist movements of the time) combined his capacity for observation and understanding human authenticity with the eyes of the soul, never conceding to the dominating taste or aesthetic, philosophical or literary conventions: the chapter “Corvo” of *As Ilhas Desconhecidas – Notas e Paisagens* [The Unknown Islands – Notes and Landscapes]. The vision Raul Brandão gives us in this book, of the Azores in general, and particularly of Corvo, is a great example of his peculiar style: more than forcing an elaborate, organized and picturesque idea of the island and its inhabitants onto us, what the writer does is to give us unconnected visions of landscape aspects, of the character and speech of the people, and personal sensations marked, not by grammar and stylistic rules, but by the rhythms of life and human relations – his own and the people with whom he spent time, people he elevates to heroes for what they are and what they represent in the eternal struggle of man against his natural environment and with history. To him, Corvo is “a boulder and wind in the Atlantic's tremendous loneliness” where “There is nothing to

see! Souls as meager as the boulder and a life not possible in a world other than this one, so far removed.” And what about the people?:

I look at those enormous hard hands supported on the staffs, at the wooden beards, at the physiognomies, opened by chisel handled by a genius sculptor who never finished them, and I think I've seen this in altars and nativities. They belong to other ages. From their fixity they seem to be animated by feelings and ideas foreign to our environment. Slowly molded by loneliness and silence. They almost frighten me, as if the past suddenly stared at me and questioned me. They almost accuse me (or am I accusing myself) of frivolity. One of these farmers resembles Herculano and the other has enormous chapped hands, hands of the land, almost inhuman.

What in today's Corvo is, or not, what Raul Brandão saw, felt and expressed here? Times and the living conditions have changed a great deal. However, the environment, the loneliness, the horizons' broadness that characterized Corvo's natural specificity are as they have always been, the same that made so difficult the settling on the island, and still make the islanders people that live a life that would be impossible elsewhere. It is that environment, that life and those people that Raul Brandão, better than any Azorean, managed to capture and translate into words that, to this day, are more than accurate: they are authentic.

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This route was made possible thanks to the collaboration of

Sr. Manuel Rita, Mayor of Corvo
Professor João Saramago, Lisbon University Linguistics Center
Dr. Vítor do Castelo, Angra do Heroísmo Museum
Mr. Paulo Alexandre Freitas de Fraga, Corvo City Hall Employee
Corvo Environmental and Cultural Interpretation Center

A TOUR through RAUL BRANDÃO'S

CORVO VILLAGE



scale: 1/10 000
source: DRT, 2006

Rua – Street
Avenida – Avenue
Caminho, Canaia – Road
Largo, Praça – Square



CORVO VILLAGE – Start the tour on foot



1 Porto da Casa

This is the traditional entrance to Corvo, and this is where we start our tour through the village and the Island. Thus, climbing the pier ramp, we head on right towards **Largo das Forças Armadas**, old Largo do Porto da Casa, where nearby the **Maritime Delegation**, we find a



2 **Cova de Junça**, one of several underground silos where cereal was kept, specifically the sedge which, in shortage of corn or wheat, was used to bake bread

«Hunger! Great hunger! Sedge was the most common food, a plant that delivers a small underground seed that pigs fed upon. It was grinded in the mills to make flour and pastries... Sometimes, one would trade land for a sedge cake. Hunger!»

We head on through **Rua da Matriz**, heading **North**, where we can visit the



3 **Mother Church**, the only temple on the Island, built in the 18th century, dedicated to **Our Lady of Miracles**

Retaking to **Rua da Matriz**, after a small turn to the **Northwest** we find, on the left-hand side, a house with a balcony, of a considerable size if compared to the surrounding buildings, known as



4 **House of D. Mariana Lopes**

«– Then, there was also a woman who was in charge of everything. D. Mariana da Conceição Lopes, a priest's daughter, wore a cape to church and boots on her feet when everyone else was barefoot. This afforded her great respect; everyone started to obey her. It was she who said: – One should not brag nor complain. If one cries, the needed will pity us: – That poor woman. – If one brags, they say: – She's got so much and won't share it!... – Damned beggars! – She was like the queen of Corvo: she would advise, she would get exemptions, she would propose and dispose at her will. – She taught the people.»

We carry on along the same street and make a right towards the

We retake to **Canada do Graciosa**, head **South** until we reach **Largo da Cancela**, where we can find



Leite de Vasconcelos na Ladeira do Outeiro em junho de 1924



Ladeira do Outeiro em outubro de 2012



9 **The house where editor Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento was born**

Born in Corvo in 1885, Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento emigrated to Chile, where he had relatives, in 1905, settling in the town of Concepción. In 1917, following the death of an uncle, who owned a small bookshop in Santiago, he moved to that city, acquired his uncle's bookshop from the other heirs, and eventually founded Editorial Nascimento, which would become one of the main Chilean publishing houses. He was the first Publisher of two future Literature Nobel Prize winners: he published *Desolación* (1923), by Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957, Nobel, 1954); and *Crepusculario* (1923) and *Veinte Poemas de Amor y Una Canción Desesperada* (1924), by Pablo Neruda (1904-1973, Nobel 1971). He returned to Corvo in 1948, to visit family, and joined a whaling excursion to revive the memory of the ones in which he took part before emigrating. He passed away in Santiago do Chile, in 1966.

5 **Ladeira do Outeiro**, where was taken the only known photograph **5a** of the great linguist, philosopher, archeologist and ethnographer **Leite de Vasconcelos** (1858-1941) in Corvo, when he visited the Island for linguistic and ethnographic collection in June 1924, the same year **Raul Brandão** was here

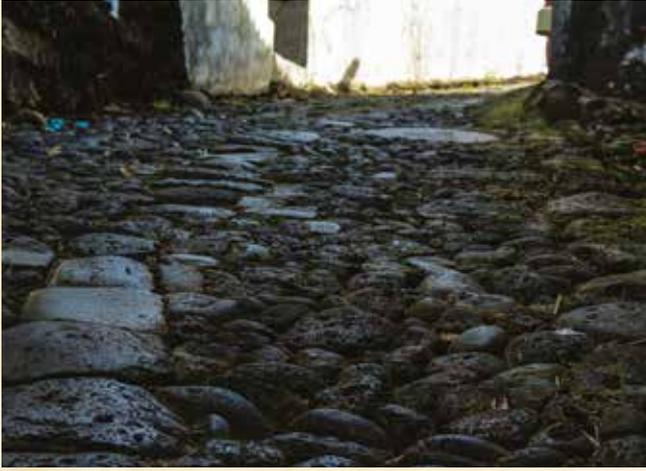
José Leite de Vasconcelos (1858-1941)



Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento (1885-1966)



We head up **Ladeira do Maranhão** where, after the crossing with **Canada do Graciosa** and **Rua da Fonte**, we find remains of



7 Traditional paving, which, as we can see in , u5a) to pave all the streets in **Corvo Village**

We turn back and follow **Canada do Graciosa** until the protected building ensemble, dating back to the 18th century, recently renovated and refitted as the



8 **Corvo Center for Environmental and Cultural Interpretation**, where we can find information on the natural and human history of the Island

Atop the **Ladeira do Outeiro**, we find **Largo do Outeiro**, where we can appreciate the



6 **House of the Holy Spirit**

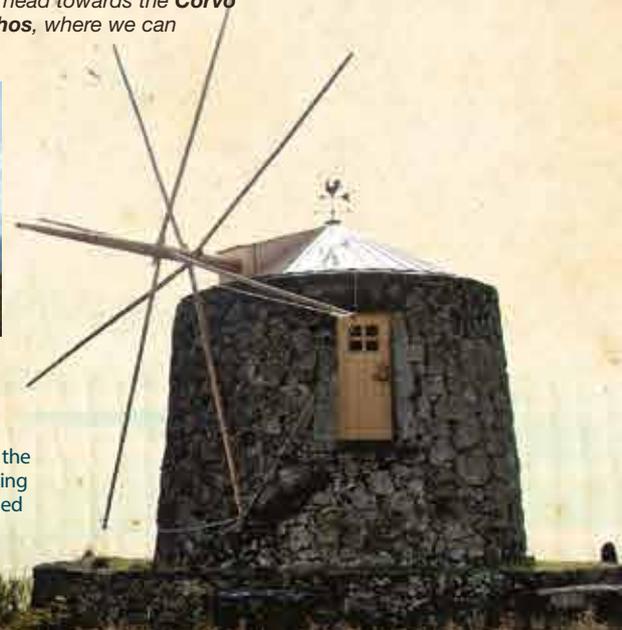
«I too go with the shepherds and farmers to sit on the Outeiro where there is the City Hall, the Holy Spirit and the empty jail (a cow now lives there), and I listen to them around the footstools, making resolutions on farming and the land. There they gather in the morning before leaving for Fojo, or in the evening, when returning home.»

We head **West** until **Largo do Ribeirão**, head down **Avenida Nova**, until **Largo das Forças Armadas**, and head towards the **Corvo Terminal** through **Caminho dos Moinhos**, where we can appreciate three



10 **Windmills**, of traditional design, in the process of being restored

«They grind the bread in the windmills or in the mills, in dark rooms where a manure-trampling ox, blindfolded and tied to a thick beam called castalho, moves the spinning top and the almanjar.»



- 1351** Navigational chart Mediceo Laurenziano records a group of seven islands: insulæ de Cabrera [Santa Maria and São Miguel], insulæ Brazi [Terceira], insulæ Ventura sive Columbus [Faial and Pico], and insulæ Corvis Marinis [Flores and Corvo].
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- 1452** Upon returning from a trip to the West, Diogo de Teive and Pedro Velasco found the islands of Flores and Corvo, then designated Flower Islands.
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- 1453** **January:** D. Afonso V donated Corvo to his uncle Afonso, Duke of Bragança and Count of Barcelos.
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- 1474** **January 28th:** Royal charter sanctioned the purchase of Flores and Corvo by Fernão Teles de Menezes from João de Teive, the discoverer's son.
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- 1521** Father Agostinho Ribeiro, who would become the first Bishop of Angra (1534-1540), was the first clergyman residing in Corvo.
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- 1537** French privateers attacked the ships anchored in Corvo.
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- 1548** **November 12th:** D. João III turned Flores and Corvo over to Gonçalo de Sousa da Fonseca, who implemented a plan to develop the Island, using slaves brought from the Island of Santo Antão, in Cape Verde, of which he had lordship.
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- 1566** D. Sebastião confirmed Gonçalo de Sousa's grace of the "tithes from said Flores Island and the isle of Corvo".
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- 1570** Antão Vaz de Azevedo, born in Praia, Terceira Island, built the first church of Our Lady of the Rosary.
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- 1580** A group of colonists from Flores settled in Corvo, thus assuring the island's definitive settlement.
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- 1587** The Island was looted by English privateers, who burned down the houses.
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- 1594** **August:** Martim Herrera reported the news of a military deployment to Corvo, as defense against the privateers.
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- 1632** Barbarian Pirates attempted to land twice on the bay where we now find the Porto da Casa. The Corvo population repelled the attacks and their victory was attributed to a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, then placed in Canada da Rocha, and henceforth was known as Our Lady of Miracles, the local parish patron.
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- 1640** Frei Diogo das Chagas considera que o Corvo já tem excesso populacional.
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- 1832** **May:** Mouzinho da Silveira received, in Angra, a group of islanders from Corvo seeking to reduce the forum payment which they annually paid to the Captaincy.
May 4th: after such a request, D. Pedro IV signed the decree that cut the cereal tax in half and cancelled a lump sum payment in cash, to which the people of Corvo had been obliged since the 16th century.
June 20th: D. Pedro IV elevated the Corvo settlement to Village and Township headquarters.
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- 1849** In his last will and testament, Mouzinho da Silveira determined: "I wish for my body to be buried in the cemetery of Corvo, the smallest of the Azores Islands [...]. These are kind, thankful people, and I like the thought of being surrounded, as a dead man, by people who, in my lifetime, dared to be thankful".
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- 1885** **April 18th:** In Corvo, bookseller and publisher Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento was born, the youngest of Carlos Lourenço Jorge and D. Maria do Nascimento's twelve sons.
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- 1886** In response to Horta's Civil Governor question of what the populace needed while visiting the Island, he was told they only needed a national flag with which to hail the passing ships.
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- 1885/1888** Prince Albert I of Monaco visited Corvo, on a science mission, aboard the L'Hirondelle, where he collected an important set of photographs, on display at the Monaco Oceanographic Museum, and of which Corvo City Hall acquired copies.
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- 1905** Young Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento left Corvo, heading to Chile, where some of his close relatives resided, settling permanently in the town of Concepción.
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- 1917** Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento moved to Santiago, where he founded the Casa Editora Librería Nascimento. Imprenta Universitaria de Santiago de Chile, from a small book store he had inherited from his uncle João.
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- 1923** Manuel Carlos Jorge Nascimento founded Editorial Nascimento, and published Gabriela Mistral's first book, Desolación, as well as Pablo Neruda's first book, Crepusculario.

- 1924** **Summer:** Raul Brandão visited Corvo with a group of Portuguese intellectuals who visited the Azores at the behest of the Autonomist movement. That same year, by José Bruno Carreiro's, director of Correio dos Açores, Ponta Delgada's newspaper, initiative, José Leite de Vasconcelos visited Corvo, integrated in a group of Portuguese celebrities, where he undertook to linguistic and ethnographic collections.
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- 1926** Raul Brandão published, in Lisbon, As Ilhas Desconhecidas - Notas e Paisagens [The Unknown Islands - Notes and Landscapes], where we find the most beautiful description of Corvo Island ever written, which is a guide to this Route.
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- 1997** **April 10th:** the old urban center of Vila Nova do Corvo was classified as being of Public Interest.
-
- 2007** **September:** Corvo Island was classified by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve.



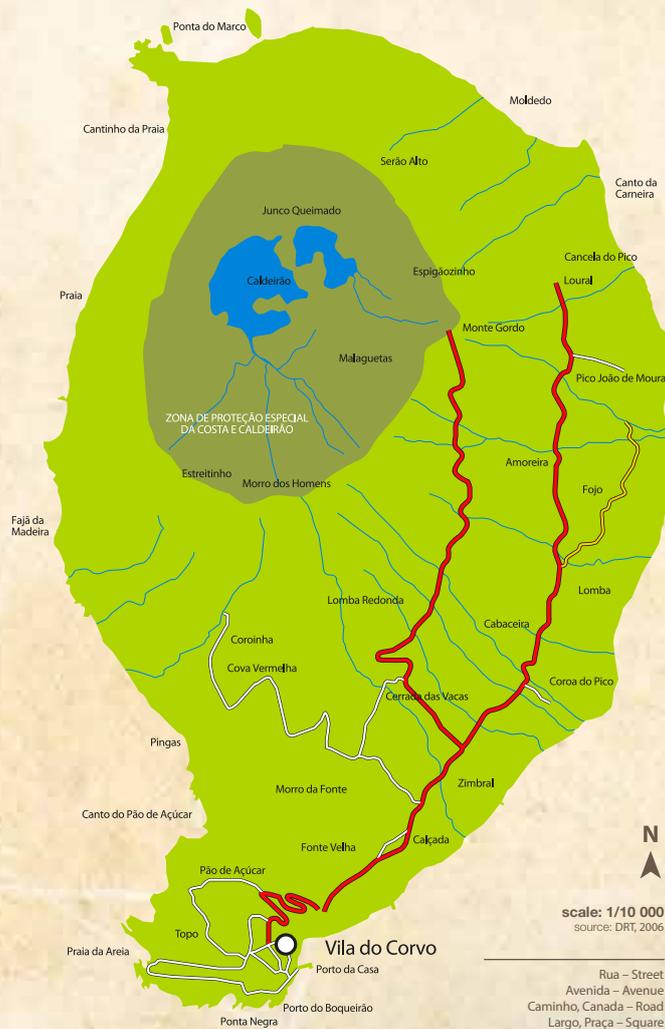
A TOUR through RAUL BRANDÃO'S CORVO

We carry on through **Caminho de Leste** heading **North**, until the end, by



13 Ribeira da Vaca, where **Caminho de Leste** ends

«And they leave together in the dark: they're going to milk the cows in Ribeira Funda, Ribeira da Vaca, Feijoa [Fajã] dos Negros, wastelands to the northwest of the Island, through mountains and valleys where only a few beeches and cedars grow.»





From here, carrying on through **Caminho dos Moinhos** heading **West**, then moving on through **Rua Padre Eugénio Rita**, we pass by **Praia da Areia**, we circumvent the **Airport** landing strip, then head **North** through **Rua da Cruz**, make a right at **Rua do Jogo da Bola** where, by the **City Hall**, we begin a

Head back through the same path until the fork in the road (about 3.5 Km), and take **Estrada do Caldeirão** until **Monte Gordo** (about 3.5 Km), from where we can admire the magnificent

14 Caldeirão

Tour by car

Going up **Estrada do Caldeirão**, we get a scenic view of Corvo Village and a sight of Flores Island, from the



11 Belvedere

«Flores and Corvo rise in front of each other, separated by a fifteen mile channel, Corvo being thick and naked, Flores violet and green with violet rocks and pinnacles of delicate grass.»

Heading on through **Estrada do Caldeirão**, we find, about 1.4 Km away, a fork in the road. Take **Caminho de Leste** until



12 Fojo, from where we have a breathtaking view of the Ocean vastness

«A spongy cloud drags itself over the peaks – all the land is soaked in humidity. It is the grass's monotonous kingdom. After walking for two hours, I arrive at Monte Gordo crater, an immense and perfectly round cirque with such regular drainage one would think it built by the hands of men. Down deep glitters a lake with a few green isles – Morcego isle, Mato isle, Manquinho, Braço, Bracinho and Marreca islands making up the archipelago. Not one tree, nothing but green shorn grass and red reed. The very low smoky sky perches on the rims of the vast cauldron. The bright-green ramps descend to the bottom flowing as a white moss thread and petrified scoria lines, coming from on high ending on the polished lake. A vague ghost, white, set itself on one of the banks. I look upon the vast coliseum.»

Return to Corvo Village, and end the tour at the **8 Corvo Center for Environmental and Cultural Interpretation**.



Governo dos Açores

SECRETARIA REGIONAL DA EDUCAÇÃO E CULTURA
Direção Regional da Cultura

*«Black rock, black sand and a greenish sea which, in the winter, assaults,
comber after comber, this steep rock, with boulders fallen deep,
where the waters corrode them in an incessant tragic roar.
A very low sky, whitish clouds. Bravery, loneliness and darkness.»*



Personalities

CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE
AZORES



**RAUL
BRANDÃO**

production and coordination: Direcção Regional da Cultura dos Açores / 2014 Edition
scientific direction and texts: Luiz Fagundes Duarte, May 2012
photography, design and printing: Bises, Projectos
dois, Chão Museum – National Museum of Contemporary Art, Portrait of Raul Brandão, by Columbano
Bordalo Pinheiro, photography by Paulo Cintra, Laura Castro Caldas, Direcção-Geral do Património
Cultural / Divisão de Documentação, Comunicação e Informática
photograph of the *Cova da Jurta*, IAC – Inventory of Azorean Immoveable Heritage, Corvo Island, Vila Nova
legal deposit: 352272/12

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