



Pessoa

POEMS OF FERNANDO



translated
and edited by
WIN HONIG AND
SAN M. BROWN

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EDWIN HONIG AND SUSAN M. BROWN

At last, at last, at last, Pessoa again! More Pessoa! One of the very great poets of the twentieth century, again and more! And one of the fascinating figures of all literature, with his manifold identities, his amazing audacities, his brilliance and his shyness. I think I have under control the reluctance I feel in having to share Pessoa with the public he should have had all along in America: until now, only the poets, so far as I can tell, have even heard of him, and delighted and exulted in him. He is, in some ways, *the* poet of modernism, the only one willing to fracture himself into the parcels of action, anguish, and nostalgia which are the grounds of our actual situation.

C.K. Williams

Pessoa is one of the great originals (a fact rendered more striking by his writing as several distinct personalities) of the European poetry of the first part of this century, and has been one of the last poets of comparable stature, in the European languages, to become known in English. Edwin Honig's translations of Spanish and Portuguese poetry have been known to anyone who cares about either, since his work on Lorca in the forties, and his *Selected Poems of Pessoa* (1971) was a welcome step toward a long-awaited larger collection.

W.S. Merwin

Fernando Pessoa is the least known of the masters of twentieth-century poetry. From his heteronymic passion he produced, if that is the word, two of our greatest poets, Alberto Caeiro and Álvaro de Campos, and a third, Ricardo Reis, who isn't bad. Pessoa is the exemplary poet of the self as other, of the poem as testament to unreality, proclamation of nothingness, occasion for expectancy. In Edwin Honig's and Susan Brown's superb translations, Pessoa and his "others" live with miraculous style and vitality.

Mark Strand



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A preface is always bad and a translator's preface positively immoral. But, sometimes, like immorality, a necessary thing. The only preface of a work is the reader's brain.

—F.P.

FERNANDO PESSOA, the multiplex early twentieth-century European poet, almost single-handedly brought modernism to Portugal. His is so clearly an instance of the contemporary poet's predicament that he deserves to be viewed with the major modernists—Pound, Eliot, Yeats. Like them he learned to weave the ambivalence he habitually felt about his life and art into a spectacular and unique practice. He too was a language experimenter, a playful spoofer, and a mock-serious renegade throwing jibes at the intellectual circles in the Lisbon of his day. He aimed to shock and scandalize in order to shake up a society all too provincial and imitative of French fashions. Diagnosing the nation's chronic illness, he claimed that Portuguese backwardness derived from an overdisciplined anality. His remedy for impacted conscience was to exchange uneasy acquiescence to the tyrannies of church and state for an anarchy of the individualist spirit. In the guise of his fictitious "mental child," Álvaro de Campos, he played the role of masked buffoon, jokester, and trickster, and sometimes with telling effect. Part of that effect had to do with the growing claims his poetry was making, dedicated to a higher vocation and the conspicuous purpose of heralding a new age of civilization. The sense of his studiously mixed roles in principle and his renditions of them in practice crops up in a letter written in January 1915 to a close friend and literary associate, Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues:

I have been on the move for several years in order to collect ways of feeling. Now that I've seen and felt everything, my job is to shut myself up in the house of my spirit and work as much as possible and, inasmuch as I can, for the progress of civilization and the broadening of the

consciousness of humanity. I only hope I'm not distracted by my dangerous habit of being all too many-sided, adaptable to all things, forever alien to myself and with no central core inside me.

I am of course still intent on publishing pseudonymously the work of Caeiro-Reis-Campos. This is a whole literature that I have created and lived, sincere because experienced, constituting a current with a possible influence—undoubtedly beneficial—on the souls of others. What I call insincere literature is not analogous to Alberto Caeiro's, Ricardo Reis's, or Álvaro de Campos's. . . . One experiences it in the other; it is written dramatically, but is sincere (in my solemn sense of the word) just as what's spoken by King Lear—not Shakespeare, but a creation of his—is sincere. I call those things insincere that attempt to shock, as well as such things—take careful note, this is important—that contain no essential metaphysical idea, or let's say where no notion of the seriousness and mystery of life passes like a wind. In this sense, all I've written under the names of Caeiro, Reis, and Álvaro de Campos is serious. I gave them each a profound concept of life, something divine, and they were all seriously attentive to the mysterious importance of existing.

Artistic dedication mixed with a zealous but self-defensive humanitarianism suggests Pessoa's equivocality in continuing the heteronymic adventure he had barely begun the year before. Behind his advocacy of the heteronyms lurks the anticipation of one day dropping them to get on with the more serious job of cultural missionary. *Message (Mensagem)*, the occultist poem written in his own name, was the culmination of this effort, completed and published twenty years later, the year of his death. Scrupulously designed in three parts, nine sections, and forty-four short poems, *Message* frames his deprecation of the Portuguese for their anachronistic hero-worship with a fervid need to renew his messianic hope for the nation. The ambivalence is not unlike the condition of Hart Crane's epic, *The Bridge*, which devalues urban America yet hoists the prophetic vision of a renewal of the nation's original promise. Aside from a few such poems of obliquely religious intent, Pessoa's effort after 1915 enforced the drama of his fictitious poets (or "coterie"), substituting their voices for his. It is in fact these poetic embodiments of his theoretical program for Portuguese modernism that

constitute Pessoa's major achievement and represent the bulk of his poetic oeuvre.

The heteronymic engagement became Pessoa's way of accomplishing a good deal of what other modernists were trying to achieve. If Sensationism is the standard under which all the heteronyms proceed, with its banning of abstraction and prescriptive focus on the bodily senses, it resembles the principles of Imagism on which English and American poets of the period were attempting to build individual styles of their own. In refuting the subjectivity of the Romantics, these poets all sought to bring about a transmutation of the materials of poetry. They took from their national past and the legacy of other civilizations the fragmentary ruins on which to base new forms of art made of the living language and familiar artifacts of the modern world.

Pessoa's poet characters, each with a discrete body of work, reflect his lifelong propensity for drama and depersonalization. Yet in his first experiments with dramatic personae—Alexander Search and Charles Anon—he fails to achieve anything like a distinct voice of someone other. It is only with the advent of Alberto Caeiro, the innocent pastoralist, who roots drama in sensation, that the polyphony of impersonating voices gets under way. Pessoa shifts the course of poetic practice in Portugal by dramatizing the lyric, stretching certain syntactic conventions, and often tilting the diction toward English. In giving it something foreign to digest, Pessoa slowly transforms traditional materials, dead styles, creating a Portuguese which at times sounds foreign even to the native reader. Free verse, derived from Whitman, becomes the dominant speech of Caeiro and Campos, while a revived neoclassical line empowers the poems of Reis. Pessoa himself, avowed disciple of Caeiro, blends traditional forms with psychological and unorthodox religious perceptiveness.

Few of the heteronymic poems were published during Pessoa's lifetime and there is evidence that he was uneasy about what principle of organization to use for the publication of his "people-books." Although toward the end of his life he finally declared he was inclined to publish all the heteronymic poetry under his own name, his original intention seems to have been to bring them out anonymously, establishing a "Portuguese neo-paganism, with various

authors, each different, collaborating on it and expanding it." He ultimately rejected this idea, he said, because of the lack of a large enough intellectual milieu in Portugal capable of understanding the heteronymic strategy. Given the pains Pessoa took to plot this strategy, it seems appropriate to present these versions of the poetry in accordance with that scheme, taking into account some of its complexity as he continually referred to it and theorized about it. Still, one could dispense with the heteronymic fiction, for after all, the personae were created to generate the poetry and not vice versa. But to follow his scheme as it evolves centrifugally from the center (Caeiro) leads one to the instigating notion of the poetry as an open-ended process, an enactment of the continuing search for the fragments of modern consciousness. Looking at the poetry from this perspective, one might begin to see Pessoa's engagement in a mythic creation of the self as a distinctive mosaic of inter-reflecting persons. And this reading of the poetry as a fractured whole coincides with Pessoa's repeated insistence on the need to go beyond the limiting and illusory notion of the self as a "single separate person."

In his fictionally spontaneous gesture of 1914, Pessoa created Alberto Caeiro, whose sequence of poems argues for a new poetics on modernist grounds. *The Keeper of Sheep* provided the orbit around which a serious contemporary poetry might be written in Portuguese, if it could be written at all. Caeiro redefines one's simplest creatural response to the phenomenal world as the sole task of the poet. To accept this response is to focus on the sensations, a norm implicit in the practice of the heteronymic poets who thus create a means of regaining something of the pre-Christian mode of pagan perception.

The other side of Caeiro's Zen-like vitalism is the loud, sometimes hysterical voice of Álvaro de Campos, would-be world traveler and ship's engineer, whose poems occasionally illustrate the urgent dependency felt for Caeiro, his master. The poems of Ricardo Reis, doctor, monarchist, and exile, also follow Caeiro's but as his conspicuously Epicurean counterpart, writing imitations of classical odes. Finally, Pessoa himself is represented by the metaphysical lyrics he called *Cancioneiro* (Song Book), the lost identity-seeker in the haunted drama of selfhood.

With the exception of the Campos section, which is introduced

by excerpts from his own poetry, the poems of each persona are introduced by concise prose pieces attributed to one or another heteronym which delineate the impersonator's voice. The three sections on Pessoa illustrate his many-layered managerial role as well. The *Cancioneiro* examples are taken from the orthonymic work Pessoa intended to publish the year he died, while *Message*, the single book of Portuguese poems published in his lifetime, appears in its entirety for the first time in English translation. In addition to the Portuguese poetry of the *Cancioneiro* and *Message* there are selections from his English poems.

Pessoa is also seen as the constant experimenter in English verse, samples of which are included in the Appendix. The first three poems, written under the fictitious name of Alexander Search, are taken from over a hundred poems done between 1903 and 1909–1910. They show the apprentice style of Pessoa as the bright South African schoolboy writing of his fear of madness and uselessness, thus presaging themes developed more dramatically later.

Another English work, "A Sensationist Poem," is drawn from *The Mad Fiddler*, an unedited sequence comprising fifty-three poems written between 1911 and 1916. Traces are evident here of a modernist imitation in English of a Campos figure. Other poems of the period show the influence of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Browning, whom Pessoa had been reading closely in high school. In a third sequence are the fourteen English epitaphs from *Inscriptions*, completed in 1920 and published as a chapbook the following year along with the republished "Antinous," the Emperor Hadrian's 361-line lament on the death of his young lover. Though not included here, the poem is worth noticing along with "Epithalamium" (1913) as two long erotic exercises composed, according to Pessoa, in order to free himself of an obsession. "In each of us," he writes to the critic João Gaspar Simões, "even if one has little instinct to specialize in obscenity, there exist certain elements on this order, the number obviously varying in degree from one person to the next. Since such elements, minimal though they may be, act as a kind of obstacle to certain higher mental processes, I decided to eliminate them, twice, by the simple act of expressing them intensely."

Following *Inscriptions* are ten poems from the *35 Sonnets* in

English, published in 1918 but probably written as early as 1913. A letter to Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues expresses Pessoa's hope to achieve equivalents of Shakespeare's sonnets, the result being a highly wrought pastiche of its model.

At the end of *Message* and preceding Notes, a final section presents critical and poetic excerpts from the enormous realm of his prose. Pessoa's observations on psychological and esthetic aspects of literature make up one part of this section; the other consists of extracts from the recently published two-volume diary, the *Book of Disquietude* (*Livro do Desassossego*), by the semi-heteronym, Bernardo Soares. Finally, along with the English poems in the Appendix, there is a gloss on *Message* and several other poems.

Somewhere among his critical writings Pessoa lists the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, and Shakespeare (presumably the plays) as works he hopes to translate. The brevity of his life would have prevented anything more than a start on these projects. But it might have been a good start, on Shakespeare at least, judging from his pastiche English sonnets. He also planned to translate his Portuguese poems into English, but the attempts he made on several, including "Maritime Ode," indicate that he would have had considerable difficulty doing things the other way round.

The difficulties in translating Pessoa are fixed by the various spectra of his heteronymic activities. One must be sensitive to the shifts in tone and language, from the loud-to-soft modulations of Campos's gangling "Maritime Ode" to the stoicism of Reis's brief and formal *Odes*. There is another range between both these types and the tight syntax in the metaphysical questings of the *Cancioneiro*. Also to be reckoned with are the structural differences between the beguilingly free but obsessive creatural reverence in Caeiro's pastoralism and the tonal shifts in the always highly wrought panels of *Message*.

With few exceptions the translations dispense with rhyme. The reason is that the syntactical problems are nominally profuse enough without courting further complications for the minimal advantage to be had in rhyming. With the stanzaic forms of sonnet, ode, and ballad, the aim was to achieve uniform lines of metrical or cadenced equivalents. The long free-verse lines of Caeiro and

Campos were an open invitation, based on the Whitman echo in them, to follow the American poet's swelling rhythms—not surprisingly, since Pessoa was an avid reader of *Leaves of Grass* just before and during his early heteronymic period. To suggest the stylistic character of *Message*—a succinctly short line with the same epigrammatic tendency as Reis's *Odes* but different in its stricter syntactic involutions—the problem was to keep the language bare without allowing Reis-like archaisms to creep in. Some notion of what the Portuguese feels like may be gleaned by reading the English *Sonnets* and *Inscriptions* in the Appendix.

No matter how hard one might try to reassemble them, certain poems just do not lend themselves to translation. One is "Absurd Hour" ("Hora Absurda") with its constant barrage of self-fragmenting imagery that tries to turn Pessoa's mournful lyric voice into a convincing dramatic one. Deliberately veiled and depersonalized, the indirections of the process may be sensed through the excerpts given here. Others, like the decadent symbolist poem, "Impressions of the Twilight" ("Impressões de Crepusculo"), which cultivates untranslatable sound-values, could not be rendered into anything equivalent in English. Less marked in difficulty but fully rhyme-dependent are the popular folk quatrains (*Quadras Populares*), equally untranslatable.

To be translatable a poem must contain enough of what is verbally useful of the man and the mind that made it, enough of the original energy that succeeded in transforming reality into an accessible form—even if, as in Pessoa's case, it is a reality the poet himself could never believe he shared with any other human being. One returns to the heteronyms and to the orthonymic Pessoa they helped to free, in order to find what is central, not perhaps in any single one of them, but in all of them at different times and viewed from their unique angles—and therein justify the reason why they were invented. An analogy for this condition might exist in something as joyfully mundane as the Marx Brothers. To choose one of the poets as superior or more sympathetic would be like choosing one Marx Brother above another; one would soon discover that the brother one had chosen did not really exist apart from his finely linked dramatic association with the others.

For the original text of *The Keeper of Sheep* (*O Guardador de Rebanhos*) see Ática edition, *Poemas de Alberto Caeiro*, vol. III of the *Obras Completas de Fernando Pessoa*, Third Edição, Lisboa (1963). For all other Portuguese texts, with the exception of those by Bernardo Soares, see the two-volume edition of Pessoa, *Obra Poética* and *Obras em Prosa*, Editora Nova Aguilar, Rio de Janeiro (1983, 1982). For those few passages originally written in English prose, see *Páginas Íntimas de Auto-Interpretação*, Edição Ática (1966). For the English poems, see *Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa* in *Obras Completas de Fernando Pessoa*, Edição Ática (1974) and *Estudos Sobre Fernando Pessoa*, by Georg Rudolf Lind, Edição Estudos Portugueses, Imprensa Nacional, Casa da Moeda, Vila da Maia (1981). For the excerpts from the semi-heteronym, Bernardo Soares, see Fernando Pessoa, *Livro do Desassossego*, 2 volumes, Edição Ática (1982).

References have been cited to all the excerpts which introduce the heteronyms. Regarding the poetry, each excerpt is followed by the number of the poem in the Nova Aguilar edition. With the prose excerpts the headings or titles of essays are cited when they are given in the Aguilar edition.

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the reading of these poems. There too, João Paulo Moreira as well as José Blanco, of the Gulbenkian Foundation, encouraged the translators by the sympathy of their special attention and understanding of Pessoa's poetry. The assistance of Dr. Paul Acker in the preparation of the manuscript was crucial in the final shaping of this book.

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E. H.
S. M. B.

POEMS OF FERNANDO

Pessoa

Introducing the Heteronyms

I see before me, in a colorless but real space of a dream, the faces and gestures of [Alberto] Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos. I made out their ages and their lives. Ricardo Reis, born in 1887, not that I remember the day and the month (though I have them somewhere), in Oporto, is a doctor and is living at present in Brazil. Alberto Caeiro was born in 1889 and died in 1915; he was born in Lisbon, but lived almost all his life in the country. He had neither profession nor any sort of education. Álvaro de Campos was born in Tavira, on the fifteenth of October, 1890 (at 1:30 p.m., Ferreira Gomes tells me; and it's true, since it's confirmed by a horoscope made of this hour). As you know, he is a naval engineer (in Glasgow), but now lives here in Lisbon, not working. Caeiro was of medium height and, though really delicate (he died a consumptive), didn't seem as delicate as he was. Ricardo Reis is a bit, though very slightly, shorter, but also shrewd. Álvaro de Campos is tall (1.75 meters tall, two centimeters more than I), thin, and with a tendency to a slight stoop. All are cleanshaven—Caeiro pale without color, blue eyes; Reis a vague dull brown; Campos between fair and swarthy, a vaguely Jewish Portuguese type, hair therefore smooth and normally parted on the side, monocled. Caeiro, as I said, hadn't any education to speak of—only primary school; his father and mother died early and he remained at home, where he lived on the income of a few small properties. He lived with an old aunt, on his mother's side. Ricardo Reis, educated in a Jesuit college, is, as I said, a doctor; he's been living in Brazil since 1919; for he became an expatriate immediately because he was a monarchist. He is a Latinist by schooling, and a semi-Hellenist by virtue of his own efforts. Álvaro de Campos had a high-school education; he later went to Scotland to study engineering, first mechanical, then naval. On some holiday he went to the Orient, from which "Opium Eater" is derived. An uncle, also a priest, from the Beira, taught him Latin. . . .

(Fernando Pessoa, from a letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, January 13, 1935)

Alberto Caeiro

Introducing Alberto Caeiro

One day . . . March 8, 1914. . . . It was the triumphant day of my life: . . . What followed was the appearance of someone in me . . . Alberto Caeiro. Forgive the absurdity of the sentence: In me there appeared my Master.

(Fernando Pessoa, in a letter to Aldolfo Casais Monteiro)

My master Caeiro wasn't a pagan: he was paganism. Ricardo Reis is a pagan, António Mora is a pagan, I am a pagan, Fernando Pessoa himself would be a pagan if he weren't a ball of yarn rolled up inside himself. But Ricardo Reis is a pagan in character, António Mora is a pagan intellectually, I am a pagan by virtue of my rebelliousness, that is, my temperament. In Caeiro, there is no explanation for his paganism; there's consubstantiation . . .

(Álvaro de Campos, from "Notes on the Memory of My Master Caeiro")

Caeiro, in his total objectivity, or better, in his constant tendency toward objectivity, is frequently more Greek than the Greeks . . . I was as a blind man at birth in whom the possibility to see was given; and my knowledge of *The Keeper of Sheep* acted as the surgical instrument that opened my eyes to seeing . . .

(Ricardo Reis, from "The Objectivism of Caeiro")

Caeiro, like Whitman, leaves me perplexed. We are thrown off our critical attitude by so extraordinary a phenomenon. We have never seen anything like it. Even after Whitman, Caeiro is strange and terribly, appallingly new. Even in our age, when we believe nothing can astonish us or shout novelty at us, Caeiro does astonish and does breathe novelty. To be able to do this in an age like ours is the definite and final proof of his genius. . . . Alberto Caeiro is reported to have regretted the name of "sensationalism" which a disciple of his—a rather queer disciple, it is true—Mr. Álvaro de Campos,

gave to his attitude, and to the attitude he created. If Caeiro protested against the word as possibly something to indicate a "school," like Futurism, for instance, he was right . . .

(Ricardo Reis, in an English preface to Alberto Caeiro's poems)

At first sight it seems that something of Whitman is present in these poems. I have no information as to Caeiro's knowledge of foreign languages, or of English and of Whitman particularly; yet, on the face of it, and after a very cursory reading of the poems, I suspect the first to have been, at best, very slight, and the second and third nil. However it may be, on close examination there is really no influence of Whitman here. There is at most an occasional coincidence and the coincidence is merely of tone, and more apparent therefore than real. The essential difference is enormous . . .

(Ricardo Reis, from "Alberto Caeiro—Translator's Preface")

The curious fact about Alberto Caeiro is that he comes apparently out of nothing, more completely out of nothing than any other poet . . .

(Ricardo Reis, from another translator's preface to Alberto Caeiro)

The Keeper of Sheep

I. "I never kept sheep"

I never kept sheep,
But it's as if I'd done so.
My soul is like a shepherd.
It knows wind and sun
Walking hand in hand with the Seasons
Observing, and following along.
All of Nature's unpeopled peacefulness
Comes to sit alongside me.
Still I'm sad, as a sunset is
To the imagination,
When it grows cold at the end of the plain
And you feel the night come in
Like a butterfly through the window.

But my sadness is comforting
Because it's right and natural
And because it's what the soul should feel
When it already thinks it exists
And the hands pick flowers
And the soul takes no notice.

Like the clanking of cowbells
Beyond the bend in the road,
My thoughts are happy.
My only regret is knowing they're happy
Because if I didn't know it,
They'd be glad and happy
Instead of unhappy and glad.

Thinking is discomfoting like walking in the rain
When the wind increases, making it look as if it's raining
harder.

I've no ambitions or desires.
My being a poet isn't an ambition.
It's my way of being alone.

And if sometimes in my fancy
I desire to be a lamb
(Or the whole flock of sheep
So I can go over the hillside
And be many happy things at the same time),
It's only because I feel what I'm writing when the sun sets
Or when a cloud's hand passes over the light
And a silence runs off through the grass.

When I sit down to write a poem
Or when ambling along the main roads and bypaths,
I write lines on the paper of my thoughts,
I feel the staff in my hands
And glimpse an outline of myself
On top of some low-lying hill,
Watching over my flock and seeing my ideas,
Or watching over my ideas and seeing my flock,
And smiling vaguely like one who doesn't understand
what's said
And likes to pretend he does.

I greet everyone who'll read me,
Tipping my wide-brimmed hat to them
As they see me at my door
Just as the coach tips the top of the hill.
I salute them and wish them sunshine,
And rain when rain is called for,
And may their houses contain
Near an open window

Somebody's favorite chair
Where they sit, reading my poems.
And when reading my poems thinking
Of me as something quite natural—
An ancient tree, for instance,
In whose shade they thumped down
When they were children, tired after play,
Wiping the sweat off their hot foreheads
With the sleeve of their striped smocks.

II. "My glance is clear like a sunflower"

My glance is clear like a sunflower.
I usually take to the roads,
Looking to my right and to my left,
And now and then looking behind me . . .
And what I see each moment
Is something I'd never seen before,
And I'm good at noticing such things . . .
I know how to feel the same essential wonder
That an infant feels if, on being born,
He could note he'd really been born . . .
I feel that I am being born each moment
Into the eternal newness of the World . . .

I believe in the World as in a daisy
Because I see it. But I don't think about it
Because thinking is not understanding . . .
The World was not made for us to think about
(To think is to be eye-sick)
But for us to look at and be in tune with . . .

I have no philosophy: I have senses . . .
If I speak of Nature, it's not because I know what
Nature is,
But because I love it, and that's why I love it,
For a lover never knows what he loves,
Why he loves or what love is . . .

Loving is eternal innocence,
And the only innocence is not to think . . .

VI. "To think of God is to disobey God"

To think of God is to disobey God
Because God wanted us not to know him,
And therefore did not show himself to us . . .
Let's be calm and simple,
Like brooks and trees,
And God will love us for it, make us
Beautiful as brooks and trees,
And will give us the green of his spring,
And a river to go to when we are done! . . .

VIII. "Once at mid-day in late spring"

Once at mid-day in late spring
A dream came to me like a photograph.
I saw Jesus Christ come down to earth.
He came down the slope of a mountain,
Turned once more into a child,
Running and romping through the grass,
And pulling up flowers to throw them away
And laughing so loud he was heard far away.

He had escaped from the sky.
He was too much like us to pretend
He was the second person of the Trinity.
It was all false in the sky, all out of keeping
With the flowers and trees and rocks.
In the sky he always had to be serious
And now and then he had to become man again
And mount the cross and always be dying
With a crown of thorns all around his head
And the head of a spike hammered into his feet,
And even a rag around his waist

Like the black men in the picture books.
They didn't even let him have a father and mother
Like the other children.
His father was two people—
An old man named Joseph, who was a carpenter,
And wasn't his father;
And the other father a stupid dove,
The only ugly dove in the world
Because it wasn't from the world and wasn't a dove.
And his mother hadn't loved anyone before having him.

She wasn't a woman: she was a suitcase
In which he'd come out of the sky.
And they wanted him, who was born only of a mother,
And never had a father to love with respect,
To teach goodness and justice!

One day when God was sleeping
And the Holy Ghost was flying around,
He went to the chest of miracles and stole three.
With the first he made it impossible anybody would know
he'd escaped.
With the second he created himself eternally human and a
child.
With the third he created a Christ eternally stuck to the
cross
And left him nailed to the cross in the sky
And it serves as a model for the others.
Afterward he went off to the sun
And came down on the first light beam he could catch.

Today he lives with me in my village.
And he's a natural child with a wonderful laugh.
He wipes his nose on his right arm,
He splashes around in the puddles,
He picks flowers and loves them and forgets them.
He throws stones at the donkeys,

He steals fruit from the orchards
And runs away from the dogs, screaming and yelling.
And, because he knows they don't like it
And that everybody finds it funny,
He runs after the girls
Who stroll in groups along the roads
Carrying water jars on their heads,
And he lifts up their skirts.

He taught me everything.
He taught me to look at things.
He points out everything there is inside flowers.
He shows me how funny rocks are
When people take them in hand
And look slowly at them.

He speaks very badly of God to me.
He says he's a stupid sick old man,
Always spitting on the floor
And saying indecent things.
The Virgin Mary spends afternoons in eternity knitting
stockings.
And the Holy Ghost scratches itself with its beak
And perches in chairs and dirties them up.
Everything in the sky is stupid like the Catholic Church.
And he tells me God doesn't understand a thing
About the things he's created—
"If it's he who created them, which I doubt.
He says, for instance, that the creatures sing his glory,
But the creatures don't sing anything.
If they sang they'd be singers.
The creatures exist, and nothing more,
And that's why they're called creatures."
And afterward, tired of speaking ill of God,
The Child Jesus falls asleep in my arms
And I carry him home against my breast.

He lives with me in my house halfway up the hill.
He's the Eternal Child, the God that was missing.
He's the human being that's natural,
He's the divine being that smiles and plays.
And that's how I know for certain
That he's really the Child Jesus.

And the child who's so human he's divine
Is this, my daily life as a poet,
And it's because he's always with me that I'm always a
poet,
And that the slightest glance
Fills me with feeling,
And the tiniest sound, whatever it may be,
Seems to speak to me.

The New Child who lives where I live
Gives me one hand
And the other to all that exists,
And so we go along, the three of us, on whatever road's
ahead,
Jumping and singing and laughing
And enjoying our common secret
Which is knowing through and through
There is no mystery in the world
And that all things are worth our while.

The Eternal Child is with me always.
My glance takes the direction of his pointing finger.
My hearing, happily alert to every sound,
Is his playful tickling in my ears.

We get along so well together
In the company of every thing
We never think of one another,

But live together, the two of us,
With an intimate understanding
Like the right hand with the left.

At nightfall we play jacks
On the doorstep of the house,
Serious, as befits a god and a poet,
And as if each jack
Were an entire universe
And would be enormously dangerous therefore
To let it fall to the ground.

Later I tell him stories about the doings of mankind
And he smiles because it's all so incredible.
He laughs at kings and those who aren't kings,
And it hurts him to hear me speak of wars,
And of commerce, and the navies
That are left as smoke in the air on the high seas.
Because he knows it all lacks that truth
A flower has in bloom
Which moves with the light of the sun
Changing mountains and valleys
And making eyes ache at whitewashed walls.

Later he falls asleep and I put him to bed.
I carry him at my breast into the house
And lay him down, undress him slowly,
Like following a ritual, utterly clean and maternal,
Until he is all naked.

He sleeps within my soul
And sometimes wakes at night
And plays with my dreams.
He throws some upside down in the air,
He places some on top of others
And claps his hands alone,
Smiling at my sleep.

When I die, my little son,
Let me be the child, the smallest one.
Take me in your arms
And carry me inside your house.
Undress my tired human frame
And lay me in your bed.
Tell me stories if I waken
So I can fall asleep again.
And give me your dreams to play with
Until whatever day is born,
A day—and you know which.

This is the story of my Child Jesus.
For what conceivable reason
Should it be any less true
Than all that philosophers think of
And all that religions teach?

IX. "I'm a keeper of sheep"

I'm a keeper of sheep.
The sheep are my thoughts
And my thoughts are all sensations.
I think with my eyes and ears
And with my hands and feet
And with my nose and mouth.

To think a flower is to see it and smell it
And to eat a fruit is to taste its meaning.

That's why on a hot day
When I ache from enjoying it so much,
And stretch out on the grass,

Closing my warm eyes,
I feel my whole body lying full length in reality,
I know the truth and I'm happy.

XIV. "Rhymes mean nothing to me. Only rarely"

Rhymes mean nothing to me. Only rarely
Are two trees identical, standing side by side.
My thinking and writing are like flowers having color
But the way I express myself is less perfect
Because I lack the divine simplicity
Of being only what I appear to be.

I look and I am moved,
Moved as water flows when the ground slopes,
And my poetry is natural, like the rising of the wind .

XV. "The four songs that follow now"

The four songs that follow now
Are separate from anything I think.
They give the lie to everything I feel,
They are the opposite of all I am . . .

I wrote them when I was ill
And that's why they're natural,
In keeping with what I feel.
They agree with what they disagree . . .
When I'm sick I must think the opposite
Of what I think when I am well.
(Otherwise I wouldn't be sick.)
I must feel the opposite of what I feel
When I am well,
I must give the lie to my nature
As a being who feels in a certain way . . .
I must be sick completely—ideas and everything.
When I'm sick, I'm not sick for any other reason.

That's why these songs that deny me
Have no power to deny me
And are the landscape of my soul at night,
The same one but its opposite . . .

**XVI. "I'd give anything if only my life were an
oxcart"**

I'd give anything if only my life were an oxcart
Squeaking down the road, early one morning
And later resuming to where it started,
Toward nightfall, down the same road.

I'd have no need of hopes—I'd need only wheels . . .
As I grew old I'd have no wrinkles or white hair . . .
When I'd be of no further use, they'd pull off my wheels
And I'd lie there overturned and broken, at the bottom of
a pit.

XXI. "If I could take a bite of the whole earth"

If I could take a bite of the whole earth
And get a taste of it,
I'd be happier for a moment . . .
But I don't always want to be happy.
One must be unhappy now and then
Just to be able to be natural . . .

Not every day is fair,
And when there's a drought, you look for rain.
That's why I take the happy with the sad
Naturally, like someone not surprised
There are mountains and plains,
Rocks and grass . . .

One must be natural and easy,
Take the happy with the sad,

Feel as one who looks,
Think as one who walks,
And, when it's time to die, remember the day dies too,
And the sunset is beautiful, and beautiful too the
 enduring night . . .
That's how it is, and so be it . . .

XXVII. "Only Nature is divine, and she's not divine"

Only Nature is divine, and she's not divine . . .

If I speak of her as a being
It's because to speak of her I must use the language of
 men
Which endows things with personality,
And forces names upon things.
But things have neither name nor personality—
They exist, and the sky is vast and the earth wide,
And our hearts the size of a clenched fist . . .

Bless me for all I do not know.
I enjoy it all as one who knows there's always sun.

XXVIII. "Today I read nearly two pages"

Today I read nearly two pages
In a book by a mystic poet,
And I laughed like someone who'd been weeping and
 weeping.

Mystic poets are sick philosophers,
And philosophers are madmen.

Because mystic poets say that flowers feel
And say that stones have souls
And rivers have ecstasies in moonlight.

But flowers wouldn't be flowers if they felt anything—
They'd be people;
And if stones had souls they'd be living things, not
stones;
And if rivers had ecstasies in moonlight,
They'd be sick people.

Only if you don't know what flowers, stones, and rivers
are
Can you talk about their feelings.
To talk about the soul of flowers, stones, and rivers,
Is to talk about yourself, about your delusions.
Thank God stones are just stones,
And rivers nothing but rivers,
And flowers just flowers.

As for myself, I write out the prose of my poems
And I am satisfied,
Because I know I can understand Nature from the
outside;
I don't understand it from inside
Because Nature hasn't any inside;
It wouldn't be Nature otherwise.

**XXX. "If they want me to be a mystic, fine. I'm a
mystic"**

If they want me to be a mystic, fine. I'm a mystic.
I'm a mystic, but only of the body.
My soul is simple and it doesn't think.

My mysticism is not wanting to know.
It's living without thinking about it.

I don't know what Nature is: I sing it.
I live on a hilltop
In a solitary whitewashed cabin.
And that's my definition.

XXXI. "If at times I say that flowers smile"

If at times I say that flowers smile
And if I should say that rivers sing,
It's not because I think there are smiles in flowers
And songs in rivers' running . . .
It's because that way I make deluded men better sense
The truly real existence of flowers and rivers.

Because I write for them to read me I sacrifice myself at
times
To their stupidity of feeling . . .
I don't agree with myself yet I forgive myself
Because I'm solely that serious thing—an interpreter of
Nature—
Because there are men who don't understand its language,
Being no language at all.

XXXV. "The moonlight behind the tall branches"

The moonlight behind the tall branches
The poets all say is more
Than the moonlight behind the tall branches.

But for me, who do not know what I think—
What the moonlight behind the tall branches
Is, beyond its being
The moonlight behind the tall branches,
Is its not being more
Than the moonlight behind the tall branches.

XXXVI. "And there are poets who are artists"

And there are poets who are artists
And work on their poems
Like a carpenter on his planks! . . .

How sad, not knowing how to bloom!
Having to pile line upon line like someone building a wall
And looking to see if it fits, and removing it if it
doesn't! . . .

When the only house of art is the whole Earth,
Which changes and is always good and always the same.

I think about this, not as one who thinks but as one who
breathes,

And I watch the flowers and smile . . .

I don't know if they understand me

Or if I understand them,

But I know the truth is in them and in me

And in the divinity we share

By letting ourselves go and live with the Earth

And be borne on the breast of the satisfied Seasons

And letting the wind sing us softly to sleep

And having no dreams at all in our sleep.

XLIII. "Rather the flight of the bird passing and leaving no trace

Rather the flight of the bird passing and leaving no trace

Than creatures passing, leaving tracks on the ground.

The bird goes by and forgets, which is as it should be.

The creature, no longer there, and so, perfectly useless,

Shows it was there—also perfectly useless.

Remembering betrays Nature,

Because yesterday's Nature is not Nature.

What's past is nothing and remembering is not seeing.

Fly, bird, fly away; teach me to disappear!

XLIV. "At night I suddenly waken"

At night I suddenly waken

And my watch fills the night completely.

I don't sense Nature outdoors.
My room is a something dark with vaguely white walls.
Outside there's repose, as though nothing existed.
Only the watch with its noise keeps going.
And this tiny thing full of complex gears on top of my
 table
Suffocates all existence on earth and above . . .
I'm about to lose myself thinking of what all this means,
But I stop, and in the night feel a smile creep to the
 corners of my mouth,
Because the only thing my watch symbolizes or means,
Filling the huge night with its tininess,
Is the curious sensation of filling the huge night
With its tininess . . .

XLVI. "One way or another"

One way or another,
The moment permitting,
Able to say what I think at times,
And otherwise saying it poorly and jumbled,
I keep writing my poems without wanting to,
As if writing weren't something made up of gestures,
As if writing were something that happened to me
Like the sun outside shining on me.

I try saying what I feel
Without thinking about what I feel.
I try fitting words to the idea
Without going down a corridor
Of thought to find words.

I don't always succeed in feeling what I know I should
 feel.
My thought swims the river only quite slowly,
Heavily burdened by clothes men have made it wear.

I try divesting myself of what I've learned,
I try forgetting the mode of remembering they taught me,
And scrape off the ink they used to paint my senses,
Unpacking my true emotions,
Unwrapping myself, and being myself, not Alberto
Caeiro,
But a human animal that Nature produced.

So I write, wanting to feel Nature, not even like a man,
But one who feels Nature, nothing more.
So I write, often well, often not,
Now hitting the nail on the head, and now not,
Falling down here, picking myself up there,
Yet always going ahead on my own like a pigheaded blind
man.

Even so, I'm somebody.
I'm the Discoverer of Nature.
I'm the Argonaut of true sensations.
I bring a new Universe into the Universe
Because I bring to the Universe its very own self.

This I feel, and this I write,
Knowing perfectly and not without seeing
That it's five o'clock in the morning
And the sun, though still not showing its head
Over the wall of the horizon,
May already be seen with its fingertips
Clawing the top of the wall
Of the horizon, full of low-lying hills.

XLVII. "On a terribly clear day"

On a terribly clear day,
A day that made you wish you'd worked very hard
So you'd not work at all that day,
I caught a glimpse, like a road through the trees,

Of what might after all be the Big Secret,
That Great Mystery crooked poets talk about.

I saw that there is no Nature,
That Nature does not exist,
That there are mountains, valleys, plains,
That there are trees, flowers, grasses,
That there are rivers and stones,
But that there's no one great All these things belong to,
That any really authentic unity
Is a sickness of all our ideas.

Nature is simply parts, nothing whole.
Maybe this is the mystery they talk about.

And this, without stopping, without thinking,
Is just what I hit on as being the truth
That everyone goes around looking for in vain,
And that only I, because I wasn't looking for it, found.

XLVIII. "From the highest window of my house"

From the highest window of my house
With a white handkerchief I bid good-bye
To my poems going off to humanity.

And I'm neither happy nor sad.
That's the destiny of my poems.
I wrote them and must show them to everyone
Because I cannot do otherwise,
As the flower can't hide its color,
Or the river hide its flowing,
Or the tree its fruit-giving.

There they go off in the distance, as in a coach,
And I feel sorrow without wanting to,
Like bodily pain.

Who knows who's going to read them?
Who knows what hands they'll reach?

Flower, it was for eyes that my destiny picked me.
Tree, it was for mouths my fruit was plucked.
River, it was the destiny of my waters not to remain in
me.

I yield, and feel almost happy,
Almost happy, like one who's tired of being sad.

Go, go from me!
The tree goes by, its remains strewn everywhere by
Nature.
The flower wilts, its dust remains forever.
The river flows, entering the sea, and in its waters
always its own remains.

Like the Universe, I pass and I remain.

XLIX. "I go indoors, and shut the window"

I go indoors, and shut the window.
They bring the lamp and say good night.
And my voice, content, says good night.
Oh, that my life were like this always:
The day full of sun, or gentle with rain,
Or in fury raging as if the World would end,
A soft afternoon with clusters of people going by,
Looked at with interest from the window,
The last friendly gaze turned to the repose of the trees,
And then, the window closed, the lamp lit,
Without reading a word, without thinking a thought or
sleeping,
Feeling life flow through me like a river in its bed,
And there, outside, a vast silence like a god asleep.

“The startling reality of things”

The startling reality of things
Is my discovery every single day.
Every thing is what it is,
And it's hard to explain to anyone how much this delights
me
And suffices me.

To be whole, it is enough simply to exist.

I've written a good many poems.
I shall write many more, naturally.
Each of my poems speaks of this,
And yet all my poems are different,
Because each thing that exists is one way of saying this.

Sometimes I start looking at a stone.
I don't start thinking, Does it have feeling?
I don't fuss about calling it my sister.
But I get pleasure out of its being a stone,
Enjoying it because it feels nothing,
Enjoying it because it's not at all related to me.

Occasionally I hear the wind blow,
And I find that just hearing the wind blow makes it worth
having been born.

I don't know what others reading this will think;
But I find it must be good since it's what I think without
effort,
With no idea that other people are listening to me think;

Because I think it without thoughts,
Because I say it as my words say it.

I was once called a materialist poet
And was surprised, because I didn't imagine
I could be called anything at all.
I'm not even a poet: I see.
If what I write has any merit, it's not in me;
The merit is there, in my verses.
All this is absolutely independent of my will.

"If, after I die, they want to write my biography"

If, after I die, they want to write my biography,
There's nothing more simple.
There are only two dates: my day of birth, day of death.
Between one and the other all the days are mine.

I'm easy to define.
Seeing devoured me.
I loved things with no sentimentality at all.
I never had a desire I couldn't satisfy because I never lost
my sight.
Even hearing was never more for me than an
accompaniment to seeing.
I understood that things are real and wholly different
from each other.
I understood this with the eyes, never with the head.
To understand this with the head would be to see them as
all the same.

Days made me sleepy as it does any child.
I'd close my eyes and sleep.
Beyond that, I was the only poet of Nature.

“Live, you say, in the present”

Live, you say, in the present;
Live only in the present.

But I don't want the present, I want reality;
I want existent things, not the time which measures
things.

What is the present?

It's something relative to the past and the future.

It's something that exists by virtue of other things
existing.

I only want reality, things without time present.

I don't want to include time in my scheme.

I don't want to think of things as time-bound; I want to
think of them as things.

I don't want to separate them from themselves, treating
them as things present.

I shouldn't even treat them as real things.

I shouldn't treat them as anything.

I should see them, just see them;

See them until I can't think about them,

See them, without time or space,

See, and be able to put aside all but the seeable.

This is the science of perception, which is no science at all.

“The snow threw a silent towel over everything”

The snow threw a silent towel over everything.

One feels nothing but what goes on inside the house.

I wrap myself in a blanket and don't even think of thinking.

Feeling creature comfort and dimly thinking,

I fall asleep with no less purpose than anything else going on in the world.

Álvaro de Campos

Introducing Álvaro de Campos

Yes, I am I, I myself, just what I turned out to be after all,
A sort of accessory or leftover,
The foggy suburbs of my sincere emotion,
It's me here inside of me, it's me.

What I was, what I wasn't—that's all me,
What I wanted, what I didn't, all of that gets to be me,
What I loved, what I stopped loving—it's all become the same sad
yearning in me.

And at the same time, the impression, a bit inconsequential,
Like a dream made of mixed realities,
Of facing myself left behind on a seat in a trolley,
To be accidentally met by someone who'd sit down on top of me.

* * * *

I'm me, and what the hell can I do about it! . . .

(from poem #481)

I who am, in the end, a continual dialogue,
A loud incomprehensible voice from the tower in the depths of
night
When the untouched bells sound indistinctly
With the pain of knowing there's life to live tomorrow.

* * * *

I, the solemn investigator of useless things . . .

(from poem #445)

I've always seen the world independently of myself.

* * * *

If I could only put up with myself and the selves inside me.

(from poem #516)

I love and animate everything, give humanity to
everything,

To men and stones, souls and machines,
Enlarging my own personality by doing so.

I belong to everything so as always to belong a bit more to
myself,

And my ambition would be to carry the universe in my
arms

Like a child being kissed by its nurse.

(from poem #517)

Opium Eater

It's before my opium fix that my soul is sick.
It kicks back and quakes, feeling life,
And I go looking for some opium to claim me,
Some Orient east of the Orient.

This life on board is going to kill me.
Days with nothing but a burning head,
And though I try till I'm sick of trying,
I can't find the catch to adapt myself.

In paradox and astral incompetence,
In folds of gold, I live my life
Wavering wave where honor's a pratfall
And even pleasure's the ganglia of my illness.

Through some mechanism of disasters,
Some machine with fake flywheels,
I must pass through visions of gallows
In a flower garden without trellises hung in mid-air.

I reel through the lace and lacquer
Of an inner life's handiwork.
I sense I've got the knife at home
That beheaded the Precursor.

I still expiate a crime in a suitcase
My grandfather committed as a fine art.
My nerves hang in the gallows, in bunches of twenty,
And I fall into opium as into a ditch.

With the slumber touch of morphine
I lose myself in throbbing transparencies,
And in a night full of diamonds
The moon comes up as my Sign.

Always a second-rate student,
I do nothing but watch the boat's motion
Through the Suez Canal, directing
My life, camphor in the dawn.

Gone are the days I relished.
I worked for nothing but the exhaustion
That in me today is a kind of arm
Around my neck, suffocating and protecting me.

Like everyone else, I was once a child.
I was born in a Portuguese province,
And I've known some English people
Who say I speak their language perfectly.

I'd like to have poems and short stories
Published by Plon or *Mercure*,
But I can't see this life going on.
If there were just a few tempests on this trip!

Life on board is a paltry thing,
Though people occasionally have a good time.
I speak with Germans, Swedes, Englishmen—
And the ache of living persists.

I think it's not worth having gone
To the Orient, seen India and China.
The earth is always so small and the same.
And there's only one way to live.

That's why I take opium. It's a help.
I'm convalescing from the Moment.
I live on the ground floor of thought,
Bored watching Life pass by.

I smoke, I grow weary. Oh, for a place on earth
Far enough West not to be East yet!

Why did I visit the India that exists
If the only real one is the one in my soul?

I'm a poor wretch by legacy.
Gypsies robbed me of my Fortune.
Perhaps not even on my deathbed
Will I find a spot to shield me from the cold.

I pretended I studied engineering.
I lived in Scotland. I visited Ireland.
My heart is a little old grandmother
Begging for a pittance at the doors of Happiness.

Iron boat, don't land at Port Saïd!
Turn back, I've no idea toward what.
I pass my days in the *smoking-room* with the count,
A French swindler, funeral-party-crashing count.

I return unhappy to Europe, doomed
To be a sleepwalking poet.
I'm a monarchist but no Catholic,
And I'd like to be much more intense.

I'd like to have strong convictions and money,
As a lot of dull people I've seen do.
Today, alas, here is where I am,
Just a passenger on any old ship.

I've no definite character whatever.
More notable is that servant on board
With his spiffy woolen outfit
Of a Scottish *laird* who's been fasting for days.

There's nowhere at all I can go on being.
My country is where I'm not. I'm sick and weak.
The steward on board is a slyboots.
He saw me with the Swedish woman—he guesses the rest.

One day I create a scandal on board,
Just to give others something to say about me.
I can't stand this life and I find ominous
These occasional outbursts of rage in me.

I spend the day smoking, drinking things,
American drugs that addle the senses,
And I, smashed on nothing! If only
My rosy nerves had a better brain to hang from.

These lines I write—with so much talent
It's unbelievable I hardly feel I've got any!
The fact is this life is a country place
Where a sensitive soul grows easily bored.

The English are made to exist.
There's no other people endowed with
Such tranquility. You throw them a penny
And one of them turns out a smile.

I belong to a type of Portuguese
Who since discovering India
Has been unemployed. Death's a certainty.
I've thought about this a great deal.

Life—the devil take, and let the people have it!
I don't even read the book at my bedside.
The Orient nauseates me. It's a straw mat
Rolled up, its beauty faded.

I fall into opium without wanting to.
You can't expect me to be straight,
Living a life like this. Honest souls
With set hours for sleeping and eating—

To hell with them! And that's really envy.
Because these nerves will be the death of me.

Oh, for a boat to carry me off
To a place where I'd want nothing I couldn't see!

Nonsense! I'd still become tired in the same way.
I'd like stronger opium to hurl me out of here
Into dreams that would put an end to me
And stick me in some mudhole.

Fever! If what I have isn't fever,
I don't know how one has it and feels it.
The main thing is I'm sick.
Well, friends, the hare's been snared!

Evening arrives. The first dinner bell.
It's time to dress.
Social life to boot! That too! And just
Keep going till it starts coming out of the ears!

Because this ends badly, and there has to be
(Wow!) blood and a pistol at the end
Of all this restlessness inside me
With no way to resolve it.

And whoever looks at me must find me banal.
Me and my life . . . Well, now! A young chap . . .
My very monocle says I belong
To a universal type.

How many souls are there to come,
Toeing the Line, and like me, a mystic!
How many, under the usual dinner-jacket,
Won't feel the horror of life as I do?

If I were at least as interesting outwardly
As I am on the inside!
In the Maelstrom, I veer more and more toward the center.
Doing nothing at all is my ruination.

A good-for-nothing. But with every right to be one!
Oh, if we could only spurn the others,
And even with tattered elbows
Be a hero, a madman, damned or dazzling.

I feel like raising my hands to my mouth
And biting them hard till it hurts.
It would be an original pastime
And amuse others, the so-called robustious ones.

The absurd—like the flower of India
Never encountered there—awakes
In my brain tired of tiring itself out.
My life, God, change it or end it . . .

Leave me here in this chair,
Till they come to lower me in the coffin.
I was born to be a mandarin, a man of quality,
But I just don't have the serenity, the tea, the straw mat.

Oh, to leave here through a trapdoor
And fall into my grave with a bang!
Life tastes like a bland cigarette.
I never did more than smoke life away.

And what I really want is faith and some calm,
And not be dogged by these confusing sensations.
God, just end it all! Open the floodgates—
And enough of this farce in my soul!

*In the Suez Canal, on board
(1914)*

Ode (an excerpt)

Come, selfsame and ageless Night,
Queen of Night, born dethroned,
Night matching innermost silence, Night
Spangled with fast flying stars
In your dress fringed by Infinitude.

Come drifting,
Come lightly,
Come in solemn, alone, hands fallen
At your sides, come
Bearing the distant hills down to the foot of the trees
 nearby,
Fusing all fields I see into your one field,
Turn the mountain into one single block of your body,
Expunge from it each bit of difference I see from afar,
All the roads climbing it,
All the various trees turning it dark green in the distance,
All the white houses with their smoke rising through the
 trees,
And leave but one light and another, and still another,
In the blurred and vaguely disturbing distance,
In the distance suddenly impossible to penetrate.

Our Lady
Of everything impossible we strive for in vain,
Of dreams that come to us by the window at dusk,
Of the schemes that beguile us
On the broad terraces of cosmopolitan hotels
To the European sound of music and voices far off and
 near by
That hurt us, knowing we'll never come anywhere near
 them . . .
Come lull us,
Come soothe us,

And kiss our brow, silently,
Our brow so lightly we're not aware we've been kissed
Except for some difference in the soul,
And the hint of a sob that flees like a melody
Out of what's most ancient in us
Rooting all those magical trees
Whose fruits are the dreams we fondle and love
Because we know them apart from any connection with
 life.

Come solemnly,
Come most solemnly full
Of a secret yearning to weep,
Because the soul is immense and life so meager, perhaps,
And all our gestures go no further than our bodies
And we can reach only as far as our arms go
And see only as far as our sight allows.

Come, most sorrowful
Dolorous Mother of all the Anguish of the Fearful,
Turris-Eburnea of the Sorrows of all those Scorned,
Solacing hand on the feverish head of the Humble,
Savor of water on the dry lips of the Weary.
Come from the depths
Of the livid horizon,
Come and uproot me
Out of the soil of disuse and anguish
Where I superabundantly flourish.
Pluck me out of the soil, forgotten daisy,
Petal by petal read in me what fate I do not know,
And pick me apart for pleasure,
Your pleasure so silent and cool.
Send one of my petals Northward
To Today's cities where I loved you so much;
Send another petal of me Southward
To the oceans where the navigators once opened up,
Send another petal of me Westward,

There where all that may be the Future is burning blood-
red,
Which I love, though unknown to me;
And another, and others, the rest of me
Send off to the East,
The East where everything comes from, daylight and
faith,
The fanatical East with its high pomp and its heat,
The teeming East I shall never see,
The East of Buddha, Brahma, and Shinto,
The East having everything we have not,
The East being all that we are not—
The East which is where—who knows?—Christ may still
be alive today,
Where God may really exist as King over all . . .

Come over the oceans,
Over the great oceans,
Over the oceans of boundless horizons,
Come pass your hand over the back of the beast
And soothe it mysteriously,
Oh tamer hypnotic of overly restless things!

Come, ever attending,
Come like a mother,
Most ageless nurse on tiptoe, you who sat
At the bedsides of gods of faiths now abandoned,
You who saw born Jehovah and Jupiter
And smiled because to you all is so futile and false.

Come, silent, ecstatic Night,
Come wrap my heart, white-mantled night . . .
Like some gentle breeze risen one evening,
Like some mother's hand calmly soothing,
With the stars in your hands shining
And the moon a mysterious mask on your face.
When you arrive

All sounds sound different.
When you come in all voices turn down,
Nobody sees you arrive.
No one can tell when you came in,
Except that suddenly—seeing everything start to
 withdraw
And everything lose its color and edge
And in the sky overhead, still clearly blue,
A definite crescent or a white circle or new light now
 rising—

The moon grows real.

(1914)

Maritime Ode

Alone, on the deserted dock, this Summer morning,
I look out along the sandbar, I look out toward
 Indefinitude,
I look out and am happy to see,
Small, black, and clear, a steamer approaching.
Coming in so neat and classical there by itself, from so
 far away,
It leaves an empty banner of smoke far behind on the air.
It comes in, and the morning comes with it, and on the
 river
Here and there, maritime life awakens.
Sails are hoisted, tugboats approach,
Small boats hover behind vessels tied up at the dock.
A vague breeze rises.
But my soul belongs with what I see least,
With the approaching steamer,
Because it belongs with distance, and with the Morning,
With the seagoing sense of this Moment,
With the sad sweetness rising in me like nausea,
Like the beginning of wanting to vomit, but spiritually . .

I observe the far-off steamer with great independence of
 spirit
And in me a flywheel starts spinning lightly.

The steamers arriving along the sandbar in the morning
Bring along into view
The sad happy mystery of arrivals and departures,
Bring memories of faraway docks and other moments,
Other customs of common humanity in other places.
All the hauling in and sailing off of ships,
And—this I feel stirring in me like my own blood—it is
Unconsciously symbolic, terribly portentous
With metaphysical implications
That painfully dredge up in me the man I once was . . .

Ah, the whole dock is a nostalgia of stone!
And when the ship starts out from the dock
And when one suddenly sees a space open up
Between the dock and the ship,
A new dread—I don't know why—drops over me
A mist of depressing thoughts
That glows in the sunlight of my cropped anxieties
Like the first windowpane struck by the rising dawn,
And I am swaddled, as with the memory of some other
 person
Mysteriously become my own.

Well, who knows, who knows,
If once, way back, before me,
I did not leave from such a dock; if I, a ship
In the sun's slanting dawn light,
Did not depart from some other port?
Who knows if I did not leave behind,
Before this hour of the external world I now see
Raying out around me,
Some huge dock lined with a few people,
In a large half-wakened city,
A big mushrooming, commercial, apoplectic city,
Much as this one might be, out of Space and out of
 Time?

Yes, from a dock, somehow brought into being,
Made real and visible as a dock, actually a dock,
The Absolute Dock from whose unconsciously imitated
 pattern,
Unknowingly evoked,
We men build
Our own docks in our own ports,
Our real stone docks over real water,
Which after they're built are suddenly called
Real Things, Spirit Things, Entities in Stone Souls,
At certain moments of root feeling,

When in the outer world, as though a door had opened,
And, without anything having changed,
Everything becomes diverse.

Ah, the Great Dock from which we depart in Nation
Ships!

The Great Original Dock, eternal and divine!
From what port? In what waters? And why do I think
about this?

Great Docks like other docks, but the One and Only
Dock.

Like them full of rumbling, pre-dawn silences
Blossoming with morning in a grinding of cranes
And freight trains arriving
Under the occasional light black cloud
Of nearby factory smokestacks
Casting shadows on the black floor of glinting coal dust
As if it were one cloud shadow passing over dark water.

Ah, what essence of mystery and meaning latent
In the divinely revealing ecstasy
Of hours colored with silence and anxieties,
Would not form a bridge from any dock to the Dock!

A dock darkly reflected in motionless waters,
The bustle on board ship,
Oh, the roving, restless soul of all boarding passengers,
The symbolic milling crowd among whom nothing abides,
And among whom, when the ship returns to port,
Some change has always occurred on board!

Oh, the continual drunken Diversity of flights and
departures!

Eternal soul of navigators and their navigations!
Hulls slowly flashing in water
As the ship takes off from port!
To float like the very core of life, to break like a voice,

To live the moment tremulously on eternal waters,
To wake up to days more immediate than any in Europe,
To see mysterious ports on the wide wastes of ocean,
To round distant capes and come upon sudden vast
 landscapes
Past countless stunning hillsides . . .

Ah, the remote beaches, the docks glimpsed from far
 away,
Then the beaches looming up, the docks seen from close
 up.
The mystery of every departure and every arrival,
The sad instability, the incomprehensibility
Of this impossible universe
Felt in the skin more intensely at every seafaring
 moment.
The absurd gulping sobs our souls pour out
Over the expanses of various seas with isles in the
 distance,
Over far-off island coasts left behind as we pass,
Over ports grown clearer with houses and people
As the ship approaches.

Ah, the morning freshness of one's arrivals
And the morning pallor of one's departures,
When the bowels tighten
And a vague sensation like fear
—The ancestral fear of moving off and leaving,
The mysterious ancestral dread of Arrival and the New—
Shivers our hide and torments us,
And the whole of our anxious body feels,
As if it were our soul,
An inexplicable urge to be able to feel this in some other
 way:
Nostalgia for something else—
A confused tenderness for what vague homeland?
What seacoast? what ship? what dock?—

Until the thought itself becomes a sickness within,
Leaving only a great emptiness inside,
A hollow satiety of seafaring moments
And a vague anxiety that might be tedium or sorrow
If only it knew how to assume that state . . .

Even so, the summer morning is a bit cool.
The soft torpor of night still moves in the shaken air.
The flywheel inside me moves faster, lightly,
And the steamer approaches, as it surely must,
And not so I can see it enter from so far away.

My imagination has it already nearby and visible
Through the full length of its rows of portholes,
And everything in me starts trembling, my whole body
and skin,
Because of that person who never arrives on any boat
And whom some oblique message orders me to wait for
today on the dock.

The ships that come in by the sandbar,
The ships that leave from the ports,
The ships that pass in the distance
(I imagine myself seeing them from a deserted beach)—
All these abstract ships about to depart
All these ships move me as if they were something else
And not simply ships coming and going.
And the ships seen from up close, even when one doesn't
board them,
Seen from below from rowboats, with high iron sides,
Seen from inside, through the staterooms, dining rooms,
holds,
Seeing the masts from up close, pointing way up,
Grazing against cordage, stepping down difficult
gangways,
Smelling the oily, metallic sea mixture of it all—
The ships seen close are something else and the same,

Stirring the same nostalgia and the same hankering in
another way.

All seafaring life! Anything to do with seafaring life!
All that fine seductiveness of the sea enters my blood
And I dream indeterminately of voyages.
Ah, the faraway coastlines, flattened on the horizon!
Ah, the capes, the islands, the sandy beaches!
The oceanic solitudes, like certain moments on the
Pacific

When, I do not know by what suggestion picked up at
school,
One feels dragging at one's nerves the fact that this is the
biggest ocean,
And the whole world and the taste of everything becomes
a wasteland inside us!
The more human, more splashing expanse of the
Atlantic!
The Indian, most mysterious ocean of all!
The sweet Mediterranean, with nothing mysterious about
it; a classical sea dashing
Up the esplanades seen by white statues from nearby
gardens!
All seas, all straits, all bays, all gulfs—
I'd like to clutch them to my breast, feel them in my arms
and die!

And all you seafaring things, my old dream playthings,
Oh, compose beyond me my inner life!
Keels, masts, and sails, helm wheels, ropes,
The funnels of steamers, propellers, topsails, pennants,
Tiller ropes, hatchways, boilers, engine-sumps, valves—
Fall through me in a heap, in a mountain,
Like the mixed contents of a locker littered on the floor!
Be the hoard of my febrile avarice,
Be the fruits of the tree of my imagination,

The theme of my songs, the blood in the veins of my
intelligence,
Let yours be the esthetic thread that binds me to external
things,
Give me metaphors, images, literature,
Because in actual fact, seriously, literally,
My sensations are a ship with its keel in the wind,
My imagination a half-sunken anchor,
My anxiety a broken oar,
And the weave of my nerves a net to dry on the beach!

A chance whistle sounds off the river—just one.
And the base of my whole psychic system has begun
shaking.
The flywheel inside me whirs faster and faster.

Ah, the steamers, the voyages bound for who knows where
Of our old friend, the sailor, old So-and-So!
Ah, the glory of knowing that a man who used to walk
here beside us
Was drowned off an island in the Pacific!
We who chummed around with him will now discuss it
with everyone,
With legitimate pride, an impalpable conviction
That all this has a finer, a vaster meaning
Than the mere loss of the ship where he went down,
Went down to the bottom because water got into his lungs!

Ah, the steamers, the merchant ships, the schooners!
Those sailing ships—alas!—become rarer on the high
seas!
And I who love modern civilization, I who embrace the
machines with all my heart,
I, the engineer, the civilized mind, the man educated
abroad,
I would love to see again before me only schooners and
ships built of timber,

And hear of no other maritime life than the old seafaring
life!

Because the ancient seas are Absolute Distance,
Pure Extension, free of the weight of Actuality . . .
Ah, how everything here reminds me of that better life,
Of those seas that were vaster because sailed more slowly,
Of those seas more mysterious because so little was
known about them.

Each steamer far off is a schooner nearby.
Each ship seen from afar now is a ship seen up close in
the past.

All the invisible sailors aboard ships on the horizon
Are the visible sailors back in the time of the schooners,
Back in the slow-moving sailing age of dangerous voyages,
Back in the age of canvas and timber and the voyages
that took months.

Little by little the spell of seagoing things comes over me.
The dock and its ambience penetrate me physically,
The tide of the Tagus floods all my senses
And I start dreaming, I start wrapping myself up in a
dream of waters,
Driving-belts start winding themselves firmly around my
soul,
And the fast-whirring flywheel clearly shakes me.

Waters are calling me.
Seas are calling me.
All distances raise a bodily voice and call me,
And all seafaring ages felt out of the past are calling me.

It was you, Jim Barnes, my friend, the English sailor, it
was you
Who taught me that ageless English shout,
Which for such complex souls as mine
So venomously sums up
The confused cry of the waters,

The implicit, astounding voice of everything at sea,
The shipwrecks, the endless voyages, the hazardous
 crossings,
That English shout of yours, universalized in my blood,
So unlike a shout, without human form or voice,
That tremendous cry that seems to resound
Inside a cave whose vault is the sky
And seeming to tell of all the sinister things
That might occur Out There, in the Sea, at Night . . .
(You always pretended it was a schooner you were calling,
And as you said it, cupping your hand at either side of
 your mouth,
Making a megaphone out of your big tough dark hands:

Aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-yyy . . .
Schooner aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-yyy . . .)

I listen to you, here and now, and I awaken to some
 thing.
The wind trembles. The morning rises. The heat begins.
I feel my cheeks redden.
My conscious eyes dilate.
Ecstasy rises in me, spreads, goes forth,
And with a blind cackle resounding, the living flywheel
In me intensifies.

Oh clamorous outcry,
Your heart and fury bring boiling up inside me
All my fears in one explosive unity,
All my boredom turned dynamic, every bit of it! . . .
A cry aimed at my blood
From some former love, from where I do not know,
Coming back, with power still to attract and drag me
 away.
With power still to make me hate this life
I live of physical and psychic impenetrability
Among the real people I live with!

Ah, just to get away, I don't care how or where!
Just to take to the high seas, through perilous waves and
oceans,
To be off to the Far Away, to Out There, to Abstract
Distance,
Indefinitely, through deep mysterious nights,
Carried like dust by winds, by gales!
Moving, moving, moving, once and for all!
All my blood rages for wings!
My whole body shoots on ahead!
I rush in torrents through my imagination!
I trample over myself, roaring, throwing myself down onto
it! . . .
My anxieties explode in foam
And my flesh is a wave about to break against the rocks!

As I think of this—O madness! as I think of this—O
fury!
Thinking of my straight-and-narrow life, full of feverish
desires,
Suddenly, tremulously, extraorbitally,
With one viciously vast and violent twist
Of the living flywheel of my imagination,
There breaks through me, whistling, trilling, and whirling,
This somber, sadistic rutting itch for all strident seafaring
life.

Hey there, sailors, topsmen! Hey, crewmen, pilots!
Navigators, mariners, seamen, adventurers!
Hey, ships' captains! Men at the helm and at the masts!
Men asleep in their crude bunks!
Men sleeping with Danger peering in at the portholes!
Men sleeping with Death as a bolster!
Men standing on decks, standing on bridges looking out
On the immense immensity of the immense ocean!
Hey there, you winch-crane operators!
You furlers of sail, stokers and stewards!
Men who load cargo in the holds!

Men who coil ropes on deck!
Men who wash down the hatchways!
Men at the helm, men at machines, men at the masts!
Hey there, hey there, hey there!
Men in peaked caps! Men in mesh undershirts!
Men with anchors and crossed pennants decorating their
 chests!

Tattooed men! Men with pipes! Men at the gunwales!
Men darkened by so much sun, blasted by so much rain,
Made sharp-eyed by so much immensity before them,
Tough-looking because of all the winds they stood up to!

Hey there, hey there, hey!
Men who saw Patagonia!
Men who shipped out to Australia!
Men whose eyes filled with shores I'll never see!
Who made for land in places where I'll never set foot!
Who bought crude goods from the natives in the
 hinterland stations!

And who did all this as a matter of course,
As though it were all natural,
As though that's what life was like,
As though they weren't even fulfilling a destiny!
Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey!
Men of the modern seas, men of the ancient seas!
Pursers! Galley slaves! Men fighting in Lepanto!
Pirates in Roman times! Greek navigators!
Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Portuguese hurled out of
 Sagres

For boundless adventure on the Absolute Sea to realize
 the Impossible!

Hey there, hey there, hey . . . !
You men who raised stone pillars to mark the coasts, you
 who named the capes!
Who first traded with the Negroes!
Who first sold slaves from new lands!
Who gave the astonished Negresses their first European
 orgasm!

You who brought back gold, glass beads, fragrant woods,
arrows,
From hillsides exploding with green vegetation!
You men who plundered peaceful African villages,
Scattering the natives with the roar of your cannon,
You who murdered, robbed, tortured, and grabbed the
booty
Of the New, thanks to those who with lowered heads
Crushed the mystery of the newfound seas! Hey, hey, hey!
To all of you together, to all of you as though you were
one,
To all of you mixed together and interlocking,
To all of you bloody, violent, hated, feared, revered,
I salute you, I salute you, I salute you!
Hey, hey, hey! Hey, hey, hey! Hey, hey, hey!
Hello there, hello there, hello, he . . . lloo . . . ooo!

I want to take off with you, I want to go away with you,
With all of you at once,
To every place you went!
I want to meet the dangers you knew face to face,
To feel across my cheeks the winds that wrinkled yours,
To spit from my lips the salt sea that kissed your lips,
To pitch in with you as you work, to share the storms
with you,
To reach like you, at last, extraordinary ports!
To flee with you from civilization!
To lose with you all moral sense!
To feel my humanity change in the far distances!
To drink with you in southern seas
New savageries, new tumults of soul,
New central fires in my volcanic spirit!
To take off with you, divesting myself of me—come now,
get on with it, get going—
My civilized suit, my genteel behavior,
My innate fear of jails,
My peaceful life,

My sedentary, static, orderly, all-too-familiar life!
Anchors away, away, away!
Hey there! Put my life to sea, with the winds
And the waves!
With the foam flung by the winds
Salten my taste for great voyages.
With lashing torrents whip my adventuring flesh,
Soak through and through the bones of my existence in
freezing oceanic cold,
Flagellate, cut, and wrinkle with wind, sun, and foam
My cyclonic Atlantic being,
My nerves spread out like shroud ropes,
A harp in the hands of the winds!

Yes, yes, yes . . . Nail me to your sea ventures
And my shoulders will love the weight of the cross!
Bind me to each voyage as to a stake
And the pressure of the stake will pierce my spine
And will feel it in one great passive orgasm!
Do what you want with me, so long as it's done at sea,
On deck, to the sound of the waves.
Wound me, kill me, tear me apart!
What I'd like is to bring to Death
A soul spilling over with the Sea,
Dead drunk on everything having to do with the sea,
With sailors as with anchors and capes,
With faraway coasts as with wind sounds,
With the Distant as with the Dock, with shipwrecks
As with run-of-the-mill shipping,
With masts as with waves,
And in voluptuous mourning, bring Death
A body swarming with leeches, sucking, sucking—
Those strange green absurd sea leeches!

Make shroud ropes out of my veins!
Hawsers of my muscles!
Tear off my skin, nail it down to the keels.

Let me feel the pain of the nails and never stop feeling it!
Out of my heart make an admiral's flag
Unfurled in a battle between old sailing ships!
Let my ripped-out eyes be squashed underfoot on the
decks!

Break my bones against hulls!
Tie me to the mast and lash me, lash me!
To all the winds of all latitudes, longitudes,
Spread my blood over rushing waters
That dash side to side across the quarter-deck
In the wild gale's death rattle!

To be bold as cloth sails taut in the wind!
To be, like the high topsails, the whistle of the winds!
The old guitar, strumming a *fado* about all the perils at sea,
A song for sailors to hear and never repeat!

The sailors who mutinied
Hanged their captain from a spar.
Another they left stranded on a desert island.
Marooned!

The tropical sun has put the old pirate fever
In my burning veins.
The winds of Patagonia have tattooed on my imagination
Obscene and tragic images.
Fire, fire, oh fire inside me!
Blood, blood, blood, blood!
My whole skull explodes!
My world comes apart in red hunks!
My veins break with a sound of chains clanking!
And out of me, fierce and voracious, comes bursting
The Great Pirate song,
The Great Pirate bellowing out this death knell,
Till his men below quake with fear in their backbones,
And there on the quarter-deck in all the dying and
shrieking, the singing:

For me the whole world's no longer there! I'm red hot!
I roar in a frenzy to board her!
The Pirate Chief! King of the Pirates!
I pillage, I kill, I tear, I cut everything up!
All I feel is the sea—the plunder, the looting!
All I feel is a tom-tom of veins beating in me,
Beating my temples!
The sensation of my eyes a hot blood flowing!
Hey-hey, that's it, that's it! Hey-hey-hey!

Ah, pirates, pirates, pirates!
Love me and hate me, pirates!
Pirates, let me melt into you!

Your cruelty and fury—how they speak
To the blood of a woman's body that once was my own
Where nothing is left but the sexual itch!

I want to be a beast acting out all your gestures,
A beast sinking its teeth in keels and gunwales,
Devouring masts and sopping up blood and tar on deck,
Chewing up sails and oars, ropes and pulleys.
A monster female sea-serpent, gorging herself on crimes!

A symphony of sensations rises, incompatible and
analogous,
An orchestration in my bloodstream of tumultuous crimes,
Of spasmodic bloody orgies resounding in the ocean,
Raging like a hot gale in my soul,
A hot dust cloud dimming my lucidity,
Making me see and dream all this through my skin and
veins only!

Pirates and piracy, ships and the moment,
That maritime moment when prey is seized,
And the prisoners' terror approaches madness—that
moment

With all its crimes, horror, ships, people, sea, sky, clouds,
Winds, latitude and longitude, outcries—
How I wish in its Allness it became my body in its
 Allness, suffering,
My body and my blood, my whole being in one livid
 crimson glob
Burst in bloom, like an itching wound, in the unreal flesh
 of my soul!

To be as one with all those crimes, to be part and parcel
Of all those raids on ships, the massacres, the rapes!
To be all that happened where the plunder was!
To be all that lived or died where the bloody tragedies took
 place!
To be the grand-sum-total-pirate of piracy at its height,
And the grand-sum-total-victim, but in flesh and bone, of
 all the pirates in the world!

To let my passive body be the grand sum-total-woman of
 all women
Who were raped, killed, wounded, torn apart by pirates!
To be, in my bondage, the woman having to serve them
 all!
And feel it all—feel all these things at once—through to
 the backbone!

Oh, my heroes, hairy, coarse, adventurous and criminal!
My seafaring beasts, you husbands of my imagination!
Fortuitous lovers of my oblique sensations!
I'd like to be your One-and-Only lover awaiting you in
 every port,
You, the abhorrent, loved with the pirate blood of her
 dreams!
Because she would be with you, if only in spirit, raging
On top of the naked corpses of your victims at sea!
Because she would be your accomplice in crime, and in
 your oceanic orgies

Her witch's spirit dancing invisibly amid the movements
Of your bodies, amid your cutlasses and your stranglers'
hands!

And back on land, awaiting your return, if return you do,
She would drink in your roaring love all the vast wide-
openness,

All the fog-filled, sinister fragrance of your conquests,
And during your orgasms she'd whistle the red-yellow
sabbat of a black mass!

Flesh torn, ripped open, disemboweled, the blood pouring
out!

Now, as my dream of your exploits peaks,
I lose myself completely; no longer belonging to you, I
am you,

By your side, my femininity becomes yours to the very
soul!

Now to inhabit your ferocity when you practice it,
Sucking in your awareness of your own sensations
When you stain the high seas with blood,
When occasionally you toss to the sharks
The still-living bodies of the wounded, the rosy flesh of
children,

And drag their mothers to the gunwales to watch what
happened to them!

To be with you at the carnage and pillaging!

To be attuned to the symphony of your plundering!

Ah, I don't exactly know how or how much I'd like to
become you!

Not just be there as your woman, be all women for you,
be all your victims,

Being each and all victims—men, women, children,
ships—

And not just be the opportune moment, with the ships
and the waves,

Not just your souls, your bodies, your fury, your loot,

Not just be concretely your abstract orgiastic act,
It's not just this I want to be but, more than all this, be
the God of such Thisness!
I'd have to be God, I'd have to be God of some opposing
faith,
A monstrous satanic God, a God of the blood's
pantheism,
To come near satisfying the full extent of my imaginative
frenzy
And never able to exhaust the craving to identify
With each and all and the more-than-allness of your
exploits!

Ah, torture me to cure me!
And this, my flesh—change it to that whoosh of air your
slashing cutlasses make
Before they fall on heads and shoulders!
Change my veins into the threads of clothes your knives
cut through!
My imagination into the body of all women you violate!
My intelligence into the deck you stand on when you kill!
And make my whole life—nervous, hysterical, absurd kit-
and-caboodle of it all—
Into one huge organism where every act of piracy
committed would be
One unit cell aware of it—and all of me would gyrate
Like some huge undulating putrefaction—and I'd be all
of it!

In one terrible, measureless burst of speed,
The fever machine of my flooding visions
Now turns so that my consciousness in flight
Is only a whirl of smoke hissing through the air:

*Fifteen men on a Dead Man's Chest.
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!*

Hey there, hey there, ho-ho-ho, ha-ha-ha-ah-ah-ah . . .

Ah, the utter savagery of it all! Shit
On a life like ours that is nothing at all like this!
Here I am, an engineer, forced to be practical, sensitive to
everything,
Here I am stalled, where you're concerned, even when I'm
walking;
Inert, even when I act; weak, even when I impose myself;
Static, broken, dissident coward of your Glory,
Your colossal dynamism, bloody, hot, and strident!

Damn it all for being unable to act out my madness!
Damn it all for always traipsing around, tied to the apron
strings of civilization!
And going around burdened with my *douceur des moeurs*,
like a load of lace on my back!
Hangers-on—that we all are—of modern
humanitarianism!
Consumptives, neurasthenics, lymphatics in our languors,
Lacking the nerve to be bold and violent men,
With a soul like a chicken caught by its leg!

Ah, the pirates! the pirates!
The itch to do something illegal and savage,
The itch to do absolutely cruel, abominable things
Like an abstract rut gnawing at our fragile bodies,
Our delicate feminine nerves,
Making great mad fevers burn in our empty gazes!

Make me kneel before you!
Humiliate me and beat me!
Make me your slave and your object!
And let your scorn for me never leave me,
O my masters, O my masters!

Let me always gloriously assume the submissive role
In bloody happenings and long-drawn-out sensual abandon,

Fall on me like big, heavy walls,
Oh barbarians of the ancient sea!
Tear me apart and maim me!
Going from east to west of my body,
Scratch bloody trails through my flesh!
Kiss with cutlass, whips and frenzy
My joyous fleshly terror of belonging to you,
My masochistic itch to give in to your fury;
To be the sentient, inert object of your omnivorous
cruelty—

Dominators, masters, emperors, corsairs!
Ah, torture me,
Slash me, rip me open!
As I lie broken in small, conscious pieces
Spill me across decks,
Scatter me over seas, leave me
On the islands' greedy beaches!

Gratify upon me all my mystical desire for you!
Chisel your way through my blood to my soul.
Cut and tear!
Oh tattoopers of my corporeal imagination!
Oh flagellants dear to my fleshy submission!
Subdue me like a dog you kick to death!
Make me the sewer of your scornful mastery!

Make me all your victims!
As Christ suffered for mankind, I want to suffer
For every victim at your hands—
Calloused, bloody hands with fingers lopped off
In brutal assaults at the gunwales!

Turn me into something that's been
Dragged along—oh my delight, oh kiss of pain!—
Dragged at the tail of horses you have whipped . . .
But all this on the sea—on the se-eea, on the SE-EEEE!
Ho-ho-ho-ho! Ho-ho-ho-ho—on the S-EE-EEA!

Yah-yah-yah-yah! Yah-yah-yah-yah! Yah-yah-yah-yah-yah!
Everything screams! Everything is screaming! Winds,
 waves, ships,
High tides, topsails, pirates, my soul, blood, and the air,
 the air!
Ha-ha-ha-ha! Yah-yah-yah-yah! Yah-yah-yah-yah-yah!
 Everything sings itself into a scream!

FIFTEEN MEN ON A DEAD MAN'S
 CHEST.
YO-HO-HO AND A BOTTLE OF RUM!

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Yah-yah-yah-yah! Yah-yah-yah-yah!
Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! Hohohohohohoh!

AHO-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O—yyy! . . .
SCHOONER AHO-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O—yyy! . . .

Darby McGraw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw.
DARBY MCGRAW-AW-AW-AW-AW-AW-AW.
FETCH AFFFT THE RU-U-U-U-UM, DARBY.

Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho!
HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO!
HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO!
HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO!

HO-HO-HO-HO-HO-HO!

Something inside me comes apart. The redness nightens.
I felt too much to go on feeling any further.
My soul is spent, inside only an echo remains.
The flywheel slows down noticeably.
My dreams lift their hands a bit from my eyes.
Within me, simply emptiness, desert, nocturnal sea.
And as soon as I feel a nocturnal sea inside me,
There rises out of its distances, born of its silence,
Once again, once more, that vast, never-changing cry.

Suddenly as a light noiselessly resounds with tenderness,
And instantly spreads across the watery horizon,
The gloomy, humid surge of nighttime humanity,
A distant siren voice comes wailing, calling out,
From depths of Distance, depths of Sea, the core of all
 Abysses,
While on the surface float like seaweed my dismembered
 dreams . . .

Aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-yy . . .

Schooner aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-yy . . .

Ah, the wet dew on my fevered frenzy!
The night-freshness come from my internal sea!
There it all is suddenly inside, a night at sea confronting
 me
Full of the immense and all-too-human mystery of
 nocturnal waters.
The moon climbs the horizon
And my happy childhood rouses like a tear within me.
My past surges back as if the seafaring cry
Were a fragrance, a voice, the echo of a song
Recalling from my past
That happiness I shall never know again.

It was in the old quiet house along the riverside . . .
(The windows of my room, and the dining room as well,
That looked out on low-lying houses, over the nearby
 river,
Over the Tagus, this very Tagus, but somewhere else,
 farther down . . .
If I resumed to the same windows now I would not return
 to the same windows.
That age has passed like a steamer's smoke on the high
 seas . . .).

An inexplicable tenderness,
A sad, a touching regret

For all those victims—especially the children—
I dreamed of doing in, imagining myself an old pirate,
A touching feeling, because they were my victims;
Gentle, soft—since they really weren't;
A confused tenderness, like a dimly bluish windowpane,
Sings old songs in my poor sad soul.

Ah, how could I have thought and dreamt of such things?
How removed I am now from what I was a few minutes
ago!

The hysteria of one's sensations—first one thing, then
the opposite!

With the golden morning rising, how my hearing picks
out

Only things that jibe with this emotion—the tossing
waters,

The light lapping waters as the river touches the docks . . .

The sails passing near the river bank opposite,

The far-off hills in Japanese blue,

The houses of Almada,

And all that is gentle, newborn, in the early dawn hour! . . .

A seagull passes.

My tenderness increases.

Yet all this time I wasn't noticing a thing.

It was all some impression I felt on the skin, like a caress.

All this time I didn't take my eyes off my distant dream,

My house at the riverside,

My childhood at the riverside,

From the windows of my room looking out at the river at
night,

And the peacefulness of moonlight spread over the
waters . . .

My old aunt who loved me because of the son she lost . . .

My old aunt used to sing me to sleep

(Though I was already too grown-up for lullabies)—
I recall this, and tears well up in my heart, cleansing it of
 life,
And a light sea breeze rises in me.
Sometimes she'd sing of "The Good Ship *Catrineta*":

*There goes the good ship Catrineta
Over the sea and the waves.*

And other times, a song so nostalgic and medieval,
About "The Fair Princess" . . . I recall it now, and the
 poor old voice stirs in me,
Reminding me how little I've remembered her since, and
 how much she loved me!
How ungrateful I was to her . . . and finally, what have I
 done with my life?
It was "The Fair Princess"—I'd close my eyes and she'd
 sing,

*As the Fair Princess
Sat in her garden . . .*

I'd open my eyes a bit and see the window full of
 moonlight,
Then I'd shut my eyes again, so happy about it all.

*As the Fair Princess
Sat in her garden,
Combing her tresses,
Her comb was golden . . .*

Oh my childhood, a doll they broke for me!
Not to be able to travel back in time to that house and all
 that affection,
And stay there forever, forever a child and forever happy!

But all that was the Past, a lamppost on an old street
corner.

To think of it makes me cold, hungry for what I can't
have.

To think of it fills me with an indefinable, absurd remorse.
Oh slow whirlwind of feelings, flying off in every
direction!

Tenuous, vertiginous confusions of the soul!

Broken-off rages, affections like spools of thread children
play with,

Huge collapses of imagination against the eye of the
senses,

Tears, useless tears,

Light contrary winds grazing the soul . . .

To escape this emotion, I deliberately evoke,

By a desperate, dry, and empty effort of the will, I evoke

The song of the Great Pirate, about to die:

*Fifteen men on a Dead Man's Chest.
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!*

But the song is a poorly traced straight line inside me . . .

I force myself, and succeed once more in calling up before
my gazing soul,

Again, but through the medium of a semi-literary
imagination,

The fury of piracy, slaughter, appetite, an almost physical
taste for plunder,

The pointless slaughter of women and children,

The useless torture of those poor passengers, only to
amuse ourselves,

And the lust to break and smash things most cherished by
the others,

But as I dream all this I'm afraid of something breathing
down my neck.

I remember how interesting it would be
To hang children before their mothers' eyes
(Though involuntarily feeling I'm the children's mothers),
To bury four-year-olds alive on desert islands,
Rowing their parents up to see it done
(Though I shudder, remembering a child I don't have
peacefully asleep at home).

I incite a cold passion for crimes at sea,
An inquisition with no excuse of Faith,
Crimes with no motive, not even malice and anger,
Done in cold blood, not even to hurt or do wrong,
Not for a joke, but just to kill time,
Like someone playing solitaire at the dinner table in the
country, the tablecloth pushed aside after dinner,
Just for the sheer pleasure of committing abominable
crimes and not thinking twice about it,
Just to see someone suffer, going crazy and dying of pain,
yet never letting it come to that point . . .
But my imagination refuses to follow me.
A chill sends a shiver down my spine
And suddenly (more suddenly than before, more distant
and more profound)
Suddenly—oh the fright that freezes my veins!—
Oh the sudden cold of the door to the Mystery that
opened in me and let in a draught!
I remember God, the Transcendent-in-life, and suddenly
The old voice of the British sailor Jim Barnes I used to talk
with
Now inside me becomes the voice of mysterious
endearments—those mother's-lap endearments and
those sister's hair-ribbon endearments—
But now stupendously borne from the other side of the
appearance of things,
The deafening far-off Voice become the Absolute Voice,
the Mouthless Voice,

Borne on the surface from depths of the seas' nocturnal
solitude,
Calling me, calling me, calling me . . .

It comes through muffled, as though stifled but still
audible,
From far, far away, as though sounding elsewhere and not
audible here,
Like a smothered cry, a doused light, a silenced breath,
From no point in space, from no place in time,
The everlasting night cry, the deep, confusing exhalation:

Aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o—yyy . . .

Aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o—yyy . . .

Schooner aho-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o—yy . . .

A cold shiver of the spirit goes all through my body
And I quickly open my eyes that I hadn't closed.
Ah, what a joy to come out of my dreams once and for
all!

Here's the real world again, so good for the nerves!
Here it is in the early morning with newly arrived ships
just entering port.

The ship about to arrive no longer matters. It's still far
off.

Only what's close now cleanses the heart.
Now it's my imagination, strong, practical, hygienic,
That busies itself only with modern and useful things,
With freighters, steamships and passengers,
With powerful, immediate, modern, commercial, down-to-
earth things.

The flywheel inside me slows down.

Wonderful modern maritime life,
Everything so sanitary, mechanized, healthy!
Everything so well-regulated, so spontaneously adjusted,

All the cogs and wheels, all the ships at sea,
All facets of mercantile enterprise, export and import,
So marvelously arranged
That everything runs as if by natural law,
Nothing jarring or out of place!

Poetry hasn't lost out a bit. Moreover, we now have the
machine

With its own poetry as well, and a totally new way of life,
Businesslike, worldly, intellectual, sentimental,
With which the machine age has endowed our souls.
Voyages are now as beautiful as they ever were,
And a ship will always be beautiful, simply because it's a
ship.

A sea voyage is still a sea voyage and distance exists where
it always did—
Nowhere, thank God!

Seaports full of steamships of every conceivable type!
Large and small, and all painted differently, each with
variously aligned portholes
From such a delicious plethora of shipping companies!
Each steamer in port so unique in its well-marked
mooring!
So festive the quiet elegance of its commercial traffic on
the seaways,
Over the ever ageless Homeric seaways, oh Ulysses!

The humanitarian look of the lighthouses far out at
night,
Or the sudden lighthouse beam nearby on a dark thick
night
("How close to land we've been passing." And the water
sings in our ears)! . . .

All this today is what's always been, except that there's
trade;

And the commercial purpose of the great steamers
Makes me boast of this age I live in!
The variety of people aboard passenger ships
Fills me with the modern pride of living in an age when
 it's so easy
For races to come together, cover distances, see everything
 so easily,
Thus realizing and enjoying so many dreams in one's
 lifetime.

Clean, adjusted, and modern as an office of *guichets*
 enclosed in yellow wire netting,
My feelings now are ordinary and respectable as *gentlemen*,
Being practical and wholly undistracted, they fill their
 lungs with sea air,
Like people perfectly aware of how salubrious it is to
 inhale sea air.

And the day's become perfectly workaday.
It all gets under way, everything falling into place.

With great pleasure, natural and straightforward, I recite
 by heart
All the commercial operations needed to get a shipment
 of goods on its way.
Mine is the age of the rubber stamp appearing on all
 invoices
And I feel that all letters in all offices
Must be addressed to me.

A knowledge of shipping is so distinctive,
And a ship captain's signature is so beautiful and modern!
The strict commercial style of beginning and ending a
 letter:

Dear Sirs, Messieurs, Amigos e Srs.,
Yours faithfully—nos salutations empressées . . .
Not only is it all human and tidy but beautiful as well,

And finally it's all got a maritime purpose—the vessel
with its freight
Being shipped is what the letters and invoices are about.

Life's complexity! Invoices are made out by men
Who love and hate, have political passions, sometimes
commit crimes—
And their invoices are so well written, so perfectly aligned,
so independent of all that!
There are those who can look at an invoice and not feel
any of it at all.
Surely you, Cesário Verde, you once felt this.
As for me, I feel it with such human tenderness I can
almost weep.
Don't tell me there's no poetry in business, in offices!
Why, it seeps through every pore . . . I breathe it in the
sea air
Because it's all got to do with ships and modern
navigation,
Because invoices and commercial letters are the
beginnings of history,
And ships carrying goods on the everlasting sea are its
end.

And, ah, the voyages, the holiday cruises, and the rest,
The sea voyages where we all get to be fellow passengers
In a special way, as though some mystery of sea custom
Had touched our souls and momentarily changed us
Into transient compatriots of some indeterminate
fatherland,
Forever changing location on the vast ocean!
Grand hotels of the Infinite, oh my transatlantic liners!
With the totally perfect cosmopolitanism of never
stopping at any point
And encompassing every type of costume, countenance,
and race!

Voyages and voyagers—and so many different types of
them!

So many nationalities on earth, so many professions, so
many people!

So many different directions to steer one's life,
And life itself, in the end and at heart, always always the
same!

So many strange faces! All faces are strange
And nothing gives one the sense of what's holy so much
as watching people constantly.

Brotherhood isn't finally a revolutionary idea,
It's something you learn by living your life, when you've
got to tolerate everything,

And you begin finding amusing what you've got to
tolerate,

And you end up nearly weeping with tenderness over the
things you tolerated!

Ah, and all this is beautiful, all this is human and firmly
tied

To the feelings—so human, so sociable, so bourgeois,
So complexly simple, so metaphysically sad!

Drifting, diverse, life ends by teaching us to be human.
Poor people! poor people, all of us, everywhere!

I take leave of this moment in the shape of this other
ship

Setting out now. It's an English *tramp steamer*,
Filthy enough to be French,
With the homely look of a seagoing proletarian,
And listed no doubt on the last page of yesterday's
shipping news.

The poor ship touches me, it moves so humbly and
naturally.

There's a certain scrupulousness about it—in what way I
can't say—like an honest person,

Going about doing whatever he has to do.
Now it's moving away from the dock in front of me, from
the spot where I'm standing.
There it goes quietly by where caravels used to pass.
Long ago, long, long ago . . .
Headed for Cardiff? Liverpool? London? It doesn't
matter where.
It's doing its job. Let us likewise do ours. Life is so
beautiful!
Bon voyage! Bon voyage!
Bon voyage, my poor casual friend who did me the favor
Of taking the fever and fret of my dreams with you,
And bringing me back to life so I could look at you and
watch you go by.
Bon voyage! Bon voyage! That's what life is . . .

Your pose is so natural, so inevitably matutinal,
Leaving Lisbon harbor today!
I have a curious and grateful affection for you because of
all this . . .
For what? How do I know what it is! . . . but go ahead
. . . pass by . . .
With a slight shudder
(T-t-t—t—t . . .)
The flywheel in me stops.

Slow ship, pass by, pass away and don't stop here . . .
Leave me, pass away out of sight,
Take yourself out of my heart,
Vanish in the Distance, the farthest Distance, the mist of
God,
Disappear, follow your destiny, leave me behind . . .
Who am I to weep and ask questions?
Who am I to speak to you and love you?
Who am I to be upset by the sight of you?
It leaves the dock, the sun grows larger, rises golden,
The roofs of buildings along the dock begin to glow,

This whole side of the city is sparkling . . .
Good-bye now, leave me—first be
The ship in mid-river, standing there bright and clear,
Then, the ship passing the sandbar, small and black,
Then a vague speck on the horizon (oh my dread!),
A speck growing vaguer and vaguer on the horizon . . .
Then, nothing at all—only me and my sorrow,
And the great city now full of sunlight,
And this moment, real and bare as a deserted dock,
And the slow-moving crane that, like a turning compass,
Traces a semicircular course for God knows what emotion
In the compassionate stillness of my soul . . .

(1914 or 1915)

Salutation to Walt Whitman

Infinite Portugal, June eleventh, nineteen hundred and
fifteen . . .

A-hoy-hoy-hoy-hoy!

From here in Portugal, with all past ages in my brain,
I salute you, Walt, I salute you, my brother in the
Universe,

I, with my monocle and tightly buttoned frock coat,
I am not unworthy of you, Walt, as you well know,
I am not unworthy of you, my greeting is enough to
make it so . . .

I, so given to indolence, so easily bored,
I am with you, as you well know, and understand you and
love you,

And though I never met you, born the same year you
died,

I know you loved me too, you knew me, and I am happy.
I know that you knew me, that you considered and
explained me,

I know that this is what I am, whether on Brooklyn Ferry
ten years before I was born

Or strolling up Rua do Ouro thinking about everything
that is not Rua do Ouro,

And just as you felt everything, so I feel everything, and
so here we are clasping hands,

Clasping hands, Walt, clasping hands, with the universe
doing a dance in our soul.

O singer of concrete absolutes, always modern and eternal,
Fiery concubine of the scattered world,

Great pederast brushing up against the diversity of things,
Sexualized by rocks, by trees, by people, by their trades,

Itch for the swiftly passing, for casual encounters, for
what's merely observed,

My enthusiast for what's inside everything,
My great hero going straight through Death by leaps and
 bounds,
Roaring, screaming, bellowing greetings to God!

Singer of wild and gentle brotherhood with everything,
Great epidemic democrat, up close to it all in body and
 soul,
Carnival of each and every action, bacchanalia of all
 intentions,
Twin brother of every sudden impulse,
Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the world hell-bent to produce
 machinery,
Homer of all the *insaisissable* of wavering carnality,
Shakespeare of the sensation on the verge of steam
 propulsion,
Milton-Shelley of the dawning future of Electricity!
Incubus of all gestures,
Spasm penetrating every object-force,
Souteneur of the whole Universe,
Whore of all solar systems . . .

How often do I kiss your picture!
Wherever you are now (I don't know where it is but it is
 God)
You feel this, I know you feel it, and my kisses are
 warmer (flesh and blood)
And you like it that way, old friend, and you thank me
 from over there—
I know this well, something tells me, some pleasure in my
 spirit:

Some abstract, slant erection in the depths of my soul.

There was nothing of the *engageant* in you—rather the
 muscular, the cyclopic,
Though in facing the Universe yours was the attitude of a
 woman,

And every blade of grass, every stone, every man was a
Universe for you.

Walt, dearest old man, my great Comrade, *evohë!*
I belong to your bacchic orgy of freed sensations,
I am yours, from the tingling of my toes to the nausea of
my dreams,
I am yours, look at me—up there close to God, you see
me contrariwise,
From inside out . . . You divine my body, you see my
soul—
You see it properly, and through its eyes you take in my
body—
Look at me: you know that I, Álvaro de Campos, ship's
engineer,
Sensationist poet,
Am not your disciple, am not your friend, am not your
singer,
You know that I am You, and you are happy about it!

I can never read through all your poems . . . There's too
much feeling in them . . .
I go through your lines as through a teeming crowd that
brushes past me,
Smelling of sweat, of grease, of human and mechanical
activity.
At a given moment, reading your poems, I can't tell if
I'm reading or living them,
I don't know if my actual place is in the world or in your
poems,
I don't know if I'm standing here with both feet on the
ground
Or hanging upside down in some sort of workshop,
From the natural ceiling of your stampeding inspiration,
From the center of the ceiling of your unapproachable
intensity.

Open all the doors!
Because I have to go in!
My password? Walt Whitman!
But I don't give any password . . .
I go in without explaining . . .
If I must, I'll knock the doors down . . .
Yes, slight and civilized though I am, I'll knock the doors
down,
Because at this moment I'm not slight or civilized at all,
I'm ME, a thinking universe of flesh and bone, wanting
to get in
And having to get in by force, because when I want in I
am God!

Take this garbage out of my way!
Put those emotions away in drawers!
Get out of here, you politicians, literati,
You peaceful businessmen, policemen, whores, *souteneurs*,
All your kind is the letter that kills, not the spirit giving
life.
The spirit giving life at this moment is ME!

Let no son of a bitch get in my way!
My path goes through Infinity before reaching its end!
It's not up to you whether I reach this end or not,
It's up to me, up to God—up to what I mean by the
word *Infinite* . . .

Onward!
I spur ahead!
I feel the spurs, I am the very horse I mount,
Because I, since I want to be consubstantial with God,
Can be everything, or I can be nothing, or anything,
Just as I please . . . It's nobody's business . . .
Raging madness! Wanting to yelp, jump,
Scream, bray, do handsprings and somersaults, my body
yelling,
Cramponner at the car wheels and to go under,

Get inside the whirling whiplash that's about to strike,
Be the bitch to all dogs and they not enough for me,
Be the steering wheel of all machines and their speed too
 slow for me,
Be the one who's crushed, abandoned, pulled apart, or
 done for,
Come dance this fury with me, Walt, you there in that
 other world,
Swing this hoedown with me, knocking at the stars,
Fall exhausted to the ground with me,
Beat the walls with me like mad,
Break down, tear yourself apart with me,
Through everything, in everything, around everything,
 without anything,
In an abstract body rage that stirs up *maelstroms* in the
 soul . . .

Damn it! Get going, I said!
Even if God himself stops us, let's get going . . . it makes
 no difference . . .
Let's go on and get nowhere . . .
Infinity! Universe! End without end! What's the
 difference?

(Let me take off my tie, unbutton my collar.
You can't let off steam with civilization looped around
 your neck . . .)
All right now, we're off to a flying start!

In a great *marché aux flambeaux* of all the cities of Europe,
In a great military parade of industry, trade and leisure,
In a great race, a great incline, a great decline,
Thundering and leaping, and everything with me,
I jump up to salute you,
I yell out to salute you,
I burst loose to salute you, bounding, handstanding,
 yawping!

This is why I send you
My leaping verses, my bounding verses, my spasmodic
verses,
My hysteria-attack verses,
Verses that pull the cart of my nerves.

My crazy tumbling inspires me,
Barely able to breathe, I get to my feet exalted,
For the verses are me not being able to burst from living.

Open all the windows for me!
Throw open all the doors!
Pull the whole house up over me!
I want to live freely, out in the open,
I want to make gestures beyond my body,
To run like the rain streaming down over walls,
To be stepped on like stones down the broad streets,
To sink like heavy weights to the bottom of the sea,
And all this voluptuously, a feeling alien to me now!

I don't want the doors bolted!
I don't want the safes locked!
I want to horn in there, put my nose in, be dragged off,
I want to be somebody else's wounded member,
I want to be spilled from crates,
I want to be thrown in the ocean,
I want them to come looking for me at home with lewd
intentions—
Just so I'm not always sitting here quietly,
Just so I'm not simply writing these verses!

I'm against in-between spaces in the world!
I'm for the compenetrated, material contiguity of objects!
I'm for physical bodies commingling like souls,
Not just dynamically but statically too!

I want to fly and fall from way up high!
To be thrown like a hand grenade!

To be brought to a sudden stop . . . To be lifted to . . .
The highest, abstract end-point of me and everything else!

Climax of iron and motors!
Accelerated escalator without any stairs!
Hydraulic pump tearing out my guts and my feeling it!

Put me in chains, just so I can break them,
Just so I can break them with my teeth bleeding,
Bleeding away in spurts, with the masochistic joy of life!

The sailors took me prisoner,
Their hands gripped me in the dark,
I died momentarily from the pain,
My soul went on licking the floor of my private cell
With the whirligig of impossibilities circling my taunt.

Jump, leap, take the bit between your teeth,
Red-hot iron Pegasus of my twitching anxieties,
Wavering parking place of my motorized destiny!

He's called Walt:

Entryway to everything!
Bridge to everything!
Highway to everything!
Your omnivorous soul,
Your soul that's bird, fish, beast, man, woman,
Your soul that's two where two exist,
Your soul that's one becoming two when two are one,
Your soul that's arrow, lightning, space,
Amplex, nexus, sex and Texas, Carolina and New York,
Brooklyn Ferry in the twilight,
Brooklyn Ferry going back and forth,
Libertad! Democracy! The Twentieth Century about to
dawn!
Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!
BOOM!

You who lived it, you who saw it, you who heard it,
Subject and object, active and passive,
Here, there, everywhere you,
Circle encompassing every possibility of feeling,
Quintessence of all things that might still happen,
God-Terminus of all imaginable objects, and it is you!
You are the Hour,
You the Minute,
You the Second!
You interpolated, liberated, unfurled, sent,
Interpolating, liberating, unfurling, sending,
You, the interpolator, liberator, unfurler, sender,
The seal on all letters,
The name on all addressed envelopes,
Goods delivered, returned, and to follow . . .
Trainful of feelings at so many soul-miles per hour,
Per hour, per minute, per second, BOOM!

Now that I'm almost dead and see everything so clearly,
I bow to you, Great Liberator.

Surely my personality had some purpose.
Surely it meant something, since it expressed itself,
Yet looking back today, only one thing troubles me—
Not to have had your self-transcending calm,
Your liberation like star-clustered Infinite Night.

Maybe I had no mission at all on earth.

That's why I'm calling out
For the ear-splitting privilege of greeting you,
All the ant-swarmling humanity in the Universe,
All the ways of expressing all emotions,
All the shapes and patterns of all thoughts,
All the wheels, all the gears, all the pistons of the soul.

That's why I'm crying out
And why, in a parade of Me's to you, they all begin to
 buzz
In their real and metaphysical gibberish,
In the uproar of things going on inside without nexus.

Good-bye, bless you, live forever, O great bastard of
 Apollo,
Impotent and ardent lover of the nine muses and of the
 graces,
Cable-car from Olympus to us and from us to Olympus.

(1915)

Lisbon Revisited (1923)

No, I don't want anything.
I already said I don't want anything.

Don't come to me with your resolutions!
The only resolution is death.

Don't bring me your esthetics!
Don't spout to me about morals!

Get those metaphysics out of here!
Don't preach to me about complete systems, don't drag
 out for me
Your whole line of scientific conquests (scientific, my
 God, *scientific*)—
Of learning, of art, of all modern civilization!

What harm did I ever do to all the gods?

If they know the truth, let them hold onto it!

I'm a technician, but my technique lies solely in
 technique.
Aside from that, I'm crazy, with every right to be.
With every right to be—do you hear me?

Don't bother me, for God's sake!

So, would you want me married, futile, humdrum and
 taxable?
Would you want me to be the opposite—the opposite of
 anything whatever?
If I were someone else, I'd do you—all of you—the favor.
But being what I am, just hold your horses!
Go to hell without me,

Or let me go there by myself!
Why should we go together?
Don't grab my arm!
I don't like people grabbing my arm. I want to be alone.
I already said I'm alone!
Oh, what a bore—people wanting me to be one of them!

Oh sky of blue—the same sky of my childhood—
Empty, perfect, eternal truth!
Oh gentle Tagus River, age-old and silent,
Tiny truth where the sky is reflected!
Oh sorrow revisited, Lisbon of once-upon-a-time today!
You give me nothing, you take nothing from me, you're
nothing I can feel myself in.

Leave me in peace! I won't take long, for I never do . . .
And so long as the Abyss and the Silence aren't here yet,
I want to be alone!

(1923)

“If you want to kill yourself, how come you don’t want to kill yourself”

If you want to kill yourself, how come you don’t want to
kill yourself?

So, here’s your chance! As for me, who loves life and
death so much,

I’d kill myself too, if I dared . . .

Well, if you dare, dare it!

What good to you is this endless frame of outer images

We call the world?

This moving picture hour after hour performed

By old-hat actors going through their paces,

This many-colored circus of our unending impulses?

What good is that inner world of yours you ignore?

Kill yourself and maybe you’ll get to know it finally . . .

Maybe by ending it all, you’ll make a start . . .

And in any case, if you’re sick of existing,

Be sick with some dignity,

And don’t sing about life, as I do, because you’re soused,

Don’t hail death as literature, the way I do!

Somebody needs you? Those empty shadows called people?

No one is needed, nobody needs you . . .

If you’re not around, things will go on without you.

Maybe things will get worse for others if you go on living
instead of dying . . .

Maybe it’ll get harder if you go on enduring than if you
stopped enduring . . .

Others grieve for you? . . . Are you already sorry

That they’ll weep over you?

You can bet they won’t for long . . .

The life force, little by little, dries the tears

When they’re not spilled on our own account,

When they’re shed over what happens to others, especially
death,

Because that's just the thing after which nothing happens
to others . . .

First comes the heartache, the mystery arriving
Unannounced, and your highly touted life suddenly a
vacuum . . .

Then awe of the casket, solid and real,
And the men there in black doing their job.
Then the family at the wake, cracking jokes in their misery,
To cope with the pity of your passing,
And you there—mere cause and occasion for the wretched
affair,

You—honest-to-goodness dead, much deader than you
imagine . . .

Much deader around here than you think,
Even if maybe more alive over there . . .
Then comes the pathetic retreat to the grave or the vault,
And afterwards, the memory of you starting to die.
At first everyone feeling relieved
By your death, that slightly irritating tragedy,
Then the talk growing livelier day by day,
As ordinary life for everyone takes over again . . .

Then slowly you're forgotten.
Only two dates are remembered each year:
The day you were born, the day you died.
Nothing, nothing more, absolutely nothing else.
Twice a year they think of you.
Twice a year they who loved you sigh over you,
And now and then sigh if someone happens to mention
you.

Take a good look at yourself and just face what we are . . .
If you want to kill yourself, why not do it?
Forget the moral scruples, the mental qualms!
What scruples or qualms are there in life grinding on and
on?

What scruples in the chemistry of impulse driving
The sap, the circulation of the blood, and love?
What memory is there of others in the happy rhythm of
 life?

Oh, the sad vanity of flesh and blood called mankind,
Can't you see, you're not the slightest bit important?

To yourself you matter, because you feel for yourself.
To yourself you're everything, because to yourself you're
 the whole universe,
And the real universe and the universe of others
Only satellites of your objective subjectivity.
To yourself you matter, because only you matter to
 yourself.
And if that's so—you myth—won't others be the same
 way?

Do you dread the unknown, like Hamlet?
But what's not unknown? What is it you know
That lets you call this or that, in particular, unknown?

You love the fat of life, like Falstaff?
If you love it so fatly, love it even more!
Make yourself the fat of the earth and every thing.
Scatter your physical and chemical system
Of nocturnally conscious cells
Over the nocturnal consciousness of unconscious bodies,
Over the huge not-blanketing-anything-apparent blanket.
Over all the greenery and grass that teem with breeding
 creatures,
Over the atomic fog of things,
Over the turbulent walls
Of the pulsating vacuum of the world . . .

(1926)

Lisbon Revisited (1926)

Nothing holds me to anything.
I want fifty things at once.
With a meat-hungry anguish I yearn
For what I don't know—
Definitely for the indefinite . . .
Restless I sleep and live in the restless dream
Of someone who sleeps restlessly, half of me dreaming.

They closed all the abstract and necessary doors on me.
They drew the curtains on all the hypotheses I might see
on the street.
There's no house on the side street with the number they
gave me.

I woke to the same life I departed by sleeping.
Even my dream armies suffered defeat.
Even my dreams felt false as I dreamed them.
Even the life I only desire—even that life—cloys . . .

I understand in fits and starts;
I write betweentimes when I'm not tired;
And a boredom that's bored even of itself drags me
ashore;
I've no idea how the future and fate will treat my aimless
anguish;
I don't know what impossible southern islands await me
shipwrecked;
Or what palm-groves of letters will give me at least a line
of verse.

No, I don't know this, that, or anything else . . .
And deep in my soul where I dream what I dreamt,
In the furthest recesses of my soul where I live memory
without any reason

(And the past is a natural fog of fake tears),
On the shortcuts and roads in the faraway woods
Where I hypothesized my being,
The last remnants of my ultimate illusion
Flee, dismantled,
My dream armies vanquished without ever having been,
My latent cohorts shattered to pieces in God.

Once again I see you, City of my childhood terrifyingly
lost . . .

City of my sorrow and joy, I dream here again . . .

I? But am I the same person who lived here once and
returned,

And came back here again and again?

And now come back here again, am I?

Or are we, all the I's I was or were here,

A string of bead-beings strung all together by a memory
strand,

A string of dreams of myself which someone outside me
dreamt up?

Once again I see you—

With heart more distant, soul less my own.

Once again I see you—Lisbon, the Tagus, and all—,

Useless passerby of you and of me,

Stranger in this place as in every other,

Accidental in life as in the soul,

Phantom wandering the halls of memory,

To the squealing of rats and the squeaking of boards,

In the doomed castle where life must be lived . . .

Once again I see you,

Shadow passing through shadows

Shining for one moment in an unknown, funereal light,

Then entering the night like a ship's wake disappearing

In water slowly become inaudible . . .

Once again I see you,
But myself, alas, I fail to see!
Shattered, the magical mirror where I saw myself
 identical,
And in each fateful fragment I descry only a piece of
 myself—
A piece of you and of myself . . .

(1926)

Tobacco Shop

I'm nothing.

I'll always be nothing.

I can't even wish to be something.

Aside from that, I've got all the world's dreams inside me.

Windows of my room,

The room of just one of millions in the world nobody
knows

(And what would they know, if they knew that?),

You open on the mystery of a street people are constantly
crossing,

A street blocked off to all thought,

A street that's real, impossibly real, and right,
unconsciously right,

With the mystery of things lying under live beings and
stones,

With death spreading dankness on walls and white hair on
heads,

With fate driving the cart of everything down nothingness
road.

Today I'm bowled over, as though hit by the truth.

Today I'm clearheaded, as though I were going to die,

Having no more brotherly feeling for things

Than to say good-bye, turning this house and this side of
the street

Into a line of coaches in a long train with its whistle
shrieking good-bye

From inside my head,

And a nerve-wracking, bone-cracking jerk as it moves off.

Today I'm mixed up, like someone who thought
something and grasped it, then lost it.

Today I'm torn between the allegiance I owe

Something real outside me—the Tobacco Shop across
the street,
And something real inside me—the feeling that it's all a
dream.

I failed in everything.

Since I was up to nothing, maybe it was all really
nothing.

From learning and training for anything useful I escaped
By slipping out the back window.

I went off to the country with great plans,

But found only grass and trees there,

And when there were people, they were just like any
others.

I leave the window, sit down in a chair. What should I
think about?

How can I tell what I'll be, I who don't know what I am?
Be what I think? But I keep thinking I'm so many
things!

And so many people think of being the same thing, there
just can't be that many!

Genius? At this moment

A hundred thousand heads are dreaming they're geniuses
like me,

And who knows if history will remember even one of
them.

From all those dreams of glory there'll be nothing but
manure in the end.

No, I don't believe in myself.

In every asylum there are madmen sure of so much!

I, sure of nothing, am I more sure or less sure than they?

No, not even of myself . . .

In how many garrets and nongarrets of the world

Are there self-styled geniuses dreaming now?

How many high-minded aspirations, noble and lucid—

Yes, really high-minded, noble and lucid—

And who knows, even practicable,
Will ever see the real light of day or get a hearing?
The world is made for those born to conquer it,
Not those who dream of conquering it, right though they
may be.

I've dreamt of more things than Napoleon went and did.
I've taken to my so-called heart more humanity than
Christ ever did.

I've secretly thought up more philosophies than Kant ever
wrote down.

Yet I am, and maybe always will be, the man in the garret,
Though I don't live in one;

I'll always be the *one who wasn't born for it*;

I'll always simply be *the one with all the promise*;

I'll always be the one waiting for the door to open at the
wall without a door,

Who sang his anthem to Infinity in a chicken coop,

Who heard the voice of God in a covered well.

Believe in myself? No, I don't, nor in anything.

Let Nature pour down upon my burning head

Her sun, her rain, the wind ruffling my hair,

And let the rest come, if it will or must, or not at all.

Cardiac cases enslaved by the stars,

We've conquered the world before getting out of bed,

But we wake and the world is opaque,

We get up and the world looks strange,

We go out in the street and there's the whole earth,

Plus Solar System, Milky Way, and the old Indefinitude.

(Eat your chocolates, little girl!

Eat your chocolates!

Look, there's no metaphysics on earth but chocolates.

Look, all religions on earth have nothing more to teach
us than a candy store does.

Eat, dirty little girl, eat them up!

If only I could gobble down those chocolates as trustily as
you do!

But then I think, peeling off the silver wrapper, it's only
tinfoil,
And toss it on the floor, just as I've tossed away my life.)

But at least, out of my bitterness at what I'll never be,
There's the quick calligraphy of these lines,
The broken archway to the Impossible.
And at least I reserve for myself this dry-eyed contempt—
Noble, at least, in the grand gesture I make
Flinging out the dirty clothes I am, with no laundry list,
into the drift of things,
And stay at home, shirtless.

(Oh, my comforters, who don't exist and so may comfort,
Whether Greek goddess, conceived as a statue that springs
alive,
Or Roman matron, impossibly noble and ominous,
Or Princess of the troubadours, so blushing and so gentle,
Or eighteenth-century marchioness, so *décolletée* and cool,
Or famous courtesan back in our parents' time,
Or modern whatever—since I can't imagine what—
All of it, whatever it may be, if you can inspire, do it!
My heart's an emptied pail.
Like someone who can call up spooks calls up spooks,
I call myself up, and nothing's there.
I go to the window and see the street in perfect clarity.
I see the shops, I see the pavement, I see the passing cars.
I see the dressed-up living passersby.
I see the dogs too, also alive,
And all of it weighs on me like a verdict of exile,
And all of it's strange to me, like everything else.)

I lived, I studied, I loved, I even believed,
And now there's no beggar I don't envy simply for not being
me.
In each I see the rags, the sores, the lies,
And think: maybe you never lived, studied, loved, believed

(Because people can go through the motions without
doing any of it);
Maybe you barely existed, like the lizard whose tail's been
snipped
And is just a tail, apart from the lizard, and beating
frantically.

I made of myself something I didn't know,
And what I could become, I didn't.
The fancy costume I put on was wrong.
They saw me straight for what I wasn't; I didn't disabuse
them, so I lost myself.
When I tried taking off the mask,
It stuck to my face.
When I pulled it off and looked in the mirror,
I'd grown older.
I was drunk and couldn't get into the fancy costume I
hadn't taken off.
So I threw away the mask and slept in the cloakroom
Like a dog they let stay in the house
Because it's harmless,
And I'm about to write this story to prove I'm sublime.

Musical essence of my useless poems,
If only I could find you in something I'd really made,
And not forever fixed by the Tobacco Shop across the
street,
Stamping my feet on the consciousness of being alive,
Like a rug some drunkard stumbles over
Or a doormat the gypsies stole not worth a dime.

But the Tobacco Shop Owner has come to his door and
stands there now.
I look at him, straining my half-turned neck,
Straining my half-blind soul.
He'll die and so will I.
He'll leave his signboard, I'll leave poems.

After a while his signboard will perish too, and so will my
poems.

A little later the street will die where his signboard hung,
And so will the language my poems were written in.
Then the spinning planet where all this happened will die,
In other satellites in other systems something like people
Will go on making things like poems and living under
things like signboards,
Always one thing against another,
Always one thing as useless as another,
Always the impossible thing as stupid as the real thing,
Always the fundamental mystery as certain as the sleeping
surface mystery,
Always this thing or that, or neither one nor the other.
But now a man's gone into the Tobacco Shop (to buy
tobacco?)
And the plausible reality of it all suddenly hits me.
I'm getting up, full of energy, convinced, human,
And about to try writing these lines, which say the
opposite.

I light a cigarette and think of writing them,
And in the cigarette I savor my liberation from all
thoughts.
I follow the smoke like a lane of my own,
For one sensitive, dexterous moment enjoying
The freedom from all speculation
And the consciousness that metaphysics comes from
feeling out of sorts.

Then I fall back in my chair
And go on smoking.
As long as fate permits, I'll go on smoking.

(If I married my washwoman's daughter,
Maybe I'd be happy.)
I think of this, get up from my chair. I go to the window.

The man is leaving the Shop (putting change into his pants' pocket?).

Ah, I know him: it's nonmetaphysical Stevens.

(The Tobacco Shop Owner comes back to the door.)

As if by divine instinct, Stevens turns around and sees me.

He waves me a hello, I shout back, *Hello Stevens!* and the universe

Reorganizes itself for me, without hopes or ideals, and the Tobacco Shop Owner smiles.

(1928)

Written in a Book Abandoned on the Trip

I come from around Beja.

I'm going to the center of Lisbon.

I'm not bringing anything and won't find a thing.

I feel the exhaustion I anticipate from what I won't find.

And my yearning comes not from the past or the future.

In this book I leave inscribed the image of my dead
design:

I was, like the grasses, and never uprooted.

(1928?)

“Master, my dear master”

Master, my dear master!
Heart of my body, intellectual and whole!
Life-root of my inspiration!
Master, what became of you in this form of life?

You didn't care if you lived or died, you or anything else,
With your abstract soul visual to the bone,
Your incredible intentness on the external, always
 multiple world,
Refuge from the nostalgia for all the old gods,
Human spirit of mothering earth,
Flower riding the flood of subjective intelligence . . .

○ Master, my master!
In the sensationist anguish of all my felt days,
In the daily pain inflicted by the mathematics of being,
I, a slave to all things, like dust to all winds,
Lift up my hands to you, so far away, so far from me!

My master and my guide!
Whom nothing ever hurt, ever ached, ever disturbed,
Sure as the sun making day in its effortless round,
Natural as daylight letting everything show,
○ master, your serenity taught my heart nothing,
My heart learned nothing.
My heart is nothing.
My heart is lost.

Master, I would only be like you if I were you.
How piercing that great happy moment I first heard you!
Exhaustion has filled this subjective world ever since.
It's all an effort in this world where things are desired,
It's all false in this world where things are conceived,
It's all something else in this world where everything's felt.

I've been like a beggar since then, left out in the cold,
With the whole town indifferent toward me.

Since then I've been like mown grass,

Piles of it scattered in uneven rows.

Since then I've been myself—yes, myself—to my own
misfortune,

And I, with that misfortune, am not myself, neither
another nor anyone else.

But why, then, did you teach me your clarified vision

If you could not teach me to have the soul to see clearly?

Why did you summon me up to the top of the mountains

If I, a child of the cities of the plain, did not know how to
breathe?

Why did you give me your soul if I didn't know what to
do with it,

Like someone loaded with gold in the desert

Or someone who pours forth his divine voice in the
ruins?

Why did you wake me to that sensation and new soul

If I would not know how to feel, if my soul remains ever
my own?

Oh, if only the unknown God had let me be always

That decadent poet, so stupidly vain,

Who'd at least have succeeded in giving some pleasure,

And oh, if only the terrible knowledge of seeing had not
risen up in me.

Why did you turn me into myself? If only you'd let me
stay human!

Happy the store clerk

With his normal humdrum routine, so light though still a
burden,

Having his ordinary life,

For whom pleasure is pleasure, and fear is fear,

Who sleeps out his sleep,

Who dines on his dinner,
Who drinks his drink, and so is content.

The serenity you had which you gave me turned to
disquiet.
You freed me but the fate of man is to be enslaved.
You woke me but the sense of being human is to sleep.

(1928)

“At the wheel of the Chevrolet on the road to Sintra”

At the wheel of the Chevrolet on the road to Sintra
Under moonlight and dream, on the deserted road,
I drive alone, slow and easy, and it seems to me
A bit—or I make myself think it so a bit—
That I'm following some other road, some other dream,
 some other world,
I'm going on, not with Lisbon there behind or Sintra
 ahead,
I'm going on, and what more is there to it than not
 stopping, just going on?

I'll be spending the night in Sintra, since I'm unable to
 spend it in Lisbon.
But when I get to Sintra, I'll be sorry I'm not staying in
 Lisbon.
Always this restlessness, aimless, inconsequential,
 pointless,
Always, always, always,
The mind's excessive anguish over nothing at all,
On the Sintra highway, dream highway, life highway . . .

Responding to my subconscious motions at the wheel,
The car I borrowed moves like a greyhound with me and
 under me.
I smile as I think of the symbol, turning to the right.
So many borrowed things I go along with in this world!
So many borrowed things I drive on with as if they were
 mine!
What's been lent me, alas, is what I myself am!

To the left, a hovel—yes, a hovel—at the side of the
 road.
To the right, an open field and the moon in the distance.

The car, which just before seemed to offer me freedom,
Now becomes something I'm locked up in,
Something I can only control if I'm part of, if it's part of
me.

Behind, to the left, there's the hovel and more than hovel.
Life must be happy there, simply because it isn't my life.
If someone saw me from the window, they'd imagine:

there's someone who's happy.

Maybe to the child gazing through the panes of the top-
story window

I was, like the borrowed car, a dream, an honest-to-
goodness fairy.

Maybe to the girl hearing the motor who watched from
the ground-floor kitchen window,

I'm a bit of the prince all girls dream about,

And through the panes she'll take me in sidelong till I
vanish around the bend.

I'll leave dreams behind me—or is it the car that will?

I, the driver of a borrowed car, or I the borrowed car I
drive?

On the road to Sintra and sad in the moonlight, with the
night and fields before me,

Driving the borrowed Chevrolet, and miserable,

I lose myself on the road of things to come, vanish in the
distance I am overtaking,

And out of some sudden, terrible, violent, incredible
impulse,

I accelerate . . .

But I left my heart back there on that stone pile I steered
clear of,

Seeing it without seeing it,

At the door to the hovel,

My empty heart,

My unappeased heart,
My heart, more human than I am, more precise than life.

On the road to Sintra, near midnight, at the wheel in the
 moonlight,
On the road to Sintra, tired of my own fancies,
On the road to Sintra, each moment closer to Sintra,
On the road to Sintra, each moment farther away from
 myself . . .

(1928)

Note

My soul came apart like an empty jar.
It fell overwhelmingly, down the stairs.
Dropped from the hands of a careless maid.
It fell, Smashed into more pieces than there was china in
the jar.

Nonsense? Impossible? How should I know!
I've more sensations now than when I felt I was all me.
I'm a litter of shards strewn on a doormat about to be
swept.

My fall raised a din like the crash of a jar.
The gods that exist lean over the bannister,
Staring down at the shards their maid left of me.

They're not mad at her.
They indulge her.
What was I—an empty vase?

They stare at the shards, absurdly conscious,
But conscious of themselves, not of the shards.

They stare down and smile.
Indulgent, they smile at the heedless maid.

The big star-carpeted staircase spreads out.
A shard is shining, glossy side up, among the stars.
Is it my work? My one and only soul? My life?
A shard.
And the gods squint at it, not knowing why it got left
there.

(1929)

“I have a terrible cold”

I have a terrible cold.
And everyone knows how terrible colds
Change the whole structure of the universe,
Making us sore at life,
Making us sneeze till we get metaphysical.
My day is wasted, full of blowing my nose.
My head aches vaguely.
A sad fix for a minor poet to be in!
Today I'm really a minor poet.
Whatever I was before was only wishful, and that's gone.

Fairy queen, good-bye forever!
Your wings were sunbeams, and my feet are clay.
I'll never be well if I don't stretch out in bed.
I never was well unless I was stretched out across the
universe.

Excusez un peu. . . . What a terrible physical cold!
I need some truth and aspirin.

(1931)

Psyche-type (Psychotype)

Symbols. Everything's symbols . . .

Maybe it's all symbols . . .

Can you be a symbol too?

I watch, exiled from you, your two white hands
With their good English manners propped on the
tablecloth.

People independent of you . . .

I look at them: can they be symbols too?

Then the whole world is all symbol and magic?

It probably is . . .

And why shouldn't it be?

Symbols . . .

I'm tired of thinking . . .

Finally I lift my eyes to find your eyes eyeing me.

You smile, knowing just what I was thinking . . .

My God! but you don't know . . .

I was thinking about symbols . . .

Faithfully I join the conversation at the head of the
table . . .

"It was very strange, wasn't it?"

"Awfully strange. And how did it end?"

"Well, it didn't end. It never does, you know."

Yes, *you know* . . . I know . . .

Yes, I know . . .

That's the trouble with symbols, *you know*.

Yes, I know

Perfectly natural conversation . . . But the symbols?

I don't take my eyes off your hands . . . Who are they?

My God! The symbols . . . The symbols . . .

(1933)

“The sleep that comes over me”

The sleep that comes over me,
The mental sleep that physically hits me,
The universal sleep that personally overcomes me—
To others
Such a sleep must seem a sleep to fall asleep in,
The sleep of someone wanting to go to sleep,
The very sleep that is sleep.

But it's more, it goes deeper, higher than that:
It's the sleep encompassing every disappointment.
It's the sleep that synthesizes all despair,
It's the sleep of feeling there's a world within me
Without my having said yes or no to it.

Yet the sleep that comes over me
Is just like ordinary sleep.
Being tired at least softens you,
Being run-down at least quiets you,
Giving up at least puts an end to trying,
And the end at least is giving up having to hope.

There's the sound of a window opening.
Indifferent, I turn my head to the left,
Looking over the shoulder that felt it,
And see through the half-opened window
The girl on the third floor across the street
Leaning out, her blue eyes searching for someone.
Who?
My indifference asks.
And all this is sleep.

My God, so much sleep! . . .

**“I’m beginning to know myself.
I don’t exist”**

I’m beginning to know myself. I don’t exist.

I’m the space between what I’d like to be and what others
made of me.

Or half that space, because there’s life there too . . .

So that’s what I finally am . . .

Turn off the light, close the door, stop shuffling your
slippers out there in the hall.

Just let me be at ease and all by myself in my room.

It’s a cheap world.

**“He came by, wanting to speak with me on
a downtown street”**

He came by, wanting to speak with me on a downtown
street,
That poorly dressed man, a beggar by trade, as shown in
his face,
Who gets along with me and I with him;
And I, in a mutual, wide, effusive gesture, gave him all I
had
(Except, of course, what was in my pocket where I've got
more money:
I'm not stupid, nor a busy Russian novelist,
And as for Romanticism, yes, but in small doses . . .).

I have a soft spot for people like that,
Especially when they don't deserve it.
Yes, I'm a vagrant and a beggar too,
And it's all my own doing too.
Being a vagrant and beggar is not being a vagrant and
beggar:
It's being off to one side of the social ladder,
It's being unable to follow the norms of life,
The real or sentimental norms of life—
It's not being a Supreme Court Justice, a reliable
employee, a prostitute,
It's not being poverty-stricken, an exploited worker,
It's not being sick with some incurable illness,
It's not being thirsty for justice or a cavalry captain,
It's not being, in a word, those socially conscious
characters of the novelists,
Bursting with literary words because they've got every
reason to shed tears,
And rebel against society because they assume it's their
right to.

No: anything but being right!
Anything but caring about humanity!
Anything but giving into humanitarian impulses!
What good's a thrill if it's got some external reason?

Yes, being the vagrant and beggar I am,
Is not being a vagrant and a beggar—that's common
enough:
It's being isolated in our soul—that's what being a
vagrant is,
It's needing to beg the days to go by and disregard us—
that's what being a beggar is.

Everything else is stupid like a Dostoyevsky or a Gorky.
Everything else is being hungry or having nothing to
wear.
And even though that happens, it happens to so many
people
It's not worth feeling sorry for those it happens to.

I'm a vagrant and a hell of a beggar—that is, in the
metamorphic sense,
And I'm curling up in deepest charity for myself.

Poor Álvaro de Campos!
So terribly isolated in his life! Feeling so utterly
depressed!
Poor guy, slumped in the armchair of his melancholy!
Poor guy, with tears (real tears) in his eyes,
Who today gave away, in one grand, liberal, Muscovite
gesture
All that he had—from the pocket where he had only a
bit—
To that poor man who wasn't poor and had professionally
sad eyes.

Poor Álvaro de Campos, nobody cares about him!

Poor thing, feeling so sorry for himself!

Yes, the poor guy!

Worse off than the many other vagrants who straggle and
stray,

Who are beggars and beg,

Because the human soul is a bottomless pit.

I'm someone who knows. Poor guy!

How good to be able to rebel in my soul at a political
meeting!

But I'm not even that softheaded!

I don't even have the excuse of being able to hold social
opinions.

I don't, as a matter of fact, have any excuse at all: I'm
lucid.

Don't try changing my convictions: I'm lucid.

I already said it: I'm lucid.

Don't give me your heartfelt esthetics: I'm lucid.

Shit! I'm lucid.

Poem in a Straight Line

I never knew a soul who ever took a licking.
My friends have all been champions at everything.

And I, so often vulgar, so often obscene, so often vile,
I, so deliberately parasitical,
Unforgivably filthy,
I, so often without patience to take a bath,
I, who've been so ridiculous, so absurd,
Tripping up in public on the carpet of etiquette,
I, so grotesque and mean, submissive and insolent,
Who've been insulted and not said a word,
And when putting a word in growing still more ridiculous,
I who strike chambermaids as laughable,
I who feel porters wink sarcastically,
I who've been scandalous about money, borrowing and not
 paying it back,
I, who when the time came to fight, ducked
As far as I could out of punching range,
I who go into a sweat over the slightest thing—
I'm convinced no one's better than I at this sort of game.

No one I know, none of my speaking acquaintances,
Ever acted ridiculous, ever took insults,
Was ever anything but noble—yes, all of them princes,
 living their lives . . .

How I'd love to hear a human voice, from any one of
 them.

Confessing not to sins but to infamies,
Speaking not of violent but of cowardly acts!
But no, each one's a Paragon, to hear them tell it.
Is there no one in this whole world who'd confess to me
 he's been vile just once?
All you princes, my brothers,

Enough—I'm fed up with demigods!
Where are the real people in this world?

Am I the only scoundrel and bungler alive?

Maybe women don't always fall for them.
Maybe they've been betrayed. But ridiculous? Never!
And I, who've been ridiculous but never betrayed,
How do I speak to their Highnesses without stammering?
I, who've been vile, literally vile,
Vile in the meanest and rottenest possible sense of the
word.

Ricardo Reis

Introducing Ricardo Reis

Dr. Ricardo Reis was born inside my soul on January 29, 1914, around 11 o'clock at night. I'd been listening to a lengthy discussion the day before on the excesses of modern art, especially concerning its construction. According to my way of feeling things without feeling them, I let myself be carried away on a wave of that momentary reaction. When I became aware of what I was thinking, I saw that I'd created a neoclassical theory and that I was in the process of developing it. I found it beautiful and thought it might be interesting to elaborate upon the theory, based on principles I neither approve nor accept as my own. It occurred to me to turn the theory into a "scientific" neoclassicism . . . to protest against two currents . . . as much against modern romanticism as against the neoclassicism of [Charles] Maurras. . . .

(Fernando Pessoa, from "Ricardo Reis—His Life")

The whole philosophy behind the work of Ricardo Reis can be summed up as sad Epicureanism. We will try to capsule this. Each of us—the poet believes—ought to live his own life, isolating himself from others and searching, to the extent that he takes these things to heart, for what gives him joy and pleasure. He should neither seek violent pleasures nor flee painful sensations as long as they are not extreme. . . . This is the doctrine the poet offers temporarily. As long as the barbarians (Christians) dominate, this should be the pagan stance. Once the barbarian empire disappears (if it does), the pagan perspective can be different. For the time being, it cannot be otherwise.

(Frederico Reis [Ricardo's "brother"], from "The Sad Epicureanism of R. Reis")

I would say, however, that poetry is music made with ideas, and therefore, with words. Consider what it is to make music with ideas instead of emotions. With emotions, one only makes music. With

emotions that veer toward ideas, accumulating and using them in an effort to define them, one makes song. With ideas alone, containing nothing more of the emotion than what is necessarily intrinsic to the idea, one makes poetry. . . . The colder the poetry, the truer it is. . . . A poem is a projection of an idea, in words, by way of an emotion. Emotion is not the basis of poetry; it is merely the means by which the idea reduces itself to words. . . .

(Ricardo Reis, debating with Álvaro de Campos)

Novelty, in and of itself, means nothing if it contains within it no relationship to what preceded it. . . .

(Ricardo Reis, from "Considerations on the New")

The gods belong in the category of abstractions, with respect to their relationship to reality, although they do not belong in this category as abstractions for they are not abstract. Just as abstract ideas help us manage things, the gods also help us make our way among mankind. The gods, are, therefore, real and unreal at the same time. They're unreal because they're not realities, yet they're real because they are concretized abstractions. . . . An idea only becomes a god when it is concretized. Then it becomes a force of Nature. This is a god. Whether it is a reality or not, I don't know. Personally, I believe in the existence of the gods; I believe in their infinite number, in the possibility of man to ascend to divinity. The creator of civilization is a force of Nature; he is therefore a god or a semi-god.

(Ricardo Reis, from "Conception of God")

“I the roses love in the gardens of Adonis”

I the roses love in the gardens of Adonis,
Lydia, I love those fast fleeting roses

That on the day they were born,
On that same day they die.

Light for them is everlasting: born
After the sun comes up, they die
Before Apollo rounds
His visible track.

So let us make our life *a single day*,
And willingly ignore the night to come,
The night already past,
The little while we last.

(1914)

“The gods grant us this one”

The gods grant us this one
Liberty: to submit ourselves
To their dominion by an act of will.
It is better that we do this
Since only in its illusion
Does freedom find existence.

The gods, on whom fate eternal
Weighs, do not act otherwise
In their calm and ancient
Self-possessed conviction
That their life's divine and free.

Imitating gods, we, as little
Free as they up on Olympus,
Like those who on the sands
Build castles for the eye's delight—
Let us build our life so that
The gods will know how to thank us
For being their co-equals.

(1914)

“I heard it told that once when Persia”

I heard it told that once when Persia
Was engaged in some war or other,
When invaders were burning down the City,
And the women there were screaming,
Two chess players went on playing
Their endless game of chess.

In the shade of a spacious tree, their eyes
Were fixed upon an old chessboard,
And as each was anticipating some freer moment
When the chess piece had just been moved
And while awaiting his opponent's next—
He'd soberly refresh his thirst
From a wine pitcher at his side.

Houses were burning, walls
And archways being sacked,
Women raped and propped
Against the fallen walls,
Children, pierced with lances,
Lying bloody in the streets . . .
But where they sat, near the City,
And far from all the tumult,
The chess players were playing
Their game of chess.

Though the desolate wind was signaling
Through the cries that reached them,
And upon reflection, they knew in their hearts
Their women and dear daughters
Were being raped not very far away,
Even so, the instant the thought hit them

A slight shadow, vague and strange,
Passed across their foreheads,
And their calm eyes soon returned,
Trustful and intent,
To the old chessboard.

When the ivory king's in jeopardy,
Who cares about the flesh and blood
Of sisters, mothers, children?
If the rook won't cover
The white queen's retreat,
Looting and pillaging mean little.
And when the bold hand
Checkmates the opponent's king
One's soul does not care if out there
One's children may be dying.

Even though suddenly the enemy warrior's
Angry face pops up
On the wall, and soon
The solemn chess player
Must bloodily fall
Who, the previous moment
(Still considering a move
Meant for hours later),
Was sunk deep in the favorite game
Of the indifferent great.

Let cities fall and people suffer, life
And liberty cease to exist,
Let peaceful holdings and provisions
Be ransacked and burned,
But if war interrupts the game,
Make sure the king's not checked
And the most advanced of the ivory pawns
Ready to take the rook.

Brothers in Epicurus,
In loving and understanding him,
Concurring more with each other than with him,
Let us learn from this tale
Of peaceful chess players
How to live our lives.

What's serious matters so little,
What's grave concerns us no less.
Let the natural drive of instincts
Give way to the worthless pleasure
(Under the peaceful shady trees)
Of playing a good game.

Whatever we make of this useless life
Is all the same, whether it's glory,
Reputation, love, knowledge or life itself—
As if it were simply
Some memory of a game well played
And a wager won
By the best player.

Glory weighs like a precious burden,
Reputation like a fever,
Love wearies, being so searching and serious,
Knowledge never finds anything,
And life achingly passes, knowing all this . . .
The game of chess
Captures the heart completely, but losing
Matters little, since it's nothing at all.

Ah! and we, under the indifferent, favorable shade,
With a pitcher of wine beside us,
And only intent on the gratuitous effort
That's in a game of chess,
Even if the game's only a dream
And being played without a partner,

Let us be like the Persians in this tale,
And if somewhere out there,
Nearby or far away, we're summoned
By war, by country, by life,
Let them summon us in vain, and let
Each, under some friendly shade,
Dream of his opponent,
And the chess game, of its indifference.

(1916)

“One after another, hard-pressed waves”

One after another, hard-pressed waves
Curl in their green motion
And hiss white foam into
The brownness of sea shores.

Leisurely clouds one after another
Break open their round motion
And sun burns the air space
Between the scanty clouds.

Indifferent to me, as I to her,
This fair day's disposition
Takes little from my sense
Of time evaporating.

Only a vague inconsequential ache
Halts a moment at the portal of my soul
And, after staring briefly at me,
Passes on, smiling at nothing.

(1918)

"I don't want the sincere gifts"

I don't want the sincere gifts
You pretend to give me
As presents of your offering.
Give me what I'll lose,
Grieving for it lost, twice
Over, for you and for me.

Better, promise me it without
Giving it, so the loss
Will be more in the hope
Than in the memory.

I'll take no more displeasure
Than in life's continuing,
Seeing that as days pass, what's
Hoped for is delayed, which is nothing.

(1923)

“Now ashen gray tinges the balding brow”

Now ashen gray tinges the balding brow
Of the youth I was and lost.

My eyes gleam less and less.

My lips no longer have the right to kiss.

If you love me still, for love's own sake, desist:

You betray me with myself.

(1926)

“Whatever stops is death, and is our death”

Whatever stops is death, and is our death

If it stops for us. That very shrub now

 Withering, takes with it

 Part of my present life.

In everything I saw, part of me remained.

With all I saw that moves I too move.

 Nor does memory distinguish

 What I saw from what I was.

(1928)

“Recalling who I was, I see somebody else”

Recalling who I was, I see somebody else.

In memory the past becomes the present.

Who I was is somebody I love,

Yet only in a dream.

The longing that torments me now

Is not from me nor by the past invoked,

But his who lives in me

Behind blind eyes.

Nothing knows me but the moment.

My own memory is nothing, and I feel

That who I am and who I was

Are two contrasting dreams.

(1930)

“Lydia, when our Autumn comes”

Lydia, when our Autumn comes,
Bearing Winter with it, let us keep
One thought: not of Spring
To come, belonging to another,
Nor yet of Summer, when we're dead,
But of what's left of what is passing—
The yellowing of these leaves now
 Making them different.

(1930)

**“Not just those who hate and those who
envy us”**

Not just those who hate and those who envy us
Limit and oppress us; those who love us

Limit us no less;

May the gods grant that I, stripped of affection,
Enjoy the cold liberty of the highest peaks,

Without a thing.

He who wants little has everything; and he who
Wants nothing, is free; in having and wanting nothing,

Man is like the gods.

(1930)

“No one, in the vast and virgin jungle”

No one, in the vast and virgin jungle

Of this unreckoned world, ever sees

 The God he knows.

Only what is borne upon the wind, upon the wind is
 heard.

All we ponder, our loves, our gods,

 Pass on, because we do.

(1931)

“Lydia, we know nothing. We are strangers”

Lydia, we know nothing. We are strangers
Wherever we may be.

Lydia, we know nothing, We are strangers
Wherever we may live. Everything is alien,
Nor speaks our language.

Let us in ourselves create a refuge,
And from the hurt and tumult
Of the world withdraw.

What more can love desire than not to let the others in?
Like a secret uttered in a mystery,
May this become our sanctuary.

(1932)

**“Nothing comes of nothing. We are
nothing”**

Nothing comes of nothing. We are nothing.
Briefly in sun, in air, we postpone
The unbreathable darkness that weighs us down
And humble earth imposes,
Delayed corpses that breed.

Made laws, observed statutes, finished odes—
All find their proper grave. If we, the flesh
To whom a friendly sun gives blood, come
To an end, why not they as well?
We're stories telling stories, nothing.

(1932)

“To be great, be whole”

To be great, be whole; exclude
Nothing, exaggerate nothing that is you.
Be whole in everything. Put all you are
Into the smallest thing you do.
The whole moon gleams in every pool,
It rides so high.

(1933)

“I ask the gods only to forget me”

I ask the gods only to forget me.
Neither sad nor glad, I shall be free,
Free as the wind is, giving life
To the air that is nothing.
Love and hatred seek us out, both
Oppressively, each differently.
 Only he is free
 To whom the gods grant nothing.

“I only ask the gods to grant me”

I only ask the gods to grant me
That I ask nothing of them. Happiness is a burden,
 Good fortune is a yoke,
Both bespeaking too secure a state.
Not composed or discomposed, I'd calmly live
Beyond that state in which men take
 To sorrows and to joys.

“My gesture that destroys”

My gesture that destroys

The hill of ants

The ants might think's inflicted by some godly being

But I do not take myself to be divine.

And so perhaps the gods,

Whether they are or not,

Simply because they're greater than we

Are taken for our gods.

Wherever the truth may lie,

May we each avoid

Full faith, perhaps unfounded,

In those we do believe are gods.

Fernando Pessoa

Introducing Fernando Pessoa

The whole constitution of my spirit is one of hesitancy and of doubt. Nothing is or can be positive to me; all things oscillate around me, and I with them, an uncertainty unto myself. All for me is incoherence and change. All is mystery and all is meaning. All things are "unknown," symbolic of the Unknown. Consequently horror, mystery, over-intelligent fear .

(Fernando Pessoa, an untitled excerpt written in English)

The human author of these books knows no self whatsoever within himself. When, for whatever reason, he senses a self within him, he quickly sees that it's a being very different from himself although having some resemblances; a mental child perhaps, with inherited characteristics, but with the differences of someone else.

(Fernando Pessoa, from an unpublished preface to the heteronyms)

I want to be a creator of myths; it is the supreme mystery a human being can make.

(Fernando Pessoa, an untitled excerpt)

In my trade, which is literary, I'm a professional, in the highest sense of the term; that is, I'm a scientific craftsman who does not permit himself to have any opinions that are not literary. Nor should not having this or that philosophical belief in relation to these people-books lead anyone to think I'm a skeptic.

(Fernando Pessoa, an untitled excerpt)

A medium of myself and still I survive. I am, therefore, less real than the others, less coherent, less personal, and extremely vulnerable to their influence. I am also a disciple of Caeiro and I still

remember the day—March 13, 1914—when, having “heard for the first time” . . . a large number of the first poems of *The Keeper of Sheep*, I immediately began to write, in sequence, the six intersectionist poems that constitute “Oblique Rain,” the visible and logical result of Caeiro’s influence on the mind of Fernando Pessoa.

(Fernando Pessoa, from “The Genesis of the Heteronyms”)

I am, in fact, a patriotic mystic, a rational Sebastianist. But I’m also, aside from this, and even to the point of contradicting this, many other things. And these things, by the very nature of that book . . . are not included in *Mensagem*.

(Fernando Pessoa, in a letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 1935)

Behind the involuntary masks of the poet, the reasoning person, and whatever else, what I am essentially is a dramatist. The phenomenon of my instinctive depersonalization, which I alluded to in my last letter as an explanation for the existence of the heteronyms, naturally leads to this definition. As such, I do not evolve, I TRAVEL . . .

(Fernando Pessoa, letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, 1935)

More than the paganism of the Neoplatonists properly speaking, mine is the syncretic paganism of Julian the Apostate.

(Fernando Pessoa, from “A Heterodox Paganism: Pessoa’s Vision of Neopaganism”)

Analysis

So abstract is the idea of your being .
That reaches me in seeing you that when .
My eyes feast on yours, yours are lost to sight,
Leaving nothing for my gaze, whereupon
Your body retreats so far from view
And the idea of your being stays so close
To my thought of seeing you, while knowing myself
Knowing you exist, that simply to stay
Conscious of you, I don't even feel I exist.
And so, ignoring myself just to see you, I feign
The illusion of the sensation and dream,
Neither seeing you nor seeing or knowing
I see you, or even that I exist, smiling
From that wretched inner twilight where
I feel I'm dreaming what I feel I'm being.

(1911)

Absurd Hour (excerpts)

Your silence a ship, each sail taut in the wind . . .
Softly the breezes play in the pennants, your smile . . .
And your smile in your silence is the stairway and stilts
I use to pretend to be up higher, at the foot of some
paradise . . .

My heart's an amphora that falls and breaks . . .
Your silence gathers and guards the shards in a corner . . .
My idea of you is a corpse the sea hauls ashore . . . which
makes you
The unreal canvas where I wander through color my
art . . .

* * * *

Today the sky is heavy like the thought of never making
port . . .
The drizzle is empty . . . The hour feels like it's
passed . . .
Not to have something like sea lanes for ships! . . .
Absorbed,
Your gaze, self-distanced from itself, is a curse without
meaning . . .

* * * *

To be and not to be again! . . . Oh, lions born in
cages! . . .
The ring of bells out there in the Other Valley . . .
Nearby? . . .
The boarding school burns with a little boy locked in the
classroom . . .
Why can't the North be South? . . . What has been
discovered? . . .

Someone's about to enter the doorway . . . One feels the
air smiling . . .

Widowed weavers like the shrouds that virgins weave . . .
Ah, your boredom's a statue of a woman still to come,
The fragrance of chrysanthemums if they had a scent . . .

One must destroy the idea of all bridges, .
Clothe in strangeness the landscapes of all countries,
Forcibly straighten the curve of horizons,
And shudder for having to live like noise abrupt on the
hillside . . .

What is it tortures me? . . . If even your face so serene
Only fills me with boredom and the opium of fearful
emptiness . . .
I don't know . . . I'm a madman estranged from his own
soul . . .
I was loved in effigy there in a country beyond
dreaming . . .

(1913)

Beyond God

I. The Abyss

I watch the Tagus in such a way
That my watching forgets I'm watching
And suddenly this strikes me
Against my daydreaming—
What is it, river-being flowing?
What is it, my-being-here and watching?

I feel almost nothing suddenly,
Time and place both emptied,
Everything gone hollow suddenly—
Even my being here and thinking.
Everything—myself, the world around me—
Remains more than external.

In everything the being and remaining, lost,
And vanished from my thinking.
I am powerless to link
Being, idea, soul, by name
To myself, the earth, the heavens . . .

And suddenly face God . . .

II. It Passed

It passed beyond Whenness,
Whyness, and Passingness . . .

The whirligig of One Ignored
Who'd not been whirled . . .

Vastness beyond Vastness,
Haunting itself without being . . .

The Universe becomes its trail,
God, its shadow . . .

III. The Voice of God

In the night a voice is shining . . .
From inside Outerness I heard it . . .
O Universe, to you I am . . .
Oh the horror of the joy
Of such terror of the torch
Fading, which drives me on!

Ashes of idea and name
In me, and the voice: *O World,*
Seed inside you that I am . . .
Mere echo of me, I'm drowned
In wave on wave of black flame
Where in God I'm swallowed.

IV. The Fall

From my idea of the world
I fell . . .
Void beyond depthlessness . . .
With no I-ness or There-ness . . .

Void without selfness, chaos
Of being thought of as being . . .
Absolute's rungless ladder . . .
Vision that won't be seen . . .

Beyond God! Beyond God! Black calmness . . .
Lightning flash of Unknow-ness . . .
O my soul, everything has other meanings,
Even its meaningfulness . . .

V. Bodiless Arm Brandishing a Sword

Between the tree and seeing it,
Where is the dream?
What bridge's arch observes God
More? . . . And I am downcast,
Not knowing if the bridge's curve
Is the horizon's . . .

Between life and what is living,
Toward which side does the river flow?
Trees with leaves laden,
Between Treeness and all this, what's the thread?
Doves in flight, is the dovecote
Ever to their right, or is it real?

God is a huge Interval,
But between what and what? . . .
Between my speech and speechlessness,
Do I exist? Who is it sees me?
I stray . . . And the dovecote up above,
Is it around the dove, or to one side?

(1913?)

Oblique Rain (excerpt)

II

Inside, the church lights up today's rain,
And each burning candle is more rain that beats on
windowpanes . . .

Hearing the rain makes me happy because it's the temple
lit up,

And the church windows seen from the outside are the
sound of rain heard from within . . .

The magnificence of the main altar becomes my inability
to see mountains

Through the rain—the great solemn gold altar cloth . . .

Through the chorus sounding music in Latin and the
wind blown through glass

One senses the squeal of rain in the chorus . . .

The mass is an automobile passing by

Where the worshiper kneels in today's sadness . . .

An abrupt wind shakes in great splendor

The church mass and the noise of the wind absorbs all,

Even the sound of the priest's water voice dissolving far
off

Like the sound of the wheels of the automobile . . .

And the church lights go out

In the rain as it stops . . .

(1914)

"Some mysterious phantom's sudden hand"

Some mysterious phantom's sudden hand
Between the folds of night and sleep
Shakes me till I wake, and in the night's
Abandonment, I sense no form or gesture.

But some old terror still unburied in
The heart I bear, as if from a throne
Descends and takes over as my lord
And owner, without taunt or prod or order.

And I feel my life suddenly caught up
By a rope of the Unconscious
Held by whatever nighttime hand is leading me.

I feel I am nothing but a shadow
Of some form invisible that terrifies me,
And like the cold dark I exist in nothingness.

(1917)

Interval

Who whispered in your ear that secret
Few goddesses have heard—
That love full of faith and fear
That's true only if kept secret? . . .
Who told it to you so soon?

Not me, for I'd not dare tell you.
Not someone else, for none else knew it.
But whose brow lightly grazed your hair
To fill your ear with what he felt?
Was it someone, was it?

Or was it solely your dreaming and I who dreamed you
dreaming it?
Was it simply some jealousy of mine
That assumed it spoken, since I'll never speak it,
That supposed it done, since I only feigned it,
In dreams not even I know of?

Be that as it may—who was it that so lightly
At your ear, attending vaguely,
Told you of this love present in me
But like the merest passing thought
That yearns and feels not?

It was desire, unvoiced and bodiless,
That, hearing me dream you,
Spoke the phrase eternal, so mad and so unworthy—
The phrase the gods hope for from that joyfulness
By which Olympus is diminished?

Christmas

One God is born. Others die. Truth
Did not come or go. Error changed.
Eternity is different now.
What happened was better always.

Blind Science plows the useless sod.
Fool Faith lives the dream of its observance.
A new God is but a word.
Search not, nor believe. All is hidden.

“Lightly, quickly, soft”

Lightly, quickly, soft,
A bird song
Climbs the sky as day
Begins.
I listen—it is gone.
It seemed to stop only because
I listened.

Never, never in anything—
At dawn, in splendid daylight,
Or in the golden sunset—
Have I found
A pleasure that would last
Beyond the nothingness, the loss, before coming
To enjoy it.

(1921)

We Took the Town After a Heavy Bombing

The little blond boy
Lies in the street.
His guts hang out
And a toy train loose
On a string, forgotten.

His face is a mash
Of ooze and nothing.
A little celluloid fish
Children float in the tub
Glints on the curb.

Darkness covers the street.
Far off a light still casts its glow
On all tomorrow promises . . .

For the little blond boy?

(1929)

“Lightly, listlessly, my thoughts”

Lightly, listlessly, my thoughts
Of sorrow float like algae
In the wind's sleep—
Slack strands of hair
Of the water's dead body.

Like dead leaves they float
Along the standing waters—
Things dressed in nothing
After whirling at the doors
Of deserted houses.

Incurable sleep of being,
Vestige of what never was,
Slight pain, brief tedium,
I don't know if it stops or flows,
If it aches or just is.

“Cat, you tumble down the street”

Cat, you tumble down the street
As if it were your bed.
I think such luck's a treat,
Like feeding without being fed.

You're just a pawn in the hands
Of fate, as stones are, and people!
You follow your instinct and glands;
What you feel you feel—it's simple.

Because you're like that you're happy;
You're all the nothing you see.
I look at myself—it's not me.
I know myself—I'm not I.

(1931)

“No, don’t say a word”

No, don’t say a word!
Guessing what it will say—
Your covered mouth—
Is hearing it already.

It’s hearing it better
Than what you’d say.
What you are won’t blossom
From your words and days.

You’re better than yourself.
Don’t say a thing: but be!
The body’s naked grace
Is seen invisibly.

(1931)

“Audible smile of the leaves”

Audible smile of the leaves,
You're nothing more than a breeze.
If I watch you and you watch me
Who is the first to smile?
The first to smile now laughs.

Laughs and quickly looks
So as not to be looking
There where in the leaves
One feels the wind is passing.
It's all a wind and a masking.

But the looking, to be looking
Where one's not looking, has returned;
And the two of us are speaking
That which was never spoken.
Is this an end or a beginning?

(1932)

Autopsychography

The poet is a faker. He
Fakes it so completely,
He even fakes he's suffering
The pain he's really feeling.

And they who read his writing
Fully feel while reading
Not that pain of his that's double,
But theirs, completely fictional.

So on its tracks goes round and round,
To entertain the reason,
That wound-up little train
We call the heart of man.

(1931)

This

They say I fake or lie
In everything I write.
No, it's simply that
With me imagination
Feels—I don't use
The heart.

All I dream or go through,
All I fail or lose out
On, is like a terrace
Facing something else
Again. And that's the lovely
Thing.

It's why I write
Steeped in things not readily
At hand—free of emotions,
Serious about what isn't.
Feelings? That's the reader's
Lot!

“I’m so full of feeling”

I’m so full of feeling
I can easily believe
I must be sentimental.
But when I mull this over,
I see it’s all in thought,
I felt nothing whatever.

All of us alive spend
One life in living it,
Another, thinking it.
And the only life we have
Is split between
The true one and the false.

But which is true
And which is false
No one can explain.
And as we go on living,
The life we spend’s the one
That’s doomed to thinking.

(1933)

“I sleep. If I dream, I do not know on
waking”

I sleep. If I dream, I do not know on waking
What it was I dreamt.
I sleep. If I do not dream, I waken
In an open space
I do not recognize, because I woke
To what I still don't know.
What's best is neither dreaming nor not dreaming
And never waking.

(1933)

“To travel! Leave countries behind”

To travel! Leave countries behind!
Be someone else indefinitely,
Having a soul without roots
Means living only to see!

To belong to no one, not even myself!
Move ahead always, follow
The absence of any real end,
And having the wish to reach it!

Traveling this way is really traveling.
But I do so without needing
More than the dream of an open road.
The rest? Just earth and sky.

(1933)

**"It's raining. There is silence, since the rain
itself"**

It's raining. There is silence, since the rain itself
Allows no sound but peacefulness.

It's raining. The sky's asleep. When the soul's been
widowed

From what it cannot tell, feeling's blind.

It's raining. My self (who I am) I take leave of . . .

The rain is so peaceful it loosens itself in the air
(Not even seeming cloudy) so that it seems

It's not rain but a whispering

Which in its whispering forgets itself.

It's raining. Nothing to long for . . .

There's no wind hovering, there's no sky I feel.

It's raining far away and imperceptibly,

Like something true that lies to us,

Like some overwhelming wish deceiving us.

It's raining. Nothing in me feels . . .

(1933)

Loophole

In my dark moments
When there's nobody inside me
And everything's a fog and walls
Of all life offers and possesses—

If, for a moment, I raise my forehead
From where I'm bogged down in myself
And see the far horizon
Full of the setting or floating sun,

I come alive again, I exist, aware,
And even if it's all illusion
The exterior where I forget myself,
There's nothing more I wish or ask for.
I surrender my heart to it.

(1934)

Poem

Sky, the blueness of quiet light.
Gentle waveless breaking,
On the lucent length of shore—
Fingertips playing.

They play no melody at all
On the nameless piano shore
From whose rhythmic beat
The day's whole meaning spills.

How fine if this sufficed to please!
How assuring if I believed
This sea, these waves, this sky
Had in them life and being.

(1934)

**“There are sicknesses worse than
sicknesses”**

There are sicknesses worse than sicknesses,
There are pains that do not ache, not even in the soul,
Yet are more painful than all the others.
There are anxieties dreamed of more real
Than those life brings us, sensations
Felt only by imagining them,
More our own than life itself.
So many things exist without existing,
Exist, and linger on and on,
And on and on belong to us, and are us . . .
Over the turbid green of the wide-spreading river
The white circumflexes of the gulls . . .
Over and above the soul, the useless fluttering
Of what never was, nor ever can be, and that's all.

Let me have more wine, life is nothing.

(1935)

Advice

Put high walls around the part of you that dreams
yourself.

Then place as many cheerful flowers as you can
There where the garden may be seen
Behind the gate, between the bars,
So they may recognize you this way only.
Where no one sees it, put nothing.

Lay flower beds like those that others lay
And place them where eyes may spot
Your garden as you plan to show it.
But where you dwell and no one ever looks
Let flowers shoot up freely from the ground
And let the grass grow naturally.

Make of yourself a doubly sheltered being,
So no one who looks or tries to see may
Know more than the garden that you are—
A garden private and ostensible,
Behind which common flowers lightly touch
The grass so spare not even you can spot it . . .

Liberty

(with a citation from Seneca missing)

Ah, how delightful
Not to do one's duty,
Having a book to read
And not read it!
Reading's a bore,
Studying's worthless.
The sun gilds things
Without literature.

Willy nilly runs the river
Without an original edition.
And the breeze, this very one,
So natural, matutinal,
Since it has time, is in no hurry . . .

Books are papers daubed with ink.
Study's the thing where the distinction
Is unclear between nothing and nothing at all.

When there's fog, so much the better
To wait for King Sebastian's return—
Whether he comes or not!

Poetry is grand, and goodness too, and dancing . . .
But best of all are children,
Flowers, music, moonlight, and the sun
That sins only when aborting and not bearing.

And more than all of this
Is Jesus Christ,
Who knew nothing of finances
Nor ever claimed he had a library . . .

(1935)

I'm a Runaway

I'm a runaway.
When I was born
They shut me up
Inside myself.
Ah, but I ran away.

If people get sick
Of living in
The same old place,
Why not of living
In the same old skin?

My soul is on
The lookout for me,
But I lie low.
Will it ever find me?
Never, I hope!

Being myself only
Means being pinned down
And no one at all.
I'll live on the run,
And really live!

*from the Collected Unedited Poems, 1919-1935
(1931)*

First Part: Coat of Arms

Bellum sine bello

I. The Fields

FIRST: The Castles

On elbows propped Europa lies
 Outstretched and staring.
 Sheltered in romantic hair
 Greek eyes reminiscing.

Left elbow backward cast,
 The right, an open angle.
 One tells where Italia rests,
 The other where Britannia distantly
 Supports the hand that holds the face.

Sphinxish the fatal stare,
 Westerly the future of the past,

The face that stares is Portugal.

SECOND: The Five Shields

The Gods trade when they give.
 Disaster's the price of glory.
 Pity the winners—they are
 What is passing.

Who finds enough's enough
 Let his enoughness be enough!

Life is quick, the soul is vast.
Owning's postponing.

In bad luck and misery,
God's word of Himself He called Christ:
Opposing him to Nature,
Anointed him Son.

II. The Castles

FIRST: Ulysses

Myth's the nothingness that's everything.
The very sun opening the sky
Is a silent shining myth—
God's dead body,
Naked, quick.

He, who docked here,
Was—having not existed.
His not existing sufficed us.
Having never come as yet, he came
And created us.

So the legend trickles through,
Entering reality,
Then fecundating it.
Life beneath, half
Nothingness, goes dead.

SECOND: Viriato

If the doing-and-feeling soul knows
Only by remembering what it forgot,
We, as race, owe our living
To the memory of your instinct.

A nation, since you returned to life;
A people, since it found itself reborn—

Either you or what you augured—
So Portugal was born.

Your beings like the cold
Light just before the dawn,
The surely up-and-coming day
In premorning, nothingness confused.

THIRD: Count Henry

All beginning's involuntary.
God's the agent.
The hero observes himself,
Multiple and unaware.

Your gaze drops
To the sword found in your hands.
"What shall I do with this sword?"

You raised it. And it was done.

FOURTH: Queen Tareja

Nations all are mysteries,
Each a world unto itself.
Oh mother of kings, grandmother of empires,
Watch over us!

With crude animal certitude,
Your imperial breast suckled him
Whom God, unforeseen, had intended.
Pray for him!

May your prayer transform the lot
Of him your instinct marked!
The man who was your child
Has grown old.

But where you are and no day is,
All quickens with the eternal child.
At that ancient breast still pending,
Bear him again!

FIFTH: King Afonso Henriques

Father, you were a knight.
Today the vigil's ours.
Be our total example,
Your strength ours wholly!

Give us, against the unlucky hour
When infidels encroach again,
Your benediction in a sword,
Your sword in benediction!

SIXTH: King Diniz

Night, and the tree planter of ships to come
Is writing his Cantar de Amigo.
He hears a self-whispering silence:
It's the rustling pines like wheatfields
Of Empire that waver unseen.

That pure new song is a stream
Probing the unfound ocean,
And in the piny voice's dark roar
The present speech of the future sea,
Voice of the sea-craving earth.

SEVENTH (I): King John the First

Man and the hour are one
When God acts and history's made.
The rest is flesh for earth
To sift as dust.

Unknowing Master of the Temple
Portugal was made to be,
You knew the glory, and were exemplar
Of her defense.

Prized for its renown, your name
Guards the altar of the inner soul:
Eternal flame repelling
Eternal shadow.

SEVENTH (II): Philippa of Lancaster

What enigma was borne in your womb
Which bore only geniuses?
What archangel came on a day
To guard your maternal dreams?

Turn your somber visage toward us,
Princess of the Holy Grail,
Mortal womb of Empire,
Godmother of Portugal!

III. The Shields

FIRST: King Duarte of Portugal

Duty made me, as God the world.
Kingship ensouled my being,
Measured scruple, word and deed.

Locked in my sorrow, I endured.
Against Destiny I did my duty.
In vain? No, since I fulfilled it.

SECOND: Prince Ferdinand

God's foil he gave me to wage
His Holy War.
I, in honor, in disgrace, was consecrated His own

At those hours when a chill wind passes
Over the cold earth.

On my shoulders lay His hands, my forehead
Gilded by His glance;
His cause—this consuming fever to transcend
And this thirst for grandeur
Throbbing in my soul.

Passing, my uplifted sword's light
Reflects the calmness in my face.
God-infused, I fear not what may come,
For come what may, it never
Shall exceed my soul.

THIRD: Peter, Regent of Portugal

If thought is clear and feeling's clear,
Desire's clear enough;
Indifferent to achieving
What is merely gain;
Twice master, but undivided,
Of duty and my being—

Fortune could not shelter me,
As I was not her minion.
So I lived my life and so I died,
At peace beneath the speechless skies,
By word and purpose bound.
The rest is in the hands of God!

FOURTH: Prince John

I was no one. My soul was pressed
Between two great souls, my peers,
Chosen in vain,
Virginally stopped;

Because it's like the Portuguese, lords of oceans,
To want, and capable only of this:
Either all oceans or washed up drift of shores
Everything, or the nothingness of it all.

FIFTH: King Sebastian

Mad, yes, mad, because I wanted that glory
Which Fate gives nobody.
Self-certitude was uncontainable in me.
That's why there lies on sandy shores
The being that I was, not what I am.

My madness—let others take from me
And what goes with it.
What's a man who isn't mad
But some ruddy beast,
A corpse postponed that breeds?

IV. The Crown

Nun' Álvares Pereira

What halo rings you round?
The brandished sword which makes
The overarching air dispel
Its blueness—bland and black.

But what raised sword is this
That rings a halo in the sky?
Excalibur, the anointed,
Good King Arthur gave you.

Hope achieved, and
Become Saint Portugal,
Raise high your sword light
Illumining the way!

V. The Crest

THE HEAD OF THE GRIFFIN:

Prince Henrique

On his throne amid the glittering spheres,
Wrapped in his cloak of night and solitude,
The new ocean and dead ages at his feet—
Behold, the only emperor actually to hold
The round world in his hand.

ONE WING OF THE GRIFFIN:

King John the Second

Arms crossed, he stares beyond the sea:
Appears a high hill on a promontory—
The farthest reach of land above
All waters visible beyond the land

His presence fills all sea and sky
With his huge and solitary bulk.
And the changing world seems fearful
He'll loose his arms to tear aside its veil.

THE OTHER WING OF THE GRIFFIN:

Afonso of Albuquerque

He stands with vanquished nations underfoot.
His gaze is lowered, sick
Of seeing the unjust fateful world.
Neither life nor death concerns him,
So powerful now he's indifferent to all
That he might hold, since in wanting so much
He's crushed more than the groveling world
Beneath his heavy tread.
For him Fate lifts three empires off the ground.
He carved them out disdainfully.

Second Part: Portuguese Sea

Possessio Maris

I. The Prince

God wills, Man dreams, the work is born.
God willed that all the earth be one,
That seas unite and never separate.
You he blessed, and you went forth to read the foam.

And the white shore lit up, isle to continent,
And flowed, even to the world's end,
And suddenly the earth was seen complete,
Upsurging, round, from blue profundity.

Who blessed you made you Portuguese.
Us he gave a sign: the sea's and our part in you.
The Sea fulfilled, the Empire fell apart.
But ah, Portugal must yet fulfill itself!

II. Horizon

Your fearfulness preceding us, O Sea,
Was lodged in coral, shores, and masts.
Once of night and fog, of bygone
Tempests and the mystery, unveiled,
Distance flowered, and the sidereal South
Sparkled on initiated galleons.

That far-off rigid coastline—
When the ship approaches, the shore now rises
With the trees, where the distance offered nothing;
Closer, land breaks into sounds and colors;
As we disembark, come birds and flowers,
Where before was but a far-off abstract line.

To dream is to see from some vague distance
Shapes invisible, then with the quickened
Motion of one's hope and will,
To seek upon the cold horizon
Tree and beach, flower, bird, and fountain—
Those kisses Truth awards.

III. Pillar Standard

His labor's huge and man is puny.
I, Diogo Cão, the navigator, fixed
This pillar by the tawny sands
And then sailed on.

His soul's divine, his work imperfect.
This standard signals to wind and skies
That of all the derring-do the part fulfilled is mine—
Still undone is God's.

And the shields you see here
Instruct the tractable unending ocean:
The landlocked sea is Greek or Roman,
The boundless sea is Portuguese.

And the high Cross tells what burns my soul
And sends me forth to navigate
Will find elusive harbor only
In the Lord's eternal peace.

IV. The Sea Monster

The monster living at sea's end
Through pitch-black night leapt up in flight;
Three times it circled round the ship,
Three times about it flew and screeching
Said: "Who is he that dared to penetrate
My inmost chambers still undisclosed,

My blackest roofs at the world's end?"
And trembling at the helm the man there said,
"The King Don John the Second!"

"Whose sails are these which now I touch
And whose the prows I see and hear?"
Spoke the monster, and thrice it circled,
Three times circled, hideous and foul,
"Who comes daring that which only I may dare,
I who live where none has spied me yet,
Draining the fears of the bottomless sea?"
And trembling at the helm the man there said,
"The King Don John the Second!"

Thrice he lifted hands from helm,
And thrice he laid them down again,
And trembling thrice at length he said,
"At this helm here am I greater than myself:
A People am I, wanting the sea you own;
And greater than the monster frightening my heart
And circling at the world's dark end
Is the commanding will, lashing me to the helm,
Of the King Don John the Second!"

V. Epitaph of Bartholomeu Dias

Here lies, on this distant narrow shore,
The captain of the End. The Terror is turned about,
The sea's the same: let no one fear it now!
Atlas, shouldering the world, exhibits it on high.

VI. The Columbuses

Others must yet possess
What we must lose.
Others empowered to find
What in our find

Was found or left unfound,
As Fate designed or disallowed.

But what they shan't possess
Is that magic of remoteness
Which makes history.
In consequence, their glory's
The fair proffered bright-
Ness of a borrowed light.

VII. West

With both hands, Deed and Destiny,
We unveiled it. In a single gesture,
One lifts heavenward the trembling holy torch
As the other tears the veil aside.

Whether the hand which tore the Western veil
Was time gone by or time to come,
Science was the soul and Daring the body
Of that unveiling hand.

Whether the hand that raised the flaming torch,
Was Chance, or Will, or Tempest,
God was the soul, Portugal the body
Of that guiding hand.

VIII. Ferdinand Magellan

A bonfire ignites the valley.
A dance shakes all the earth.
Shadows vague and shapeless
Roaming the valley in black flashes
Pass suddenly along the hillsides
To lose themselves in darkness.

Whose is the dance the night has filled with terror?
The dance of Titans, sons of Earth,

Dancing out the sailor's death
Who yearned to encircle the primal mother—
Be the first man to embrace her—
Buried on the distant shore at last.

On they dance, not knowing the dead man's
Vaunted soul still commands the fleet—
With disembodied wrist still steering at the helm
Ships headed toward the last vestiges of space,
And who, though absent, still could circle
All the earth in his embrace.

He ravished Earth. But this
They do not know, dancing out their solitude.
And shadows vague and shapeless passing by
Lose themselves on the horizons,
Clambering up the valley through the hills
Along the silent mountains.

IX. Ascension of Vasco da Gama

Gods of the tempest, giants of the earth,
Suddenly suspend their warring fury and stand
Amazed. Along the valley rising skyward
Grows a silence through the mist that sways its veils,
At first the merest stirring, then astonishment.
While all this lasts, fears shoulder it along,
And far away the path booms off through clouds and
dazzling light.

On the earth below, a shepherd frozen, his flute
Fallen from him, sees in rapture through a thousand
glaring lightning bolts
Heaven opening its chasm for the soul of the Argonaut.

X. Portuguese Sea

O sea of salt, how much of all your salt
Contains the tears of Portugal?
So we might sail, how many mothers wept,
How many sons have prayed in vain!
How many girls betrothed remained unwed
That we might possess you, Sea!

Was it worth the effort? Anything's worth it
If the soul's not petty.
If you'd sail beyond the Cape
Sail you must past cares, past grief.
God gave perils to the sea and sheer depth,
But mirrored heaven there.

XI. The Last Ship

With King Sebastian there on board,
And raising high the flag of Empire
As his name,
The last ship sailed into the sun,
Alone, ill-omened, to anguished cries, impending
Mystery.

Never to return. At what deserted isle
Did it weigh anchor? Will it return from
Its uncertain fate?
God protects the Future's form and body
But His light projects it, darkening dream
So brief.

Ah, the more a people's soul has faltered
The more my own Atlantan soul exalting
Pours forth,
And in me, a timeless, boundless sea,
I spy through fog your dim shape
Turning back.

The hour I do not know, but know there is an hour
May God delay it, though soul call it
Mystery.

To the sun in me you rise, and mist vanishes:
As still the same, and still you bear the flag
Of Empire.

XII. Prayer

The night's arrived, Lord, and the soul is mean.
After such sea-rage, such strength of will,
What's left us now in hostile silence but
Universal sea and this nostalgia?

But the flame that life has planted in us,
If life there be, has not as yet been doused.
What cool death eclipsed in ashes
The beckoning wind can raise once more.

Let wind blow or gentle breeze—of anguish or disgrace—
Reigniting effort's flame,
And once again we'll go and vanquish Distance—
Of ocean-sea or anything, so long as it is ours!

Third Part: The Hidden One

Pax in Excelsis

I. The Symbols

FIRST: King Sebastian

Wait! On desert sands I fell, in that hard
hour

God reserves for His own
As the interval when the soul may bathe
In dreams that are God.

What matter desert, death, misfortune,
If I am in God's keeping?
As He I've dreamt myself to last forever,
And as He I shall return.

SECOND: The Fifth Empire

Pity the stay-at-home,
Happy at his hearth,
Without a dream, lifting high,
To stir his embers till they burn
In that hearth he must abandon!

Pity the happy-go-lucky!
He lives because life goes on.
Nothing at heart will tell him
More than that root lesson—
To make of his life his tomb.

Age after age disappears,
Filling time with ages to come.
Being man is being discontent.
Let blind forces be overcome
By the visionary soul!

And so, the four ages spent
By the being that dreamt
The earth will be the stage
For that bright day just begun
In the atrium of the dark night.

Greece, Rome, Christianity,
Europe—all four pass on
To where all the ages go.
Who'll come to live the truth
That King Sebastian died?

THIRD: The Desired One

Wherever between hearsay and shadows
You lie remote, feel you're being dreamt,
Arise from that abyss of all ghosts
To your new destiny!

Now at the decisive hour, come Galahad,
Of the homeland and raise once more
Your penitent people's soul
To the new Eucharist.

Master of Peace, raise your anointed blade,
Excalibur of the End, with such a thrust
Its light to the divided world reveals
The Holy Grail!

FOURTH: The Blessed Isles

What voice rolls in the sound of waves
That's not the voice of the sea?
It's the voice of one who speaks to us
But if we listen will turn mute
For our having listened.

Only if, while half asleep, we hear
(Not knowing we hear it)

The word of hope that speaks to us,
We turn to it like a tired child
Smiling in our sleep.

These are the blessed isles,
Lands of no identity,
Where the King lives in expectation.
But should we turn to wake,
Voice goes mute, there's only sea.

FIFTH: The Hidden One

What fecund Symbol is this
Rising with eager dawn?
On the Dead Cross of the World,
The Life, which is the Rose.

What holy symbol is this
Shouldering the pre-seen day?
On the Cross, called Destiny,
The Rose, which is the Christ.

What final symbol is this
Shows the pre-awakened sun?
On the dead and fateful Cross,
The Rose of the Hidden One.

II. Prophecies

FIRST: Bandarra

He dreamed—anonymous, dispersed—
The Empire God Himself had glimpsed,
Confused as is the Universe,
Plebeian as Jesus Christ.

He was no hero and no saint,
But God blessed him with His Sign

Who was at heart no Portuguese
But Portugal itself.

SECOND: António Vieira

As blue sky is star-streaked with grandeur,
So was this man of fame and glory,
This Portuguese word-emperor,
Such a sky of blue for us.

In his boundless realm of thought,
Constellations of form and vision,
Rises, in prognosticated moonlight,
His Majesty, King Sebastian.

But no, not moonlight; it's ether's light.
It's day; and in that sky's vast wishfulness
The Fifth Empire's unreal dawn
Gilds the Tagus River shore.

THIRD

On sorrow's shore I write my book.
My heart holds nothing fast.
My hot eyes fill with tears.
You alone, Lord, give me life.

Just to feel and think of you
Fills, and gilds the empty days.
But when will you wish to return?
When comes the King? When is the Hour?

When will you become the true Christ
Of Him for whom the false One died—
And when from all the evil that I am
Waken New World and New Heaven?

When will you appear, O Hidden One,
Oh dream of Portugal down the ages,
And make me more than the fitful sigh
Of some vast yearning God created?

Ah, when will you decide, resuming,
To change my hope to love?
From mist and longing, when?
When, my Dream, my Lord, ah when?

III. The Times

FIRST: Night

One brother's vessel vanished
From the indefinite sea.
Another asked the King leave,
By faith and custom's fiat,
To go and seek his brother
Through boundless seas and darkest mist.

Time passed. Neither one nor the other
Returned from the deep and distant ocean,
Unknown to the nation on whom
It laid the enigma it had made.
Then a third beseeched the King
To search for both. The King refused.

*

Servants hear him pass
The manor house as if enchained.
And, when seen, a fevered figure
With anguished eyes
Stares bitterly ahead
Into the forbidden blue beyond.

*

Two brothers who share our Name, Lord,
The Power and the Glory,
Both strove in the sea of ages
Toward your agelessness;
And with them went that part of us
Which in spirit makes heroes possible.

From our wretched prison house
We ache to seek our heroes:
It's the search for who we are
Far within us; in fevered yearning
We lift our hands to God.

But God forbids our going hence.

SECOND: Storm

What lies in the undersea abyss, struggling to arise?
We, Portugal, the latency of being.
What disquiet of the deep lifts us slowly up?
The yearning to be able to desire.

This and the mystery in the panoply of night . . .
But then a sudden wind comes roaring,
There's a flash, God's beacon, a whirlpool
Lighting up, and the dark sea pounds.

THIRD: Calm

What coast is this the waves tell of
That can never be encountered
For all the ships that are at sea?
What is it the waves encounter
That never hovers into view?
What shingle-crashing sound,
And where can it be found?

Isle so close and so remote
Persisting within earshot
That to sight is nonexistent.
What ship, what fleet, or what armada
Can find its way to shore
Where the sea is so insistent
While to sight there's only sea?

Are there clefts in space
Opening upon the other side,
And suddenly from one of these
Where only seaweed is now apparent,
A hidden isle, blessed dominion, rises,
Harboring the King exiled
In his enchanted life?

FOURTH: Pre-Dawn

The monster living at the Ocean's end
Through darkest shadows came to seek
The dawning of the new day,
The new day that has no end;
And said, "Who now sleeps remembering
He once revealed the Second World
But is unwilling to reveal the Third?"

And the sound of rolling in the dark
Disturbs the sleep, saddens dreaming,
And the rolling monster servant went his way
Whose master here he'd come to seek,
Whose master here he'd come to call—
To call the sleeping One
Who'd once been Regent of the Sea.

FIFTH: Heavy Fog

Not King nor law, nor peace nor war,
Defines in outline or in substance

The tarnished brilliance of this land
Called Portugal, now come to grief—
A brilliance lacking luster, spark,
Encircles like the will-o'-the-wisp.

None knows what it is he wants.
None knows what is in his soul,
Nor yet knows what's good or ill. .
(What distant anguish echoes here?)
All's uncertain, nears its end.
All's fragmented, nothing's whole.
Oh Portugal, today you are the fog . . .

The hour is upon us!
Valete, Fratres

No age transmits its sensibility to the next; it merely transmits the intelligence of that sensibility. Through emotion we are ourselves; through intelligence we're someone else. Intelligence disperses us; that is why it's through what disperses us that we ourselves survive. Each age gives its successor only that which it was not.

* * * *

To feign is to know oneself.

* * * *

All true emotion is a lie to the intelligence since emotion doesn't fit it. Accordingly, all true emotion is falsely expressed. Expressing oneself is saying what one doesn't feel.

* * * *

Paganism is neither materialistic nor narrow: it is simply the concept of the universe which presupposes, above all, the existence of an abstract and unshakable Destiny to which both men and gods are equally subject. . . . It may be alleged that the core of paganism is sad; and indeed it is. But the pagan is objective: he sees things and accepts them; he doesn't deem it useful to create illusions about being happy. It was Christianity that brought to Western civilization the need for a substitute to the universe. It is not unjust to say that the first known form of opium or cocaine in European civilization was Christianity. . . . With the dissolution of Christianity, where did the spirit of objectivity go? The answer is obvious: it became science. That is, it got linked to that modern phenomenon, precisely the most characteristic of our time. With this, the repaganization of the world substantially began. . . .

All art is no more than a religious rite. . . .

* * * *

As moderns, we act out the exact meaning of that line from Voltaire in which he says, if the worlds are inhabited, the earth is an insane asylum of the Universe. In effect, we're a madhouse, whether other planets are inhabited or not. We live a life that has already lost all notion of normality, and where health only flourishes in lapses between illnesses. We live a chronic illness, a feverish anemia. Our fate is not to die because we have not adjusted ourselves to our condition as perpetual moribunds. How can a spirit of the race of builders, whose soul is child to the great pagan truths, have anything in common with an age like ours? It can't, except by a spontaneous gesture of repulsion and thoughtful disdain. We are thus the only ones to disagree with decadence, and nature compels us to assume a stance, equally decadent. An indifferent attitude is a decadent one, and we're forced to be indifferent by our incapacity to adjust to our surroundings. We don't adapt because healthy men don't adapt to a morbid environment. By not adapting, we're also morbid. It is in this paradox that we, pagans, live. We've no other hope or remedy.

* * * *

Aristotle divided poetry into lyric, elegiac, epic, and dramatic. Like all classifications that are well conceived, it is useful and clear; like all classifications, it is false. Literary genres are not so easily separated, and if we look closely at what constitutes the object, we see that there's a continual gradation from lyric to dramatic poetry. In effect, and going back to the origins of dramatic poetry (Aeschylus, for example), it's more accurate to say we find lyric poetry put in the mouths of various characters. The first degree of lyric poetry is that in which the poet, concentrated upon his feeling, expresses that feeling. If, however, he is someone with many shifting feelings, he will express himself as a multiplicity of people united only by a certain

temperament and style. One step up the poetic ladder and we have the poet of varied and fictitious feelings, more imaginative than sentimental, living each mood intellectually rather than emotionally. Such a poet will express himself as a multiplicity of characters, not united by temperament and style, since imagination displaces temperament, and intelligence displaces feeling, with style as the only unifying element. Another step up the same ladder of depersonalization, or imagination, and we have the poet who, during each of his various moods, gives himself over to that mood so completely that he is entirely depersonalized, who analytically experiencing that state of mind makes of it the expression of another character, and in this way the style itself tends to vary. Take the final step and you have a poet who is various poets, a dramatic poet writing lyric poetry. Each mood cluster, similar to each other, will become a character, with its own style and with feelings that perhaps differ from, even contradict, the feelings of the poet in his living person. And he will have brought lyric poetry—or whatever literary form is substantially analogous to lyric poetry—into dramatic poetry without, however, giving it dramatic form, neither explicitly nor implicitly. . . . It is in such a way that these poems of Caeiro, of Ricardo Reis, and of Álvaro de Campos must be considered.

* * * *

Emotions and desires are the stains of humanity that must be removed from the soul when it seeks to be scientific. The esthetic feeling can become a science; and originality can be cultivated as a discipline. . . . Sincerity is the great obstacle the artist must overcome. Only long years of practice—an apprenticeship by which one learns how to avoid feeling things other than literarily—can bring the spirit to this pinnacle.

* * * *

The slowness of our life is such that we don't consider ourselves old at forty. The speed of vehicles has put an end to the speed of our souls. We live very slowly and that's why we become bored so easily.

Life has become an open field for us. We don't work enough and want to work more. We move around very rapidly from one spot where nothing's happening to another where there's nothing to do, and we call this the feverish bustle of modern life. It's not the fever of the bustle but the bustle of the fever. Modern life is an agitated emptiness, a fugue of ordered movement inside the tumult.

* * * *

Speaking is the simplest way of making ourselves unknown. And that immoral and hypocritical way of speaking which is called writing conceals us most completely from others and from that class of "others" which out of ignorance we call ourselves.

* * * *

Certainty—that is, twisting the objective nature of our perceptions and fitting our ideas to "reality" or "truth"—is a symptom of ignorance or madness. . . .

* * * *

Whoever would like to sum up the principal feature of modern art in one word would find in dream the perfect word. Modern art is the art of the dream. . . .

Bernardo Soares

The Semi-Heteronym

Introducing Bernardo Soares

The reader should note that though I am publishing (it publishes itself) the *Book of Disquietude* under the name of a certain Bernardo Soares, assistant bookkeeper in the city of Lisbon, I did not include it in *Fictions of the Interlude*. This is because Bernardo Soares, distinct from me in ideas, feelings, modes of perception, and understanding, does not differ from me in his style. I represent a different character in my own style, with the inevitable differences of tone made necessary by the distinct type of emotion projected. In the authors of *Fictions of the Interlude*, not only are ideas and feelings distinct from mine but the very structural technique, the style, is different. Thus, each character is an entirely distinct creation and not merely construed differently. That's why verse predominates in *Fictions of the Interlude*. It is more difficult to be someone else in prose.

(Fernando Pessoa, Concerning the Work of Bernardo Soares)

I envy . . . but don't know if I envy . . . those who can be written about in biographical form or who can write their own biography. In these disordered impressions, lacking even the desire to give them order, I narrate my autobiography indifferently, without facts, without my history and life. They are my Confessions, and if I say nothing in them, it's because I've nothing to say.

What can anyone confess that's worthwhile or useful? What's happened to us has either happened to everyone or happened to us alone; in the first instance, it isn't new, and in the latter, it's not communicable. If I write what I feel it's so that I can reduce the fever I get from feeling. What I confess is of no importance since nothing is. I create landscapes from what I feel. I make holidays out of the senses. I can well understand those who make embroidery out of sorrow and those who knit socks because there's life in it. My old aunt was forever playing solitaire in the evening. These confessions of feeling are my solitaire. I don't interpret them like someone who wants to know about his fate from the cards. I don't examine them since in solitaire the cards themselves have no meaning. I unravel myself like a multicolored skein, or I make designs for myself from the thread, like those woven by diligent hands and passed on from some children to other children. My sole concern is not to let the thumb miss the loop. Afterwards, I shift my hand and the figure is different. And I begin again.

Living is knitting stockings following someone else's intentions. But in doing so, one's thought is free and all the magical princes may pass through their parks between the downward swoops of the marble needle and its point coming back upwards. The crocheting of things . . . Interval . . . Nothing . . .

And besides, what is there in me I can count on? A terrible poignancy of sensations, and the deep understanding of feeling . . . A sharp intelligence to destroy me and the voracious power of dream to distract me . . . A lifeless will and a meditateness that lulls me as if I were a living child . . . Yes, crocheting . . .

* * * *

I am the outskirts of a small town that doesn't exist, the profuse commentary on a book that hasn't yet been written. I am nobody, nobody at all. I don't know how to feel, I don't know how to think, I don't know how to desire. I'm a character in a novel that still needs to be written, vanishing into thin air and undone without ever having existed, among the dreams of someone who didn't know how to complete me.

I always think, I always feel; but my thought lacks logic, my emotion lacks feelings. I keep falling from the trap door there above, down through infinite space in a directionless descent, empty and infinite on all sides. My soul is a black maelstrom, a gigantic vertigo all around the vacuum, the movement of an infinite ocean encircling a hole of nothingness, and in those waters I whirl more than the images on flowing waters I've seen and heard in the world: houses, faces, books, boxes, faint sounds of music and the syllables of voices pass by in an endless, sinister whirlwind.

* * * *

What a pleasure it would be for me to create a Jesuit religion of the senses.

* * * *

To create inside myself a political state, with parties and revolutions, and I being all of this, being God in the real pantheon of this People-Myself, essence and action of their bodies, of their souls, of the earth they tread and the acts they perform. To be all this, to be them and not them. Oh, well! This is still one of the dreams I cannot fulfill. If I did, I'd die perhaps; I don't know why but one's not supposed to live after such an enormous sacrilege against God, such an enormous usurpation of the divine power to be all things.

* * * *

To be able to dream and make the inconceivable visible is one of the great victories that even I, who am so great, only rarely achieve. Yes, to dream, for example, that I am simultaneously, separately and unconfusedly the man and the woman on a walk that a man and woman are taking along the riverside. To see myself, at the same time, with the same clarity and in the same way, without mixing things, being the two things, integral with both equally: a ship conscious of the sea in the South and a printed page of an ancient book. How absurd this sounds! But everything is absurd and the dream is still the least absurd of all.

* * * *

May the Gods preserve in me, until the hour in which this aspect of mine ceases, the clear and sunny notion of external reality, the instinct of my unimportance, the comfort of being little and being able to think about being happy.

* * * *

To speak is to show too much consideration for others. Fish and Oscar Wilde both died via the mouth.

* * * *

Slavery is the law of life, and there is no other because this law must be fulfilled, without any possibility of rebelling or any place of refuge to discover.

* * * *

I grow irritated by the happiness of all these men who don't know they're unhappy. Their human life is full of all that would constitute a series of anxieties for a truly sensitive nature. But, as their true life is vegetal, what they suffer passes through them without touching their soul, and they live a life comparable to that of a man with a toothache who could have been given a fortune—the authentic

fortune of being alive without being conscious of it, the greatest gift the gods give us because it is the gift that makes us resemble them: like them, although in a different way, beyond happiness and pain.

That's why, in spite of everything, I love them all. My dear vegetables!

* * * *

There are some days when each person I meet, and even more the daily, obligatory social contacts, acquire a symbolic aspect, and, whether separate or bound together, form an occult or prophetic script, shadow-descriptive of my life. The office becomes a page for me with words of people; the street is a book; the words exchanged with people I normally, or not so normally, meet are things said for which I have no dictionary although I do have a slight understanding of them. They speak, they express, but it is not of themselves they speak nor themselves that they express; they are words, as I have said, and they don't reveal, they let no one see through them. Yet, in my crepuscular vision, I discern if ever so vaguely what these quick glass windows, laid bare upon the appearance of things, allow us to be concealed or revealed on the inside. I understand without knowledge like a blind man to whom one speaks of colors.

* * * *

(Storm)

An overdose of silence, lividly obscure. In its own way following closely between the rapid, occasional rumbling of the wagons, a truck roars by—ridiculous, mechanical echo of what goes by, real in the near distance of the skies.

Again, without warning, magnetic light gushes forth, winking. The heart beats a short gulp. A bell jar overhead breaks into huge splinters of the dome. A new cloth of bad rain strikes the sound of the ground.

[The boss Vasques'] livid face is falsely green and shaken. I observe him there in the difficulty of breathing, with fraternal feeling, knowing I shall also be like that.

After the last heat waves of Summer ceased being harsh under the dull sun, Autumn began before it really came in, with a faint sadness so undefined it seemed to be the sky's desire not to smile. It was a blueness, sometimes clearer, sometimes greener, of the very lack in itself of bright colors' substance. It was a kind of forgetfulness in the clouds, purples of different shades, subdued; it was not torpor any more but a tedium in all the quiet solitude where clouds go by.

The entry of real Autumn was announced later by a coldness in a noncoldness of the air, by a subduing of colors not yet diluted, by something shadowy and distant from what had been the tone of the landscape and of the diverse aspect of things. Nothing was yet dying, but everything, as in a smile one still misses, turned nostalgically toward life.

It came, finally—real Autumn: the windy air grew cold; leaves resounded in a dry pitch, even though the leaves weren't dry; the whole earth took on the impalpable color and form of a vague quagmire. What had been the last smile faded from fatigued eyelids and the indifference of gestures. And so, everything that feels, or we assume has feeling, was grieving, within the heart's core, over its own leave-taking. The sound of a whirlwind in a courtyard drifted across our consciousness of something else. It was pleasant to recuperate, just so one could really feel life.

But the first Winter rains, having already arrived in the by-now clear Autumn, washed these hazy colors as if with no respect at all. High winds, screeching through immobile things, making noise in things pinned down, dragging movable things away, arose among the fitful clamoring of the rain, absent words of anonymous protest, sad sounds nearly mad from desperation without soul.

And finally Autumn dwindled, cold and gray. It was a wintry Autumn that came in now, a powder turning everything to mud, but also something that's good—clean Summer completed. Spring to come, Autumn defining itself at last in Winter. And in the air up high where dull shades recall neither color nor sadness, everything was propitious for oncoming night, indefinite meditation.

And so, it was all for me before I thought about it. If I write

about it today, it's because I remember it. The Autumn I possess is the one I lost.

* * * *

Smell is a strange way of seeing. It evokes sentimental landscapes by virtue of the subconscious's quick sketching out of things. I've felt this many times. I pass down the street. I don't see anything, or better, in seeing all things, I see the way all people see. I know I'm passing down a street and I don't know if it exists, flanked by different houses made by human beings. I pass down the street. From a bakery the smell of bread emerges, nauseating for having too sweet a smell: and my childhood rises from a certain distant neighborhood, and another bakery appears in that fairyland which is everything that has died within us. I pass down that street. Suddenly it smells of fruit on the sloping stand of the narrow little shop; and my brief life in the country, I no longer know when or where, has trees in the distance and that peace inside what is clearly my heart as a small boy. I pass down the street. I'm unexpectedly disoriented by the smell of the garbage man's garbage cans: oh, my Cesário, now you appear and I am happy at last because I have resumed, through memory, to the only truth, the truth of literature.

* * * *

That individual grandiose person the Romantics gave shape to I have often tried living in dreams, and just as often have found myself laughing aloud at my idea of living it. Mortal man, in the end, exists in his own dreams, which are those of all men, and Romanticism is nothing if not the turning inside out of the daily power we exert over ourselves. Almost all men dream deep down in their hearts of their magnificent dominion over an empire, the subjugation of all men, the submission of all women, the adoration of all people. . . . Few men are as habituated to dreaming as I am, and therefore sufficiently lucid to laugh at the esthetic possibility of dreaming oneself in such a way.

The greatest charge one can level against Romanticism has not yet been made: namely, that it represents the inner truth of human

nature. Its exaggerations, its ridiculous aspects, its various powers to compel and seduce stem from the fact that it is an external figuration of what is most intimate in the soul, yet concretely visible, even possible—if being possible only depended on something other than Fate.

How many times have I too—who laugh at such distracting seductions—found myself conjecturing how wonderful it would be to be famous, how pleasant to be fussed over, how exciting to be triumphant! But I cannot visualize myself in such lofty roles without a loud roar of laughter from that other me I constantly bear within me, like the Rua da Baixa. See myself famous? But I see myself famous as a bookkeeper. Feel myself upon the thrones of fame? But the same occurs in the office on the Rua dos Douradores, and the office boys are an impediment. Hear myself applauded by diverse multitudes? The applause reaches the fourth floor where I live, and crashes into the rustic furniture in my cheap room, collides with everything surrounding me, and from kitchen to dream, mortifies me. I didn't even admit, like the splendid Spaniards, those flimsy castles in Spain, the greatest illusion of all. Mine were the dirty old playing cards of a broken deck you could never play with; since they wouldn't fall properly they had to be slammed down with a flip of the wrist, an impatient impulse of the old maid who wanted to put the tablecloth back onto that part of the table because the time for tea had rung like a curse of Destiny. Yet even this is a useless vision, since I don't have the house in the country nor the old aunts at whose table I take tea, tasting of peace at the end of an evening family get-together. My dream failed even in its metaphors and figures. My empire didn't even extend to the old deck of cards. My victory failed without even a teapot or the proverbial night cat. I will die as I have lived, between the bric-a-brac of the suburbs, valued by the weight of that which is between the postscripts of the lost one.

Appendix

NOTES ON THE POEMS

The "*Assorted Poems*" include forty-eight additional poems by Alberto Caeiro, who somehow continued to write until 1930, although he was presumed fictionally "dead" by 1915.

The "*Opium Eater*" was composed as an experiment in voice, presumably that of an embryonic Álvaro de Campos, before coming under the influence of his master, Caeiro. "It was one of the poems," Pessoa wrote, "that created the most difficulties because of the double power of depersonalization I had to undergo . . ." The poem adheres to a formal metrical and rhyme scheme (ABBA) in the original, and with a scramble of conventional imagery typical of certain *fin de siècle* poems.

In "*Master, my dear master,*" Campos looks back nostalgically at himself before he had entered the drama of sensations and learned Caeiro's lesson about "the frightening reality of things." It deals with the longing to be the person the poet once was, and not the disemboweled hulk of sensations he feels he has become.

"*Autopsychography*" is Pessoa's most quoted poem and capsulates his notion of artistic "sincerity." Translating the word "fingidor" as "faker" is intended to evoke a cluster of meanings bound up with the idea of the artist as maker and craftsman—as, for example, *facit*, in Latin, "he makes"—and as illusion-maker and actor. Since the poem is brief, the original appears here in its entirety, so the reader may have a go at translating it:

*O poeta é um fingidor.
Finge tão completamente
Que chega a fingir que é dor
A dor que deveras sente.*

*E os que lêem o que escreve,
Na dor lida sentem bem,
Não as duas que ele teve,
Mas só a que eles não têm.*

*E assim nas calhas de roda
Gira, a entreter a razão,
Esse comboio de corda
Que se chama o coração.*

"*Absurd Hour*," the first instance of a consciousness in the process of splintering into disjointed thoughts and absurdly linked images, foreshadows the advent of the heteronyms.

"*Beyond God*" exemplifies Pessoa's occultism and plays with the dual notions of absence and interval that recur in many poems, especially in the *Cancioneiro*. Pessoa was not against religion but religious systems and, more virulently, against Christianity for having diminished the pagan gods. See, for example, the poem entitled "Christmas."

"*Oblique Rain*," a poem in six parts, was written immediately after Pessoa experienced the spontaneous "birth" of Alberto Caeiro: "the return of Fernando Pessoa Alberto Caeiro to Fernando Pessoa himself. Or better, . . . the reaction of Fernando Pessoa to his nonexistence as Alberto Caeiro." The poet had plans to include this piece in a project never completed, an *Anthology of Intersectionism*, under the name of Álvaro de Campos. And at another time he intended to include the poem in the diary of his semi-heteronym, the prose writer Bernardo Soares. "Oblique Rain" illustrates the principles of "intersectionism": establishing the impression that two things occurring in different spaces and at different times happen simultaneously, thus creating the illusion of a multiplicity of sensations.

NOTES TO *Message*

Last October I published a book of poems . . . which, in fact, forms a single poem, entitled *Message*. This book was awarded a prize by the Ministry of National Propaganda, under very special circumstances. . . . A careful reader of *Message*, regardless of his value judgment respecting the book, will not be shocked by the anti-romanticism which is constantly although negatively visible in the text. An equally careful reader, who is also familiar with the understanding, or, at least, with the intuition of hermetic things, will not find the defense of Freemasonry strange in the author of a book so

thoroughly steeped in the symbolism of the Templars and the Rosicrucians. And it will be easy for such a reader to conclude, given that the Orders of the Templars, although not politically active, have social ideas which are identical . . . to those of the Freemasons, and . . . [given that] the Rosicrucians [are involved] in concepts of fraternity and peace (*Pax profunda, frater* is the Rosicrucian salutation for their Brothers as well as for nonmembers), that the author of such a book is inevitably a liberal by inference if not by nature.

But, in fact, I have always been faithful, by nature (and this has been reinforced by my education, which has been entirely English), to the essential principles of liberalism—respect for the dignity of mankind and freedom of the spirit, or, in other words, individualism and tolerance, or better still, in a word, fraternal individualism.

There are three social realities—the Individual, the Nation, Humanity. Everything else is fictitious.

The Individual, the Nation, and Humanity are realities because they are perfectly defined. They have form and profile. The Individual is the supreme reality because it has a material as well as mental shape—it is a living body and a living soul.

Humanity is another social reality which is as strong as the Individual and stronger still than the Nation since it is more defined. The Individual is, in essence, a biological notion; Humanity is essentially a zoological notion—neither more nor less than an animal species created from all individuals of human form. Both are root-realities. The Nation, by virtue of its being a social reality, is not material; it is more a stem than a root. The Individual and Humanity are *places*, the Nation being a *passage* between them. It is from the sense of a patriotic fraternity, easy to feel for those who are not degenerate, that we gradually sublimate our feelings until we feel fraternal with all mankind.

It follows from this that the more intensely we feel patriotic—assuming we know how to be patriotic—the more intensely we will be prepared, within ourselves and with those who are with us, for a human future achievement which we must hold as desirable even though God himself makes it impossible. . . .

One thing and only one concerns me: that I have helped . . . to some degree, to hinder Portuguese reactionaries in one of their

greatest and most justifiable pleasures—that of speaking nonsense. I have confidence, however, in the stonelike solidity of their heads and the inherent moral actions of their steadfast and totalitarian faith which they divide into equal parts—Our Lady of Fatima and D. Duarte Nuño of Bragança.

(*Fernando Pessoa, excerpt from "Explanation of a Book," 1935*)

Ulysses. According to legend, he founded Ulisippo (Lisbon) during his wanderings after the Trojan war.

Viriato (second century B.C.). Lusitanian soldier and leader, he led the resistance of the Lusitanians, who dwelt in central Portugal, against the Romans. After being formally recognized by the Romans as "friend to the Roman people," he was assassinated by three companions bribed by the Romans. The resistance ended with his death.

Count Henry of Burgundy (1057–1112). A Frenchman who founded the royal house of Portugal. After marrying Tarega, he was granted the territory between Minho River and the Tagus as dowry, with permission to transmit his government to his heirs. When war broke out between the heirs of Alfonso VI of Spanish León, Henry supported the winning side in his successful effort to maintain his freedom from Spain.

Tareja (or *Terêsa*) (?–1130). Illegitimate daughter of Alfonso VI of Spain and widow of Count Henry, she continued his government and policy, but her son, Afonso Henriques, rebelled against her and fought the battle of São Mamede in 1128, after which she was forced to withdraw to Spain.

King Afonso Henriques I (1110–1185). The conqueror and first king of Portugal. He succeeded his mother in 1128, fought the Moslems until he wrested Lisbon from them, and rebelled against Alfonso VII of Spain. In 1179, after negotiating with the Holy See, he received recognition as the Portuguese King and his state as the Kingdom of Portugal.

King Diniz (1261–1325). Crowned in 1279, he married Isabel of Aragon in 1282. Called The Troubadour because he wrote many of the best Galician-Portuguese lyrical poems, he also was known as The Farmer because he ordered the planting of the pine forest of

Leiria, near Coimbra, which was to help develop the Portuguese navy and overseas trade. He also founded the University of Lisbon.

João I (1357–1433). Founder of the House of Avis and the illegitimate son of Pedro I, he secured the marriage of his daughter Beatriz to King Juan I of Castile, who favored the union of the two countries. To reinforce the claims of Beatriz as Queen, Juan invaded Portugal. The citizens of Lisbon urged João to be the defender of the realm. João sought the aid of the English in the war against Spain, and later married the British Philippa of Lancaster (1387). He was proclaimed king in 1385. He is known as the author of *The Book on Hunting*.

Philippa (Filipa) of Lancaster (1359–1415). Wife of João I and granddaughter of Edward III of England, she brought to the Portuguese court new styles and cultural traditions; she also personally educated her nine children. The six who survived were named The Illustrious Generation by Camões.

King Duarte (1391–1438). Called the Eloquent, Duarte was the eldest son of João I and was crowned king in 1433. He was responsible for the first compilation of Portuguese laws and decreed the restoration of the public treasury. During his reign Portugal conquered Morocco and began the campaign of Ceuta. The Portuguese settled in the Atlantic islands and began to explore the West African coast. Duarte wrote the first European manual on equestrianism, *How to Ride Well in Any Saddle*. Also known for his collection of religious essays, *Loyal Counsellor*, he is said to have been the first to define what is typically Portuguese with the untranslatable word *saudade*.

Prince Fernando (1402–1442). As the eighth son of João I, he participated in the second expedition against Tangier in an effort to gain glory. He was held hostage when the expedition failed. The required ransom was the return of Ceuta, and after lengthy discussion, the courts opposed the cession. Fernando was popularly canonized the Infante Santo after his death in prison.

Pedro (1393–1449). As second son of João I, Pedro served as Regent of Portugal (1441–1446) until Afonso V, the son of Duarte, came of age. Pedro voyaged extensively (to “the seven parts of the earth”) and was mainly interested in history and geography. During

his regency the University of Lisbon was reformed and the School of General Studies established in Coimbra. After Pedro relinquished the regency to Afonso V, there were intrigues that set the King against him. Afonso offered him the choice of prison, death, or exile; mobilizing his army, Pedro went to Lisbon to appeal for justice, but was there met by the king's army and killed in battle.

João (1400–1442). Seventh son of João I, he played a lesser role at court, although he had considerable influence among the nobility as well as the confidence of the King.

Sebastian I (Sebastião) (1557–1578). Called the Desired One, he was the posthumous son of Prince João and nephew of the Emperor Charles V, when he became the sixteenth king of Portugal. His grandmother, Catarina, Queen of Portugal (1557–1562), and his uncle Henrique, Grand Inquisitor and Cardinal-Archbishop of Lisbon (1562–1568), influenced his growing up. Obsessed with ideas of conquest and the propagation of the Faith, Sebastian had little sense of how to govern. After sailing to Tangier to fight the Moslems (1578), he was defeated in Morocco and disappeared along with many nobles.

The myth of Sebastianism began soon after the King's disappearance. According to popular belief, Sebastian was not dead but lived on somewhere in the legendary Isles of the Blessed. It was thought he would return one foggy morning to rule again and release the country from Spanish oppression, and herald in a new age, the Fifth Empire. After his many rumored appearances, the myth was extended to literature and politics through poems and songs expressing a strong element of the New Christian messianism. Sebastian subsequently became a type of messianic hero, identified as The Hidden One. The myth was used at crucial moments of Portuguese history when a hero was needed to save the country from collapse. João IV was regarded as an avatar of Sebastian when he liberated Portugal from Spain in 1640. The myth was revived during the French invasions, and again at the proclamation of the Portuguese Republic in 1910.

Nun' Álvares Pereira (1360–1431). The Portuguese hero-saint served as head of the army in the crisis with Spain in 1383. Two years later he was named Constable of the Realm by João I. His mil-

itary skill helped the Portuguese defeat the Spanish. With the nation's independence won, he took religious vows as a Carmelite monk and was thereafter known as the Saint Constable. He was canonized in 1518.

Henrique (Henry) (1394–1460). Called the Navigator, he was the fifth son of João I. His naval policy led the Portuguese to deep-sea fishing and subsequently to the discovery of the Atlantic islands and the West African coast. He enjoyed the assistance of many foreign mathematicians, cartographers, and sailors, and with them formed the well-known institute, the Escola de Sagres. His brother Pedro, the Regent, granted him a monopoly over the lands he had discovered.

João II (1455–1495). Known as the Perfect Prince, he was the son of Afonso V and served as Regent (1464–1475) before becoming king upon the abdication of his father in 1477. He signed the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which established two zones of Spanish and Portuguese dominion.

Afonso de Albuquerque (1462–1515). A great military strategist and administrator, he was the founder of the Portuguese empire in Asia and the best guarantor of its permanence. As Governor General of Portuguese India, he supported the Luso-Indian population, encouraging marriage between the settlers and the Indians and dealing justly with both. After conquering Omão, Ormuz, and Goa, he built fortresses and trading posts in all the maritime seaways in the Pacific and the Persian Gulf which he controlled. His dying words became a famous epitaph: "Out of step with mankind by virtue of my love for the King, and out of step with the King by virtue of my love for mankind."

Diogo Cão (fifteenth century). A famed Portuguese navigator, he sailed along the West African coast, discovering the Zaire estuary before reaching the Bay of Benguela.

Bartolomeu Dias (?–1500). The Portuguese navigator discovered the Atlantic passage to the Indian Ocean (1487–1488). When he crossed the cape amid strong currents and tempests, he named it the Cape of Storms (*O Cabo das Tormentas*), thereby creating the legend of the giant Adamastor (referred to in the poem "The Sea-Monster"). Subsequently João II changed the name of

the African land tip to the Cape of Good Hope, reflecting the common aspiration of reaching India through that passage.

Fernando de Magalhães (Magellan) (1480–1521). Portuguese navigator who served the Spanish crown and discovered the South American strait by means of which voyagers could cross between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. This he accomplished during the first voyage around the earth, when he got as far as the Moluccas (the Philippines).

Vasco da Gama (1468–1524). The Portuguese navigator who discovered the maritime passage to India through the Cape of Good Hope (1497–1499). As Governor and Viceroy of India, he was given the tide of Admiral of the Seas of India.

Bandarra (1500–1566). Cobbler and pseudo-prophet of a new messianism. As interpreter of Biblical eschatology, he deciphered Portuguese events accordingly and wrote enigmatic ditties about them, which were popular during many national crises. After King Sebastian's death, Bandarra's bizarre prophecies and mystical hopes were transmuted into Sebastianism.

António Vieira (1608–1697). A missionary priest, diplomat, writer, and famous preacher, he believed in the myth of Sebastianism and in the restoration of the Portuguese Empire, the prospect for which he termed the Fifth Empire. When Portugal gained its independence in 1640, Vieira celebrated King João VI as The Emperor of the World and The Hidden One. Considered a master of the Portuguese language, Pessoa's term for him, "Portuguese word-emperor," seems apt.

poems by "Alexander Search"

SONNET

Could I say what I think, could I express
 My every hidden and too-silent thought,
 And bring my feelings, in perfection wrought,
 To one unforced point of living stress;

Could I breathe forth my soul, could I confess
 The inmost secrets to my nature brought;
 I might be great, yet none to me hath taught
 A language well to figure my distress.

Yet day and night to me new whispers bring,
 And day and night from me old whispers take . . .
 Oh for a word, one phrase in which to fling

All that I think and feel, and so to wake
 The world; but I am dumb and cannot sing,
 Dumb as You clouds before the thunders break.

(1904)

THE STORY OF SALOMON WASTE.

This is all the story of Salomon Waste.
 Always hurrying yet never in haste
 He fussed and worked and toiled all frothing
 And at the end of all did nothing.
 This is all the story of Salomon Waste.

He lived in wishing and in striving,
And nothing came of all his living;
He worked and toiled in pain and sweat,
And nothing came out of all that.
This is all the story of Salomon Waste.

* * * *

And things begun and never ended,
And much undone and much intended,
And all things wrong yet never mended:
This is all the story of Salomon Waste.

Each day new projects did betray,
Yet each day was like every day.
He was born and died and between these
He worried himself himself to tease.
He bustled, worried, moved and cried
But in his life no more's descried
Than two clear facts: he lived and died.
This is all the story of Salomon Waste.

(1907)

THE CIRCLE

I traced a circle on the ground,
It was a mystic figure strange
Wherein I thought there would abound
Mute symbols adequate of change,
And complex formulas of Law,
Which is the jaws of Change's maw.

My simplest thoughts in vain had stemmed
The current of this madness free,
But that my thinking is condemned
To symbol and analogy:

I deemed a circle might condense
With calm all mystery's violence.

And so in cabalistic mood
A circle traced I curious there;
Imperfect the made circle stood
Though formed with minutest care.
From magic's failure deeply I
A lesson took to make me sigh.

(1907)

A Sensationist Poem

Her fingers toyed absently with her rings.

There are fallen angels in the way you look
And great bridges over silent streams in your smile.
Your gestures are a lonely princess dreaming over a book
At a window over a lake, on some distant isle.

If I were to stretch my hand and touch yours that would be
Dawn behind the turrets of a city in some East.
The words hidden in my gesture would be moonlight on
the sea
Of your being something in my soul like gaiety in a feast.

Let your silence tell me of the numberless dreams that are
you,
Let the drooping of your eyelids veil landscapes that are
far away.
I ask no more than that you should come into my dreams
and be true
To the wider seas within me and my inner eternal day.

Blossoms, blossoms, blossoms along the road of your
going to speak.
Eighteenth-century gardens, so sad in the middle of our
dreaming them now,
Are the way you are conscious of yourself on your eyelids,
by your lips, through your cheek.
O the road to Nowhere all for us and we there and a new
God this to allow!

Do not scatter the silence that is the palace where our
consciousness
Is now living at unity our duplicate lives of one soul.
What are we, in our dream of each other, but a picture
which is
The masterpiece of a painter that never painted at all?

(1916)

III

From my villa on the hill I long looked down
Upon the muttering town;
Then one day drew (life sight-sick, dull hope shed)
My toga o'er my head
(The simplest gesture being the greatest thing)
Like a raised wing.

IV

Not Cecrops kept my bees. My olives bore
Oil like the sun. My several herd lowed far.
The breathing traveler rested by my door.
The wet earth smells still; dead my nostrils are.

V

I conquered. Far barbarians hear my name.
Men were dice in my game.
But to my throw myself did lesser come:
I threw dice, Fate the sum.

VI

Some were as love loved, some as prizes prized.
A natural wife to the fed man my mate,
I was sufficient to whom I sufficed.
I moved, slept, bore and aged without a fate.

IX

There is a silence where the town was old.
Grass grows where not a memory lies below.
We that dined loud are sand. The tale is told.
The far hoofs hush. The inn's last light doth go.

XII

Life lived us, not we life. We, as bees sip,
Looked, talked and had. Trees grow as we did last.
We loved the gods but as we see a ship.
Never aware of being aware, we passed.

XIII

The work is done. The hammer is laid down.
The artisans, that built the slow-grown town,
Have been succeeded by those who still built.
All this something lack-of-something screening.
The thought whole has no meaning
But lies by Time's wall like a pitcher spilt.

XIV

This covers me, that erst had the blue sky.
This soil treads me, that once I trod. My hand
Put these inscriptions here, half knowing why;
Last, and hence seeing all, of the passing band.

(1920)

IV

I could not think of thee as pieced rot,
Yet such thou wert, for thou hadst been long dead;
Yet thou liv'dst entire in my seeing thought
And what thou wert in me had never fled.
Nay, I had fixed the moments of thy beauty—
Thy ebbing smile, thy kiss's readiness,
And memory had taught my heart the duty
To know thee ever at that deathlessness.
But when I came where thou wert laid, and saw
The natural flowers ignoring thee sans blame,
And the encroaching grass, with casual flaw,
Framing the stone to age where was thy name,
I knew not how to feel, nor what to be
Toward thy fate's material secrecy.

VI

As a bad orator, badly o'er-book-skilled,
Doth overflow his purpose with made heat,
And, like a clock, winds with withoutness willed
What should have been an inner instinct's feat;
Or as a prose-wit, harshly poet turned,
Lacking the subtler music in his measure,
With useless care labors but to be spurned,
Courting in alien speech the Muse's pleasure;
I study how to love or how to hate,
Estranged by consciousness from sentiment,
With a thought feeling forced to be sedate
Even when the feeling's nature is violent;
As who would learn to swim without the river,
When nearest to the trick, as far as ever.

XII

As the lone, frightened user of a night-road
Suddenly turns round, nothing to detect,
Yet on his fear's sense keepeth still the load
Of that brink-nothing he doth but suspect;
And the cold terror moves to him more near
Of something that from nothing casts a spell,
That, when he moves, to fright more is not there,
And's only visible when invisible:
So I upon the world turn round in thought,
And nothing viewing do no courage take,
But my more terror, from no seen cause got,
To that felt corporate emptiness forsake,
 And draw my sense of mystery's horror from
 Seeing no mystery's mystery alone.

XIV

We are born at sunset and we die ere morn,
And the whole darkness of the world we know,
How can we guess its truth, to darkness born,
The obscure consequence of absent glow?
Only the stars to teach us light. We grasp
Their scattered smallnesses with thoughts that stray,
And, though their eyes look through night's complete
 mask,
Yet they speak not the features of the day.
Why should these small denials of the whole
More than the black whole the pleased eyes attract?
Why what it calls "worth" does the captive soul
Add to the small and from the large detract?
 So, out of light's love wishing it night's stretch,
 A nightly thought of day we darkly reach.

XV

Like a bad suitor desperate and trembling
 From the mixed sense of being not loved and loving,
 Who with feared longing half would know, dissembling
 With what he'd wish proved what he fears soon proving,
 I look with inner eyes afraid to look,
 Yet perplexed into looking, at the worth
 This verse may have and wonder, of my book,
 To what thoughts shall't in alien hearts give birth.
 But, as he who doth love, and, loving, hopes,
 Yet, hoping, fears, fears to put proof to proof,
 And in his mind for possible proofs gropes,
 Delaying the true proof, lest the real thing scoff,
 I daily live, i'th'fame I dream to see,
 But by my thought of others' thought of me.

XVII

My love, and not I, is the egoist.
 My love for thee loves itself more than thee;
 Ay, more than me, in whom it doth exist,
 And makes me live that it may feed on me.
 In the country of bridges the bridge is
 More real than the shores it doth unsever;
 So in our world, all of Relation, this
 Is true—that truer is Love than either lover.
 This thought therefore comes lightly to Doubt's door—
 If we, seeing substance of this world, are not
 Mere Intervals, God's Absence and no more,
 Hollows in real Consciousness and Thought.
 And if 'tis possible to Thought to bear this fruit,
 Why should it not be possible to Truth?

XX

When in the widening circle of rebirth
To a new flesh my traveled soul shall come,
And try again the unremembered earth
With the old sadness for the immortal home,
Shall I revisit these same differing fields
And cull the old new flowers with the same sense,
That some small breath of foiled remembrance yields,
Of more age than my days in this pretence?
Shall I again regret strange faces lost
Of which the present memory is forgot
And but in unseen bulks of vagueness tossed
Out of the closed sea and black night of Thought?
 Were thy face one, what sweetness will't not be,
 Though by blind feeling, to remember thee!

XXVI

The world is woven all of dream and error
And but one sureness in our truth may lie—
That when we hold to aught our thinking's mirror
We know it not by knowing it thereby.
For but one side of things the mirror shows,
And knows it colded from its solidness.
A double lie its truth is; what it shows
By true show's false and nowhere by true place.
Thought clouds our life's day-sense with strangeness, yet
Never from strangeness more than that it's strange
Doth buy our perplexed thinking, for we get
But the words' sense from words—knowledge, truth,
 change.
 We know the world is false, not what is true.
 Yet we think on, knowing, we ne'er shall know.

XXVIII

The edge of the green wave whitely doth hiss
Upon the wetted sand. I look, yet dream.
Surely reality cannot be this!
Somehow, somewhere this surely doth but seem!
The sky, the sea, this great extent disclosed
Of outward joy, this bulk of life we feel,
Is not something, but something interposed.
Only what in this is not this is real.
If this be to have sense, if to be awake
Be but to see this bright, great sleep of things,
For the rarer potion mine own dreams I'll take
And for truth commune with imaginings,
 Holding a dream too bitter, a too fair curse,
 This common sleep of men, the universe.

XXXV

Good. I have done. My heart weighs. I am sad.
The outer day, void statue of lit blue,
Is altogether outward, other glad
At mere being not-I (so my aches construe).
I, that have failed in everything, bewail
Nothing this hour but that I have bewailed,
For in the general fate what is't to fail?
Why, fate being past for Fate, 'tis but to have failed.
Whatever hap or stop, what matters it,
Sith to the mattering our will bringeth nought?
With the higher trifling let us world our wit,
Conscious that, if we do't, that was the lot
 The regular stars bound us to, when they stood
 Godfathers to our birth and to our blood.

