

Mensagem / Message by Fernando Pessoa



*translated by Jonathon Griffin
Shearsman Books, Exeter; The Menard Press, London; 1992.*

Dom Diniz

Writing a Song to the Lover while men sleep,
The sower of ship seed
Hears a silence murmur by him creeping:
It is the rumor of pines...like a wheat crop
Of Empire, there they undulate, unseen.

A river this song is, youthful and pure –
Ocean, no less, it seeks;
And the talk of the pines, tidal, obscure,
Is the sounds – present – of the sea – future,
Is the voice of the land yearning for sea.

(page 29)

Portuguese Sea

Salt-laden sea, how much of all your salt
Is tears of Portugal!
For us to cross you, how many sons have kept
Vigil in vain, and mothers wept!
Lived as old maids how many brides-to-be
Till death, that you might be ours, sea!

Was it worth while? It is worth while, all,
If the soul is not small.
Whoever means to sail beyond the Cape
Must double sorrow – no escape.
Peril and the abyss has God to the sea given
And yet made it the mirror of heaven.

(page 73)

The Fifth Kingdom

Poor man that lives at home
Content with his fireside –
No wingbeat of a dream
To fan redder the ember,
The hearth he should desert!

Poor man that's happy! He lives
On because still alive.
No word from his soul he receives
But the lesson a root gives –
Take burial for life.

Era upon era, the main
Time eras bring to be.
Discontent makes a man.
Let the blind powers tame
Themselves that the soul may see.

So when, as dreamed, the four
Kingdoms have passed away,
Earth shall be theater for
The clear dawn, just come forth
From, black, the night, the waste.

Hellas, Rome, Christendom,
Europe – the four in their pride
Going the way of a time.
Who's coming to live the truth
Which Dom Sebastião died?

(page 83)

Bandarra

He, anonymous and dispersed,
Dreamed the Empire in God's eyes.
Confused like the Universe
And plebeian like Jesus Christ.

He was no saint, no hero – yet
God consecrated with His call
This man, who had in him a heart
Not Portuguese, but Portugal.

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Third

By the waters of heartbreak I write this book.
My heart has nothing of its own.
Through hot tears my eyes look.
I live, Lord, on you alone.

To feel you, think you, alone has power
To fill and golden my bare days.
But when will you want to return this way?
When is the King? When is the Hour?

When will you come, to be the Christ
Of a man to whom the false God is deceased,
And wake from the evil which I exist
The New Earth and New Skies?

When will you come, O Hidden One,
Vision of the Portuguese eras,
To make me more than the gust, which veers
And falls, of a longing by God begun?

When will it be your will, returning
Here, to make, of my hope, love?
Ah, when, out of this mist and yearning?
When, Dream in me my Lord above?

(page 95)

Fog

Not King nor law, not peace nor war
Grasps the outline and the truth
Of, look!, that creeping gleam of the earth
That's Portugal breaking the heart,
A flaring without light or heat,
Like the core of a hollowed reed.

No one knows what she desires.
No one has seen what soul is here,
What is bad, what is good, in there
(What distant agony mourning near?)
All's uncertain and is the end,
All is scattered, nothing entire.
O Portugal, fog you are...

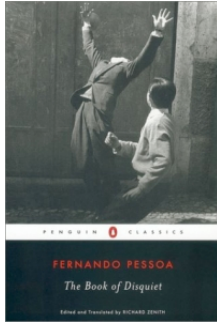
It is the Hour!

(page 107)



Thomas Joshua Cooper *Sea Fog - North-most -
The Mid North Atlantic Ocean and Caldeiro,
The Azores, Portugal, 2004*
www.inglebygallery.com/artists_detail.php?imageID=1407&id=22

The Book of Disquiet
by Fernando Pessoa



*Penquin Books; London, England; 2002.
translated by Allen Lane*

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I always live in the present. I don't know the future and no longer have the past. The former oppresses me as the possibility of everything, the latter as the reality of nothing. I have no hopes and no nostalgia. Knowing what my life has been up till now - so often and so completely the opposite of what I wanted -, what can I assume about my life tomorrow, except that it will be what I don't assume, what I don't want, what happens to me from the outside, reaching me even via my will? There's nothing from my past that I recall with the futile wish to repeat it. I was never more than my own vestige or simulacrum. My past is everything I failed to be. I don't even miss the feelings I had back then, because what is felt requires the present moment - once this has passed, there's a turning of the page and the story continues, but with a different text.

Brief dark shadow of a downtown tree, light sound of water falling into the sad pool, green of the trimmed lawn - public garden shortly before twilight: you are in this moment the whole universe for me, for you are the full content of my conscious sensation. All I want from life is to feel it being lost in these unexpected evenings, to the sound of strange children playing in gardens like this one, fenced in by the melancholy of the surrounding streets and topped, beyond the trees' tallest branches, by the old sky where the stars are again coming out.



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To live is to be other. It's not even possible to feel, if one feels today what he felt yesterday. To feel today what one felt yesterday isn't to feel - it's to remember today what was felt yesterday, to be today's living corpse of what yesterday was lived and lost.

To erase everything from the slate from one day to the next, to be new with each new morning, in a perpetual revival of our emotional virginity - this, and only this, is worth being or having, to be or have what we imperfectly are.

Without intending to, I sense that I have been thinking about my life. I didn't realize what I was doing, but that's what it was. I assumed that I only saw and listened, that during this idle stroll of mine, I was nothing more than a reflector of given images, a white screen on which reality projects colors and light instead of shadows. But there was more, without my knowing it. It was still my soul, denying itself, and my own abstract observation was still a negation.

If only I were, I feel it in this moment, someone who could see all this as if he had no relation to it except seeing, - contemplate all of it as if he were the adult traveller who had today reached the surface of life! If only I hadn't learned, from birth onward, to give accepted meanings to these things, if only I could see them in the expression they have separate from the expression that has been

imposed upon them. If only I could understand the human reality in the woman selling fish independent of her being a fishmonger and know that she exists and sells. If only I could see the policeman the way God sees him. If only I could notice everything for the first time, not apocalyptically, like a revelation of the Mystery, but directly like the blooming of Reality.



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The intensity of my sensations has always been less than the intensity of my awareness of them. I've always suffered more from my consciousness that I was suffering than from the suffering of which I was conscious.

The life of my emotions moved early on to the chambers of thought, and that's where I've most fully lived my emotional experience of life.

And since thought, when it shelters emotion, is more demanding than emotion by itself, the regime of consciousness in which I began to live what I felt made how I felt more down-to-earth, more physical, more titillating.

By thinking so much, I became echo and abyss. By delving within, I made myself into many. The slightest incident - a change in the light, the tumbling of a dry leaf, the faded petal that falls from a flower, the voice speaking on the other side of the stone wall, the steps of the speaker next to those of the listener, the half-open gate of the old country estate, the courtyard with an arch and houses clustered around it in the moonlight - all these things, although not mine, grab hold of my sensory attention with the chains of longing and emotional resonance. In each of these sensations I am someone else, painfully renewed in each definite impression.

I live off impressions that aren't mine. I'm a squanderer of renunciations, someone else in the way I am I.



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I weep over my imperfect pages, but if future generations read them, they will be more touched by my weeping than by any perfection I might have achieved, since perfection would have kept me from weeping and, therefore, from writing. Perfection never materializes. The saint weeps, and is human. God is silent. That is why we can love the saint but cannot love God.

The Book of Disquiet
by Fernando Pessoa



Exact Change; Boston; 1998.
translated by Alfred Mac Adam

I'm having one of those days in which I never had a future. There is only a present, fixed and surrounded by a wall of anguish. The other bank of the river, because it is the other bank, is never the bank we are standing on: that is the intimate reason for all my suffering. (*page xxv*)



I can imagine everything for myself because I am nothing. If I were something, I would not be able to imagine. The assistant bookkeeper can dream he's the Emperor of Rome; the King of England is deprived of being, in dreams, any other king but the one he is. His reality doesn't let him. (*page 41*)



But there is something else.... In those slow, empty hours there arises from my soul to my mind a sadness that involves my entire being, the bitterness of all being along with a sensation of mine and an external thing, which it is not within my power to change. Oh, how many times have my very own dreams arisen before me like things, not to take the place of reality but to confess that they are equal to me in my not caring for them, in arising in me from without, like the trolley that turns at the far curve of the street, or the voice of the nocturnal vendor of I have no idea what, whose voice stands out, an Arab melody, like a sudden bubble, from the monotony of the afternoon! (*page 43*)



I frequently do not recognize myself – it's something that often happens to people who know themselves.... I accompany myself in the various disguises with which I am alive. Of everything that changes, I possess that which is always the same; of that which makes up everything, I possess that which is nothing. (*page 54*)



I turned myself into the fiction of myself to such an extent that any natural feeling that I have, of course, from the moment it's born, becomes a feeling of the imagination – the memory in dreams, the dream of forgetting about the dream, knowing myself by not thinking about myself.

I stripped off my own being to such an extent that existing means dressing up. Only when I'm disguised am I really myself. And around me all unknown sunsets, as they die, guild the landscapes I shall never see. (*page 55*)