



The Book of Disquiet

Fernando Pessoa , Richard Zenith (Translator)

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Fernando Pessoa was many writers in one. He attributed his prolific writings to a wide range of alternate selves, each of which had a distinct biography, ideology, and horoscope. When he died in 1935, Pessoa left behind a trunk filled with unfinished and unpublished writings, among which were the remarkable pages that make up his posthumous masterpiece, **The Book of Disquiet**, an astonishing work that, in George Steiner's words, "gives to Lisbon the haunting spell of Joyce's Dublin or Kafka's Prague." Published for the first time some fifty years after his death, this unique collection of short, aphoristic paragraphs comprises the "autobiography" of Bernardo Soares, one of Pessoa's alternate selves. Part intimate diary, part prose poetry, part descriptive narrative, captivatingly translated by Richard Zenith, **The Book of Disquiet** is one of the greatest works of the twentieth century.

The Book of Disquiet Details

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From Reader Review The Book of Disquiet for online ebook

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Livro do Desassossego = The Book of Disquiet, Fernando Pessoa

The Book of Disquiet (Livro do Desassossego) is a work by the Portuguese author Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935).

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Cheryl says

Flow lightly, life that does not even feel itself, a silent, supple stream beneath forgotten trees! Flow softly, soul that does not know itself, a murmur hidden from view by great fallen branches! Flow vainly, aimlessly, consciousness conscious of nothing, a vague, distant glimmer through leafy clearings, with no known source or destination. Flow on, flow on and leave me to forget!

Flow smoothly, book that does not realize its influence, supple prose poem with ignitions of profundity. Read slowly, reader who wishes never to see it end.

One cannot read this book of fragmentary thoughts as quickly as one would others, for instead of plot or story, one finds style and syntax that reveal the human condition and psyche. So I read this one intentionally, wishing it would go on and on. Our protagonist and “voice” is that that of the solitary and observant older man, a writer who has never known the affections of childhood because he lost both his parents at a young age. What it must feel like to be loved, to feel the warmth of a mother’s hug, he ponders. He has never been in love, nor has he had any friends. In fact, he’s never had ambition, only his imagination and dreams:

Between myself and life there have always been panes of opaque glass, undetectable to me by sight or touch; I never actually lived life according to a plan, I was the daydream of what I wanted to be, my dream began in my will, my goal was always the first fiction of what I never was.

It is said that we learn more about life when we write, that we find ourselves within our prose (especially

memoir writers). As I write this, I understand more about myself, and as I read his words, I realize that he and I are nothing alike, and yet we have so much in common:

I am, for the most part, the very prose that I write. I shape myself in periods and paragraphs, I punctuate myself and, in the unleashed chain of images, I make myself king, as children do, with a crown of made from a sheet of newspaper or, in finding rhythms in mere strings of words, I garland myself, as madmen do, with dried flowers that in my dreams still live.

This is the beauty of poignant prose, when we find pieces of ourselves within it. Someone should have given me this book years ago, when I was a teenager in a new country, recovering from war and struggling to find myself in a new world of structured freedom. Back then, I was living in tedium, as the narrator puts it. My new world was invigorating, yet scary, this idea that I could walk the streets freely (and not have to keep myself secluded from men and guns), that I could attend public high schools and apply for federal aid for college, that I could go to a library and read any book—better yet, buy books freely and form my very own library? Although this was great, it was also painful, to be faced with the realization that this world had existed even while I'd been in a different world of imprisonment. I never knew how to verbalize that pain until now:

The pain of not understanding the mystery of life, the pain of being unloved, the pain of others' injustice to us, the pain of life crushing us, suffocating and imprisoning us...

To live in tedium is to die while still being alive, even while believing in staying alive: "*Life chills me. My existence is all damp caves and dark catacombs.*" To live in tedium is to hope for a second chance at life, where one can do the things one has always imagined doing. This is the core expression of this book, I believe, this art of mastering self-consciousness. The book is a solemn but necessary read, this is why I've recommended it to my students who are war survivors and to my veteran students who have just returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. And this is also why I would recommend it to *anyone* who is frustrated by, yet still fascinated with this thing called life.

These pages are the doodles of my intellectual consciousness of myself. I set them down in a torpor of feeling, like a cat in the sun, and re-read them at times with a dull, belated pang, as if remembering something I had always previously forgotten.

Bill Kerwin says

Here is the only Portuguese literary joke I know: Q. Who are the four greatest Portuguese poets of the 20th century? A. Fernando Pessoa. Trust me, it's funny. But it does take a little explaining.

Fernando Pessoa, in order to express various philosophical and poetic moods, constructed a series of what he termed "heteronyms." The heteronym, although similar to the mask or persona, differs in that each one is equipped with a name, a personality, a biography, and a physical description, as well as a distinct writing style. Although Pessoa made use of more than five dozen heteronyms in the course of his thirty-five years, the best known are Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos, and Bernardo Soares. Of these four, his greatest creation--and perhaps the heteronym closest to Pessoa's self--is Bernardo Soares, the "author" of *The*

Book of Disquiet.

The Book of Disquiet, if not unique, is close to it. It is a little like a novel, often like a collection of prose poems, and often like a series of aphorisms and philosophical reflections. The heteronym that is Soares enables Pessoa to communicate a disciplined, definite vision of the world, necessarily limited in scope, but intensified and concentrated. In this sense, it resembles Roman and English satire, its authorial mask as carefully crafted and resonant as those of Horace and Juvenal, Pope and Swift. Soares, however, takes no interest in vice, let alone the reform of humankind; in fact, he seems to care little about humanity in general, or people in particular.

It is here that the novelistic aspect of this work becomes interesting. Soares is a shy, isolated man, a clerk at a Lisbon commercial firm who adds up columns of figures, and seems to do little else. Although he mourns his colleagues when they pass away, he never seems to communicate with them when they are alive; the closest he seems to get to fellowship are his encounters with the waiter in the little cafe where he eats his nightly dinner and consumes his nightly bottle of wine. At first, we feel sorry for him, for we feel his great isolation and are moved by his great passion and profound love for beauty which he can only express through his journal.

Slowly, however, we begin to see that this isolation is a personal and artistic choice, a way of refining his art and his being. If he cares about human beings at all, it is only because they are useful adjuncts to his own magnificent loneliness, because they resonate as discrete elements of the poet's imagination, much as a certain play of light on a Lisbon street may reflect one particular color of the canvas that is the poet's consciousness. Perhaps this is why the book "The Book of Disquiet" reminds me of most is *The Chants of Maldoror*, that uncompromising paean to the magnificent isolation of evil.

There is of course a great difference. *Maldoror* could only have been produced by a very young man hiding beneath a very old mask. His persona is a posture of isolation through which he begins to know himself. *The Book of Disquiet* on the other hand, is the work of someone who knows himself well, and cares only about reaching a kind of existential purity: a clarity of view, a refinement of mood, the isolation of particular beauties that resonate more deeply and linger longer than the others.

Soares is a monk of the poetic mind, for whom aloneness is a vocation. Its fruit, this memorable book, is rare and delicious, filled with vivid descriptions, evocative language, and refined reflections.

Nahed.E says

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create different "personalities" and stick to them closely to perfection, writing in different styles according to the voice of each character. Schizophrenia? Or the mind of a genius who fooled everyone who knew him? Or a man who disguised himself out of boredom and who was able to live more than 70 different and complete lives through all these invented "characters" to become a complete real person? Maybe all these options at once. Maybe none. We'll never know.

Anyway, even though I knew about Pessoa, I wasn't prepared for this book.

Not only unconnected recollections of the "supposed" life of Bernardo Soares, one of Pessoa's characters, but also unanswerable questions which left me kind of anxious and peaceful at the same time, if that makes any sense...

Questions regarding consciousness, the almost obsession about dreams and the state of peaceful lethargy of sleeping, doubts aroused regarding deities, love and death. And about what it is to be happy or to feel nostalgia about a non-existent past, or about egoism and solitude. But all these questions made even more intense with this overflowing passion for writing, and for literature. And for Lisbon.

A privileged mind which opens for us, humble readers who want to witness an amazing transformation of the world surrounding us, seeing for the first time what our lives really are, or what they aren't and what we should expect them to be.

An experience which will leave you exhausted but with renewed energy to face this extenuating and unavoidable journey which we call life.

Matthias says

1

Some books wrap me up in dreams and fantasy, creating a protective bubble in which I can leisurely gaze at the world in comfort. The opposite happened when reading "The Book of Disquiet", a book that lives up to its title like no other. I didn't get wrapped up in anything. With every sentence I read I felt myself being unwrapped, as layers of self-deceit and unconsciousness were shed.

2

I held the book in my hands. I could decide to open and close it. I could decide to put it away. But despite all that it didn't take long for me to realise that I was not the one in power, as the book firmly grasped me in turn. Not through my mind, like good books. Not through my heart, like great books. It grasped my soul and never let go. While I was reading this book, I couldn't shake the feeling that it had beaten me to it, in that the book was reading me and that it did so more quickly and effectively than I could read its pages. This book is a mirror for my soul, a mirror in which my reflection always sees me first, a mirror where my reflection waves to me and I wave back.

3

I'm compelled to take over the book's structure in this review, and that's not only because of Junta's shining example. There is no plot weaving together the pages. The book is made up of more than two hundred diary entries. But this is a special diary. The entries seldom talk of work, of interactions with other people, of the goings-on in the day. They deal with the author's rich inner life, to which the outside reality offers only a background at best. Pessoa sat down at his desk and just wrote what he thought. Streams of thoughts are often fragmentary, and so is this book. Every number allows a new idea to carry you through poetic landscapes until the author reaches the shores of that idea and he starts over, sometimes with a new idea,

sometimes with the same, sometimes leading to the same shore, sometimes further away or closer by. As a result, my notes of my reactions to the book are equally fragmentary, each note representing a new stream as I glide to the next number and I start over.

4

One of my favorite things to do is to stand in between two mirrors that stand directly opposite of each other. To see my reflection multiplied to infinity is the most humbling ego-boost I can think of. I say infinity but if you look far enough into that world of infinite reflections there is a dark hole at the end of it, there where the light ceases to reach and where my beholding eye ceases to behold.

Consciousness is a mirror. Consciousness of consciousness leads to a similar infinity that seemingly leads to nothingness.

5

Infinity sharpens my mind and elates my heart as a concept, but it numbs my mind and shrinks my heart as a reality. Nothingness is just one version of infinity. Equating everything to zero is the easiest solution to find, but the most difficult one to accept.

6

I don't know if this book has changed my life. It added a layer of consciousness to my consciousness and makes me more aware of inner processes. On the other hand, it couldn't have done so if it didn't confirm my consciousness, if it didn't confirm what I already felt and knew without knowing. My soul was stripped of the comfort and warmth of the mundane, but already I feel myself slipping back into the world and out of myself.

7

A connection feels meaningful when it is direct, goes deep and is complete.

8

Dreams I've never bothered to write down, thoughts and follies that were interrupted: much of what I have said, written and thought is lost. Only the abstract memory of having said, written and thought lingers. Before I go to sleep, thoughts wash over me, turning around in my head, taking five paths at once and dancing in harmony. The mind is cleared and cleansed with these high-speed thought-cycles but then, a jolt of consciousness, the spell is broken and the thoughts are forever lost, hiding away in dreams. The heavy weight of consciousness doesn't last as another torrent of thoughts sweeps down and I fall into a peaceful sleep. How I would like to commit those thoughts to paper, to catch the wild torrents and be at peace.

9

In my mind's eye a castle is easily conjured up, the atmosphere is palpable, the potential for storytelling enormous. I pick up my pen. The jester is no longer a concept, but a living thing in need of adventures and adjectives. The scene becomes heavy and slow and I grind to a halt.

10

An unlikable side-effect of my consciousness is that I can't help but feel special. That feeling doesn't start at the cerebral level. Somewhere in the depths of my diaphragm there is this core, a source of that intuition.

Sometimes that core is cold and the feeling fades, but this book made it burn brightly. I look at the reviews page and I see that it did so for others. My feeling special makes way for a special feeling.

11

Like Pessoa, I find a lot of philosophy in the exceedingly small. That which does not matter, matters precisely because of it. When I look at an ant hard at work, I find that its essence is its being. This goes for everything, but it is in the insignificant that this is made the most obvious to me. A blade of grass sticking out of the pavement. Small numbers written in pencil on a wall that now have lost all significance. A bug. An abandoned shack that has fallen in disuse.

I was hiking in a wild, rough coastal region in France. On the sandy path there was a small patch of pebbles and I resolved to pick one up and throw it into the sea far below when I'd get close enough. During my walk I thought about what had brought the pebble to that patch, what had brought me there, and as ever, one thought led to the other. The pebble became heavy with my ponderings. I could not bring myself to throw it into the anonymity of the crashing waves when the time came.

12

13

Whenever I find wonder in the banal, nothingness becomes less likely. Banality is a virtue, importance is a sin. There is no wonder in importance, only design.

The situation of the spider crawling on my book only a few moments after I had read the small chapter on "millimeters" held wonder, but the picture I took was designed, flipping back to the relevant page so that spider could walk on it. It felt important to share the moment so I turned wonder into an anecdote.

14

Sometimes reality feels like the dream that my inaction brought to fruition.
Sometimes reality feels like the remnants in the sieve through which my dreams are poured.

Luís C. says

Loneliness makes me despair; the company of others weighs on me.

Rakhi Dalal says

"My soul is a hidden orchestra; I know not what instruments, what fiddlestrings and harps, drums and tamboura I sound and clash inside myself. All I hear is the symphony."

An Orchestra of over 70 musicians, playing their own instruments, each producing an individual sound, a discrete voice, adding up from each corner, playing the distinctive notes of solitude, dream, rain and tedium,

rising at one place while falling at another and producing a symphony so striking in its completion that it cannot be complete, like a painting frozen in time, striving for an expression it cannot possibly attain, and not because the painter isn't skillful enough but because he chooses not to part from one, deliberately made imperceptible in the strokes, which is inherently his own. So while he did create 81 heteronyms*, each distinctly dissimilar in their style, we do not yet know who Pessoa actually was or what he believed in.

Fernando Pessoa, strictly speaking, doesn't exist.*

Pessoa called this work as his "*factless biography*" I also came across the words "*Psychography*" and "*geography of self awareness*" for the book. In my opinion, it has distinct tones of the absurd, and can be looked upon as an absurdist writing albeit on an altogether different level, though the hints of stoicism and cynicism are apparently evident too. You will not notice the "babble/despair" - characteristic of Beckett's writing or "Rational absurd" (view spoiler) - quintessential trait of Camus' writing, but a willful approach towards attaining the disquietude because his consciousness is a tedium resulting from the conclusion of senselessness of existence; an existence not of this world or life but **his life**.

"It sometimes happens, more or less suddenly, that in the midst of my sensations I'm overwhelmed by such a terrible weariness of life that I can't even conceive of any act that might relieve it. Suicide seems a dubious remedy, and natural death – even assuming it brings unconsciousness – an insufficient one. Rather than the cessation of my existence, which may or may not be possible, this weariness makes me long for something far more horrifying and profound: never to have existed at all, which is definitely impossible."

His conviction of being a passer-by reminds me of Beckett's belief of being a passer-by who finds himself over and over again (The Unnameable).

"This is my morality, or metaphysics, or me: passer-by of everything, even of my own soul, I belong to nothing, I desire nothing, I am nothing – just an abstract center of impersonal sensations, a fallen sentient mirror reflecting the world's diversity. I don't know if I'm happy this way. Nor do I care."

To overcome the anguish of life which he is so acutely aware of, he engages in imagination and dreaming. Perhaps this is the reason he created so many personalities, so as to be able to experience different lives within him. In fact, his approach is distinct in the sense that he is not only aware of his sensations, but he also exercises a control over them which is clearly visible from the number of heteronyms he created for himself, who could each write in distinct literary styles. According to him:

"My intellect has attained a pliancy and a reach that enable me to assume any emotion I desire and enter at will into any state of mind."*

This writing, which is a compilation of over 500 fragments, where each fragment, written perhaps on different days, seemingly an attempt at expressing the flow of thoughts or imagination capturing writer's mind, does seem to have a structure in thoughts and more than often talks about solitude, dream, tedium and rain.

"It's so hard to describe what I feel when I feel I really exist and my soul is a real entity that I don't know what human words could define it. I don't know if I have a fever, as I feel I do, or if I've stopped having the fever of sleeping through life. Yes, I repeat, I'm like a traveller who suddenly finds himself in a strange town, without knowing how he got there, which makes me think of those who lose their memory and for a long time are not themselves but someone else. I was someone else for a long time—since birth and consciousness—and suddenly I've woken up in the middle of a bridge, leaning over the river and knowing that I exist more solidly than the person I was up till now. But the city is unknown to me, the streets are new, and the trouble has no cure. And so, leaning over the bridge, I wait for the truth to go away and let me return to being fictitious and non-existent, intelligent and natural."

Keeping in mind that this work is written by **Bernardo Soares**, the heteronym considered to be the closest to Pessoa's real self, these lines acutely express Pessoa's yearning to live an imagined life, as if in a dream, so as to forget his actual self in real life. He writes about his dreams, their nature and importance and goes as far as giving advice regarding them:

"Live your life. Don't be lived by it. Right or wrong, happy or sad, be your own self. You can do this only by dreaming, because your real life, your human life, is the one that doesn't belong to you but to others. You must replace your life with your dreaming, concentrating only on dreaming perfectly. In all the acts of your real life, from that of being born to that of dying, you don't act – you're acted; you don't live – you're merely lived."(Art of effective dreaming II)

Rain, which frequently appears in the text, seems a symbol of the incessant thoughts, pouring over writer's mind and submerging his awareness in the disquiet that he experiences:

"Each drop of rain is my failed life weeping in nature. There's something of my disquiet in the endless drizzle, then shower, then drizzle, then shower, through which the day's sorrow uselessly pours itself out over the earth. It rains and keeps raining. My soul is damp from hearing it. So much rain... My flesh is watery around my physical sensation of it." (Rainy Landscape)

He profoundly expresses his tedium in words when he experiences it and also present to us different situations where one may feel tedium:

"Tedium... Perhaps, deep down, it is the soul's dissatisfaction because we didn't give it a belief, the disappointment of the sad child (who we are on the inside) because we didn't buy it the divine toy. Perhaps it is the insecurity of one who needs a guiding hand and who doesn't feel, on the black path of profound sensation, anything more than the soundless night of not being able to think, the empty road of not being able to feel..."

And what is still more astonishing is that though he wrote these fragments in solitude, over perhaps a decade or more, he wrote it as a dialogue between him and the future reader, allowing for either acceptance or rejection on the part of reader.

And I offer you this book because I know it is beautiful and useless. It teaches nothing, inspires no faith, and stirs no feeling. A mere stream that follows towards an abyss of ashes scattered by the wind, neither helping nor harming the soil..... I put my whole soul into making it, but without thinking about it as I made it, for I thought only of me, who am sad, and of you, who aren't anyone. And because this book is absurd, I love it; because it is useless, I want to give it away; and because it serves no purpose to want to give it to you, I give it to you...

As I conclude my review, I want to admit that this book overwhelmed me immensely, I witnessed Pessoa seeping inside me slowly, making me quiver with the words he spoke to me, more as I understood them. Perceiving the disquiet which so fiercely plagued him, the solitude that he opted to dream to somehow conquer it, but still returning to the unrest because he understood the futility, made his thoughts trace through my mind, linger there for sometime before finally coming home to me. But my effort at writing a more personal review didn't ensue because if written, it would have been nothing but **babble**.

I am yet to complete reading Philosophical essays by Pessoa and the poems he wrote by the name of Albert Caeiro, but still I feel privileged to place him on the altar alongside Camus and Beckett.

*source - wikipedia

*Written by his creation, Álvaro de Campos, Notes for the Memory of My Master Caeiro (Editorial Estampa, 1997).

*From a "Personal note", 1910

Florencia says

If I write what I feel, it's to reduce the fever of feeling. What I confess is unimportant, because everything is unimportant. I make landscapes out of what I feel. I make holidays of my sensations. (42)

He who does not know how to populate his solitude, does not know either how to be alone in a busy crowd.

- Charles Baudelaire, *Crowds*

Some dreams want to transcend our minds. They want to feel alive, be outside and become reality. We all have dreamed about things that, even after we woke up, we are not sure if they actually happened or never left the secure yet claustrophobic mind of ours. And so, while those dreams are trying to abandon that place, magic can happen. When they realize they can't, tragedy awaits.

This is the story of a man who lived a thousand lives and wrote about the fragile boundary between reality and dreaming with the most beautiful and heartbreaking prose I've ever encountered.

I wanted to read this book for a long time. When I found it, I did something I try not to do: I skimmed it. I wanted to see something before my better judgment had control over my literary anxiety. Before I knew, I found myself reading a mesmerizing passage that I couldn't leave until I finished it.

Lucid Diary

My life: a tragedy booted off stage by the gods, never getting beyond the first act.

Friends: not one. Just a few acquaintances who imagine they feel something for me and who might be sorry if a train ran over me and the funeral was on a rainy day. The logical reward of my detachment from life is the incapacity I've created in others to feel anything for me. There's an aureole of indifference, an icy halo, that surrounds me and repels others. I still haven't succeeded in not suffering from my solitude. It's hard to achieve that distinction of spirit whereby isolation becomes a repose without anguish... (579)

From that moment, I just knew it was going to be an extremely emotional experience. Whoever said that reading is a passive activity, never found a book with the power of taking his soul out for a ride. What a book. I could relate to almost every word. Every yearning for something that could never happen. Every loss that did happen. Every thought made by a restless mind. And every feeling conceived by an isolated heart longing for an endless dream. A cure. Redemption. Or nothing.

The melancholic beauty of his prose and the heartbreaking honesty of his sorrow made me feel too small. And relieved. Suddenly, many of my thoughts and feelings were exposed in those pages that I was never able to write. And he did it. Pessoa did it with the most exquisite language you could ever hope to find.

The atmosphere is filled with an overwhelming sense of failure and frustration.

I envy – but I'm not sure that I envy – those for whom a biography could be written, or who could write their own. In these random impressions, and with no desire to be other than random, I indifferently narrate my factless autobiography, my lifeless history. These are my Confessions, and if in them I say nothing, it's because I have nothing to say. (42)

Each drop of rain is my failed life weeping in nature. There's something of my disquiet in the endless drizzle, then shower, then drizzle, then shower, through which the day's sorrow uselessly pours itself out over the earth.

It rains and keeps raining. My soul is damp from hearing it. So much rain... (177)

Solitude.

Solitude devastates me; company oppresses me. (80)

Again, fluid and uncertain, the rain pattered. Time dragged to its accompaniment. My soul's solitude grew and spread, invading what I felt, what I wanted, and what I was going to dream. The room's hazy objects, which shared my insomnia in the shadows, moved with their sadness into my desolation. (285)

Uncertainties.

And so, not knowing how to believe in God and unable to believe in an aggregate of animals, I, along with other people on the fringe, kept a distance from things... Could it think, the heart would stop beating. (30)

I've never had anyone I could call 'Master'. No Christ died for me. No Buddha showed me the way. No Apollo or Athena, in my loftiest dreams, ever appeared to enlighten my soul. (533)

And many other displays of human nature. Devastating situations that contrast themselves with the lyrical beauty of this man's writing.

His crude words are still little sunbeams that could enlighten the obscure depths of our souls, only if we let them. In that so human selfishness of ours, we always think nobody is suffering more than we do. We are the only ones struggling to survive in this world that we never asked for. Well, we are not; that is not an extraordinary epiphany. But reading the words of a man whose thoughts are so familiar to us always represents an inspirational experience. We feel like we just found the necessary balm to soothe our pain. That is the healing power of understanding. Of empathy.

We are not alone. We never were. Like Soares in this book, I am acquainted with isolation more than I would have wanted to. I breathe it. I am made of it. And still, somehow, I am not alone.

A breath of music or of a dream, of something that would make me almost feel, something that would make me not think. (57)

Being fatally sensitive can be exhausting and a perpetual cause of sorrow. But the so-desired inability to feel resembles to being dead inside a living body. Human existence doesn't limit itself to some functional organs. Feeling nothing is not the answer. You might as well be truly dead.

So, yes. This book is my newest treasure. My diary and sanctuary. I can't help but to be grateful. It filled my

head with many questions that I wish I could find the answers by myself.

What to do when we are forced to leave the safe place our dreams represent? Can they make us do it? Will we ever find the strength enough to face the world? Do we have to? Do we dare?

I sleep when I dream of what doesn't exist; dreaming of what might exist wakes me up. (179)

Life should be about finding a sane balance between reality and fantasy. That reminds me of something I found the other day. I don't know if the following words really belong to Pizarnik—they sure sound like her—and since I couldn't find them in English, I kind of translated them. Trust me, they are too beautiful in Spanish. So, I apologize in advance.

I am simply not from this world... I frenziedly dwell in the moon. I am not afraid of dying; I am afraid of this foreign, aggressive land...

I cannot think about specific things; I am not interested. I cannot speak like everybody else. My words are foreign, they come from far away... What will I do when I plunge myself in my wildest dreams and cannot ascend? Because that is going to happen, eventually. I will go and I won't know how to come back. Moreover, I will not know that there is a "coming back". I will not want it, perhaps.

No. Pessoa was not alone.

According to this book, Soares was not a pessimist. He was sad. He suffered and dreamed. And he complained without knowing if suffering was the norm, if he deserved it for some reason. However, he rejoiced in the fact that he could play with his complaints and made them musical because he was an artist. He could give beauty to his complaints and dreams.

But, if you can't do that, if you are not an artist... well. What then?

Note: I read the English (Zenith) and Spanish (Crespo) translations at the same time. I prefer the English one.
Apr 27, 14

* Also on my blog.

** Other reviews:

A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe: Selected Poems

The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa

The Education of the Stoic

El Banquero Anarquista (written in Spanish)

Lizzy says

'We're well aware that every creative work is imperfect and that our most dubious aesthetic contemplation will be the one whose object is what we write. But everything is imperfect. There's no sunset so lovely it couldn't be yet lovelier, no gentle breeze bringing us sleep that couldn't bring yet sounder sleep.'

Almost all my feelings...

As soon as I turned the last page, I realized how much I was going to miss The Book of Disquiet. For it has been my faithful companion for over two weeks, as my friends are witness for their company was always there with me. As soon as I turned the last page, I worried, what am I going to do now? But now it seems my only consolation is all the quotes I collected during this lavish period. So I now populate my new solitude with these gems, with Fernando Pessoa's amazing dreams.

'I've never done anything but dream. This, and this alone, has been the meaning of my life. My only real concern has been my inner life. My worst sorrows have evaporated when I've opened the window on the street of my dreams and forgotten myself in what I saw there.'

I've always been a dreamer, but I dream mainly through readings that I always carried along with me in my life's journey. I cannot now pretend to be a dreamer like Fernando Pessoa, or Bernardo Soare: *I've never done anything but dream. This, and this alone, has been the meaning of my life.* For I lived more in the real world than Pessoa confessedly did. *Every dream is the same dream, for they're all dreams. Let God change my dreams, but for my gift of dreaming.* For him they were his nourishment, his own life. But for me they are my leisure. Yes, my dreams might not be his dreams but they are as alive as his, as dear to me as his were to him.

'I read and I am liberated. I acquire objectivity. I cease being myself and so scattered. And what I read, instead of being like a nearly invisible suit that sometimes oppresses me, is the external world's tremendous and remarkable clarity, the sun that sees everyone, the moon that splashes the still earth with shadows, the wide expanses that end in the sea, the blackly solid trees whose tops greenly wave, the steady peace of ponds of farms, the terraced slopes with their paths overgrown with grape-vines.'

We might be distinct souls, but there is one thing that we are one and that I felt is his anxiety and is also my own:

'My tedium takes on an air of horror, and my boredom is a fear. My sweat isn't cold, but my awareness of it is. I'm not physically ill, but my soul's anxiety is so intense that it passes through my pores and chills my body.'

Yes, it seems we could even be related,

'It sometimes occurs to me, with sad delight, that if one day (...) the sentences I write are read and admired, then at last I'll have my own kin, people who 'understand' me, my true family in which to be born and loved.'

The main difference is that I am not a writer, I am only a reader. And so I am his soul mate for I complete him when I leaf through the pages of his book. As are all his readers that give life to his writings. His prose so beautiful it is heartbreaking, despite his own insecurities. But I would I wish to be a writer if the price is to not live? *Better to write to dare to live...*

Do you suppose that that is the reason of my contentment? *Should you ask if I'm happy, I'll say that I'm not.* For me there is not so much solitude, no lack of friendship, no ceaseless tedium. *Only unhappiness is elevating, and only the tedium that comes from unhappiness is heraldic like the descendants of ancient heroes.* So, I could not ever be a good poet and I am glad I had never desired so high. Although I have to confess that I had some dreams of being a poet. But these were only dreams...

Perhaps I could have never been a poet, for above all I love. I love my friends, I love my children, I loved a man and I love life. And I could never declare like Pessoa, *We never love anyone. What we love is the idea we have of someone. It's our concept – our own selves – that we love.* Or even that *[l]ife hinders the expression of life. If I actually lived a great love, I would never be able to describe it.* Maybe I should read other poets... But I have to agree with him when he states, *I wake up to make sure I exist...* Aren't we all always unsure if we truly exist?

Am I ordinary?, for most of the time I realize I think with my feelings. While Pessoa confesses: *I believe most people think with their feelings, whereas I feel with my thoughts.* Yes, I am happily ordinary. While his *happiness is as painful as [his] pain.*

However, the more I say I don't agree with our poet, the more I believe him. Am I saying nonsense? Sometimes to be a poet is to unbelieve. Oh, I believe we can travel through our dreams, we can imagine unimaginable places within our dreams:

'What can China give me that my soul hasn't already given me? And if my soul can't give it to me, how will China give it to me? For it's with my soul that I'll see China, if I ever see it. I could go and seek riches in the Orient, but not the riches of the soul, because I am my soul's riches, and I am where I am, with or without the Orient.'

But after all my *incoherence*, I can only agree with Pessoa:

'It's the central error of the literary imagination: to suppose that others are like us and must feel as we do. Fortunately for humanity, each man is just who he is, it begin given only to the genius to be others as well.'

But our natures are diverse, for I am not as solitary as he was. I am solitary, you might say, but I have my books. What does he have? Only his dreams or a poignant and fruitful solitude. *To understand, I destroyed myself. To understand is to forget about loving.* Can we be that alone? I ask myself, or only genius and poets have that gift? Perhaps, if so that is a sad truth.

Some closing remarks...

I feel I need to add a few considerations, besides my ramblings above.

Pessoa called this work as a *factless biography*. It might present distinct tones of the absurd, and despite its hints of indifference or even cynicism, it's nevertheless a quintessential trait of its writer. He reveals an ethereal existence, or his own life, through his willful approach towards his own disquietude; through his sense of a consciousness that suffers with a tedium that results basically from his own senselessness existence. And in that he could not be more truthful.

Faced with the life's adversity, and aiming to overcome the anguish to him so acute, he imagines, he dreams. This may be one of the reasons for his so many personalities (his heteronyms, who could each write in distinct literary styles) to be born. He is not one, he is many. So he can experience different lives in only one existence. According to him:

'My intellect has attained a pliancy and a reach that enable me to assume any emotion I desire and enter at will into any state of mind.'

For me, his flow of thoughts or dreaming that we read in *The Book of Disquiet* captures the writer's mind,

reveals a structure and a repetition in thoughts that talks about solitude, dream, tedium, love or *un-love* and unhappiness. It is ultimately passionate and painful.

Bernardo Soares is Pessoa's heteronym considered to be the closest to Pessoa's real self; and his writings strongly express Pessoa's aspiration to live an imagined life, as if in a dream, so as to forget his self in real life. He continually writes about his dreams, their nature and importance to his survival:

'Live your life. Don't be lived by it. Right or wrong, happy or sad, be your own self. You can do this only by dreaming, because your real life, your human life, is the one that doesn't belong to you but to others. You must replace your life with your dreaming, concentrating only on dreaming perfectly. In all the acts of your real life, from that of being born to that of dying, you don't act – you're acted; you don't live – you're merely lived.'

Rain frequently appear in his writings and it could be viewed as a symbol of his disquietude, his unrelenting dreaming that pours over his own existence. What a wistful and beautiful vision Pessoa gifts us:

'Each drop of rain is my failed life weeping in nature. There's something of my disquiet in the endless drizzle, then shower, then drizzle, then shower, through which the day's sorrow uselessly pours itself out over the earth. It rains and keeps raining. My soul is damp from hearing it. So much rain... My flesh is watery around my physical sensation of it.'

And he dialogues with the readers, but mainly he questions or even doubts himself and his own writing:

'What will I be ten years from now, or even five? My friends say I'll be one of the greatest contemporary poets - they say this based on what I've written, not what I may yet write. But even if this is true, I have no idea what it will mean. I have no idea how it will taste. Perhaps glory tastes like death and futility, and triumph smells of rotteness.'

The Book of Disquiet moved and overwhelmed me fiercely. Pessoa bit by bit immersed himself into my own self, made me wonder and tremble with his alluring and poignant words, much above a mere understanding. I perceived his disquiet, and I shared with him many uncertainties or yet his certainties. His solitude and his dreaming are written down in my soul and will certainly come back to me in the future. Ah, to be such a poet, what a dream and what sufferings!

Other quotes

- *'I weep over my imperfect pages, but if future generations read them, they will be more touched by my weeping than by any imperfection I might have achieved, since perfection would have kept me from weeping and, therefore, from writing. Perfection never materializes.'*
- *'When all by myself, I can think of all kinds of clever remarks, quick comebacks to what no one said, and flashes of witty sociability with nobody. But all of this vanishes when I face someone in the flesh: I lose my intelligence, I can no longer speak. Only my ghostly and imaginary friends, only the conversations I have in my dreams, are genuinely real and substantial, and in them intelligence like an image in a mirror.'*
- *'I've undertaken every project imaginable. The Iliad composed by me had a structural logic in its organic linking of epodes such as Homer could never have achieved. The meticulous perfection my unwritten verses makes Virgil's precision look sloppy and Milton's power slack. My allegorical satires surpassed all of Swift's'*

in the symbolic exactitude of their rigorously interconnected particular. How many Horaces I've been.'

- *'When I put away my artifices and lovingly arrange in a corner all my toys, words, images and phrases, so dear to me I feel like kissing them, then I become so small and innocuous, so alone in a room so large and sad, so profoundly sad.'*
- *'Sadly I write in my quiet room, alone as I have always been, alone as I will always be. And I wonder if my apparently negligible voice might not embody the essence of thousands of voices, the longing of self-expression of thousands of lives, the patience of millions of souls resigned like my own to their daily lot, their useless dreams and their hopeless hopes.'*
- *'I'm dazed by a sarcastic terror of life, a despondency that exceeds the limits of my conscious being. I realize that I was all error and deviation, that I never lived, that I existed only in so far as I filled time with consciousness and thought. I feel, in this moment, like a man who wakes up after a slumber full of real dreams, or like a man freed by an earthquake from the dim light of the prison he'd grown used to.'*
- *'It sometimes occurs to me, with sad delight, that if one day (...) the sentences I write are read and admired, then at last I'll have my own kin, people who 'understand' me, my true family in which to be born and loved. But from being born into it, I'll have already died long ago. I'll be understood only in effigy, when affection can no longer compensate for the indifference that was the dead man's lot in life.'*
- *'Not only am I dissatisfied with the poems I write now; I also know that I will be dissatisfied with the poems I write in the future...
So why do I keep writing? Because I still haven't learned... I haven't been able to give up my inclination to poetry and prose. I have to write, as if I were carrying out a punishment. And the greatest punishment is to know that whatever I write will be futile, flawed and uncertain.'*
- *'My state of mind compels me to work hard, against my will, on The Book of Disquiet. But it's all fragments, fragments, fragments...'*

Rowena says

"I follow the course of my dreams, making them images into steps toward other images; folding casual metaphors like fans into grand pictures of interior vision; I untie life from myself, and I toss it aside as if it were a too-tight suit." - Fernando Pessoa, The Book of Disquiet

You know a writer is great when he makes you want to learn a new language to understand his work in the original. "The Book of Disquiet" is easily the best book I've read this year, and possibly the one I've copied the most quotes from. I'd only ever read Pessoa's poetry and I had no idea what to expect from his prose. It turns out he does poetry and prose equally well.

I would love to have a conversation with Pessoa, although I would probably be an annoyance to him with his desire for solitude. But having a deep, philosophical conversation with him would be like a dream. He has such fascinating thoughts! He delves into the complexity of humans and helped me to understand the reason for his several heteronyms in his poetry:

"Each of us is various, many people, a prolixity of selves."

I feel that this is the sort of book that people will either think is brilliant or they will think Pessoa is too sentimental and sensitive. I have to say that I rarely come across a writer who thinks so deeply and obsessively about certain things. Pessoa's favourite topics seem to be dreams, solitude, writing, the futility of life (was he an existentialist? He reminds me a bit of Meursault). I may share Pessoa's melancholy to some extent but I don't share his negative outlook, his depression and his misanthropic nature! Even so, this was a brilliant book and one I'm so glad I finally read.

Pessoa's writing really consumed me at times. Definitely a book to be savoured, and a candidate for a re-read.

"When I write, I visit myself solemnly. I have special rooms, remembered by someone else in the interstices of my self-representation, where I take pleasure in analyzing what I do not feel, and I examine myself as if I were a painting in the shadows."

Camille Stein says

¿Qué sé? ¿Qué busco? ¿Qué siento? ¿Qué pediría si tuviese que pedir?

La vulgaridad es un hogar. Lo cotidiano es maternal. Después de una incursión prolija en la gran poesía, hacia los montes de aspiración sublime, hacia los peñascos de lo trascendente y de lo oculto, sabe mejor que bien, sabe a cuanto es cálido en la vida, regresar al albergue donde ríen los necios felices, beber con ellos, necio también, como Dios nos ha hecho, contento del universo que nos ha sido dado y dejando lo demás a los que escalan montañas para no hacer nada allí en lo alto.

Transeúntes eternos a través de nosotros mismos, no hay paisajes sino el paisaje que nosotros somos. Nada poseemos, porque ni siquiera nos poseemos a nosotros mismos. Nada tenemos porque nada somos. ¿Qué manos extenderé hacia el universo? El universo no es mío: soy yo.

Al final de este día queda lo que quedó de ayer y quedará de mañana: el ansia insaciable e innúmera de ser siempre el mismo y otro.

Pero así es toda la vida; así, por lo menos, es ese sistema de vida particular al que, en general, se llama civilización. La civilización consiste en dar a algo un nombre que no le compete, y después soñar sobre el resultado. Y, realmente, el nombre falso y el sueño verdadero crean una nueva realidad. El objeto se vuelve realmente otro. Manufacturamos ideales. La materia prima sigue siendo la misma, pero la forma, que el arte le ha dado, la aleja de continuar siendo efectivamente la misma.

...

Fernando Pessoa o el refinamiento estético de la tristeza. Intérprete y traductor de la pena, de la lucidez que

no languidece: las palabras se aparecen como islas salvadoras, oasis en mitad de todos los desiertos. Descarado, insolente, implacable con la amalgama de aflicciones que a todos rondan y mortifican.

Bernardo Soares o cómo descifrar la paradoja de la existencia, cómo conferir coherencia a la incredulidad y la sorpresa, cómo redactar aplicadamente un diario del desencanto, de la desilusión y la derrota. Quizá lo que realmente perviva, de una manera vaga e involuntaria, sea la vanidad de aquellos que relatan el cadáver exquisito de la vida, aquellos que esculpen suntuosos panteones de voces que otorgan cuerpo al discurso de las almas: memorias que deambulan por las aristas cortantes de lo cognoscible.

°°°.°..°-°.°_.° ???? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος .°-°.°° .°°° ★.°-°.°★ ?????? ???????
?????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

"Ποτ? δεν αγαπ?με κ?ποιον. Αγαπ?με απλ?ς την ιδ?α που σχηματ?ζουμε για κ?ποιον. Τελικ? αυτ? που αγαπ?με ε?ναι μια δικ? μας ?ννοια και ο εαυτ?ς μας.

Αυτ? ε?ναι αλ?θεια σε ?λη την κλ?μακα του ?ρωτα. Στο σεξουαλικ? ?ρωτα αναζητ?με τη δικ? μας απ?λαυση με τη μεσολ?βηση εν?ς ξ?νου κορμιο?.

Στον ?ρωτα που διαφ?ρει απ? τον σεξουαλικ? αναζητ?με τη δικ? μας απ?λαυση με τη μεσολ?βηση μιας δικ? μας ιδ?ας.

Ο αυνανιστ?ς ε?ναι αποτρ?παιος, αλλ?, στην απ?λυτη αλ?θεια, ο αυνανιστ?ς ε?ναι η απ?λυτη λογικ? ?κφραση του ερωτευμ?νου. Ε?ναι ο μ?νος που δεν προσποιε?ται μ?τε κορο?δε?ει τον εαυτ? του.

Να λες. Να ξ?ρεις να λες. Να ξ?ρεις να υπ?ρχεις μεσ' απ? τη γραπτ? φων? και τη νοητικ? εικ?να! Η ζω? δεν αξ?ζει τ?ποτα παραπ?νω: το παραπ?νω ε?ναι ?ντρες και γυνά?κες, υποθετικο? ?ρωτες και ματαιοδοξ?ες ψε?τικες, προφ?σεις της π?ψης και της λ?θης, ?νθρωποι που κινο?νται π?νω κ?τω, σαν ζ?α ?ταν ανασηκ?νουμε μια π?τρα, κ?τω απ? τον μεγ?λο αφηρημ?νο βρ?χο του γαλ?ζιου χωρ?ς ν?ημα"

Το πρ?το μ?ρος του βιβλ?ου της ανησυχ?ας ε?ναι ?να π?ζλ απο περιπλεκ?μενα ?νειρα. Σημει?σεις ψυχικ?ς εξομολ?γησης, φωτειν?ς και κατασκ?τεινης ταυτ?χρονα. Κομμ?τια καρδι?ς. Κομμ?τια λογοτεχνικ?ς θεωρ?ας. Αυτοβιογραφικ? αποσπ?σματα ονε?ρων και απομ?νωσης.

Μια επιστολ? που γρ?φτηκε για να μην εκδοθε? με τ?τλο "η αισθητικ? της αδιαφορ?ας".

?να εγχειρ?διο πεπρωμ?νου που διατηρε? π?ντα ευπρ?σδεκτη την ελπ?δα της αποτυχ?ας.

"Ανασυνθ?τοντας διαρκ?ς τον εαυτ? μου, τον κατ?στρεψα. Απ? την πολλ? σκ?ψη του εαυτο? μου ε?μαι πια οι σκ?ψεις μου και ?χι εγ?.

Με βυθομ?τρησα και ?φησα να π?σει ο βυθομετρητ?ς. Ζω για να σκ?φτομαι αν ?χω β?θος ? ?χι, χωρ?ς πια ?λλο βυθομετρητ? π?ρα απ? το βλ?μμα μου, που μου δε?χνει, φωτειν? π?νω στο σκορ?ο φ?ντο του καθρ?φτη του τερ?στιου πηγαδιο?, το πρ?σωπ? μου να με κοιτ?ζει εν? το κοιτ?ζω".

?νας παραπονι?ρης ονειροπ?λος. ?νας παρ?ας της ζω?ς και οπαδ?ς της φαντασιακ?ς νοημοσ?νης.

Άνας Άνθρωπος τραγικ? μοναχικ?ς και μοναδικ?ς.

Καθισμ?νος π?σω απο Άνα παλι? γραφε?ο,σε Άνα φτωχικ? νοικιασμ?νο δωμ?τιο μας καλε? να τον νι?σουμε. Να μπο?με στο σκοτειν? δωμ?τιο και να διαβ?σουμε τις σκ?ρπιες σημει?σεις που γρ?φει καθημεριν? κ?νοντας μια αδι?κριτη ενδοσκ?πηση στο βυθ? των αισθη?σεων της ψυχ?ς του.

"Απ? τη ζω? τ?ποτα Άλλο δεν ζ?τησα π?ρα απ? το να περ?σει απ? μ?σα μου χωρ?ς να την αισθανθ?. Απ? την αγ?πη το μ?νο που ζ?τησα Άταν να με?νει για π?ντα Άνα Άνειρο μακριν?.

Απ? τα εσωτερικ? μου τοπ?α, Άλα τους μη πραγματικ?, αυτ? που με ε?λκυε Άταν το μακριν?, και τα τοξωτ? γεφ?ρια που Άσβηναν, σχεδ?ν στην απ?σταση των τοπ?ων των ονε?ρων μου, ε?χαν μια γλυκ?τητα ονε?ρου σε σχ?ση με Άλλα μ?ρη του τ?που -μια γλυκ?τητα που μ' Άκανε να τ' αγαπ?.

Η μαν?α μου να δημιουργ? Άναν κ?σμο ψε?τικο με συνοδε?ει ακ?μα, και μ?νο με τον θ?νατ? μου θα μ' εγκαταλε?ψει».

Ο Πεσσ?α δημιουργε? ζωντανο?ς καθρ?φτες μεταφυσικ?ς απεικ?νισης επινοημ?νων τοπ?ων και ειδ?λων.

Οι ερωτ?σεις π?φτουν σαν τη βροχ? που τον θλ?βει και τον αναζοογωνε? με τη μυρωδι? που απλ?νει στη φ?ση.

"Ποιος ε?μαι εγ?;"

"Τι με κ?νει να γρ?φω;"

"Σε ποιον πρ?πει να γυρ?σω;"

"Ποιον Άχω; ποιος με περιμ?νει;"

Λατρε?ει τη μοναξι? που τον καταστρ?φει.

Διατυπ?νει ευκριν?στατα εναν μεταφυσικ? πλο?το αυτοσεβασμο?, καταπ?εσης και εκτροχιασμο? στο προσωπικ? μητρ?ο του που ποτ? δεν καταφ?ρνει να αναλ?σει.

" Για να καταλ?βω κατ?στρεψα τον εαυτ? μου. Η καταν?ηση ε?ναι να ξεχ?σουμε την αγ?πη".

Η δημιουργ?α του γραπτο? απολογισμο? καταστρ?φει τον Άδιο.

Συγκρ?νει την ψυχ? του με μια μυστικ? ορχ?στρα της οπο?ας τα μουσικ? Άργανα σταδιακ? χαμηλ?νουν Άνταση και αργοσβ?νουν. Χτυπο?ν π?λι δυνατ? σε στιγμ?ς απ?γνωσης,αυτοκτονικ?ς δειλ?ας.

Ο εαυτ?ς του Άδεια σκην? θε?τρου. Δι?φοροι ηθοποιο?-καθημερινο? Άνθρωποι,πα?ζουν Άργα ρουτ?νας και υποταγμ?νης πρ?ζας.

Άτσι πληρ?νει την ετερονομ?α του και απομακρ?νεται απο την κοινωνικ? ζω?.

Δεν του ταιρι?ζει. Του προκαλε? σωματικ? ναυτ?α. Η παρουσ?α Άλλων προσ?πων τον κ?νει να ονειρε?εται μια περ?εργη απουσ?α που δεν κατανοε? ο?τε καθορ?ζει. Θεωρε? μ?νο πως κινδυνε?ει και εκτροχι?ζεται απο το ονειροπ?λο του ε?ναι.

Άλα τα παραπ?νω αναφ?ρονται στο ημερολ?γιο του ετερ?νυμου του Πεσσ?α

Μπερν?ντο Σο?ρες.

Άνας ασ?μαντος βοηθ?ς λογιστ? που καταγρ?φει ενδοσκοπικ? τον εαυτ? του και τον κ?σμο γ?ρω

γράφτηκε κατ' τη διάρκεια αυτο? του ταξιδιου? μ?σα σε ?να ?νειρο.

Κ?ποιος αν?συχος, ονειροπ?λος,
κοινωνιολ?γος ταξιδευτ?ς ε?ναι ο μοναδικ?ς συνεπιβ?της μας σε αυτ? το πολ?πλοκο και γεμ?το
περιστροφ?ς ταξ?δι προς ?γνωστα λιμ?νια.

Κατ' τη διάρκεια που μας απομακρ?νει απο την πραγματικ?τητα της σκ?ψης και του
συναισθ?ματος, ταξιδε?οντας στην πρ?ζα της ονειροπ?λησης, μας αφηγεται τις αισθ?σεις, τις
ιδ?ες και τα συναισθ?ματα του -μ?σα απο επινοημ?νες προσωπικ?τητες και διχασμο?ς- ως τη
μοναδικ? του πραγματικ?τητα, τη βεβαι?τητα του για τις αισθ?σεις που αποκαλε? δικ?ς του.
Προφαν?ς αυτ? που επιδι?κει το πετυχα?νει. Μας εξομολογε?ται μ?σα απο μια ονειροπ?ληση το
αν?φελο και την οδυνηρ? και στε?ρα μαν?α του ονειρε?εσθαι...

Ο αναγν?στης ξεκιν?ντας αυτ? το ταξ?δι απομ?κρυνσης απο τη γνωστ? και οικε?α τ?ξη πραγμ?των
προς την αναθε?ρηση των π?ντων, τη λογικ? ασυν?χεια και τις επικουρικ?ς σκ?ψεις των
αισθ?σεων, βαρα?νει με πολλ? φορτ?α την πνευματικ? του κρ?ση.

?χοντας ως μοναδικ? συνταξιδι?τη το μοναχικ? και πολ?μορφο συγγραφ?α πρ?πει αναγκαστικ? να
απομονωθ?με μαζ? του και να σεβαστο?με την αλ?θεια του.

Δεν υπ?ρχει ?λλη επιλογ?, αν επιθυμο?με κ?ποια στιγμ? να φθ?σουμε στο λιμ?νι των
συμπερασμ?των κατανο?ντας ?σα αντιφατικ? μην?ματα διατε?νεται πως αληθε?ουν για τις αξ?ες
και τα νο?ματα που αναγρ?φονται στο πνευματικ? του ημερολ?γιο.

Μοναδικ? βο?θεια η δια?σθηση μας.

?τσι, μ?σα στις απ?ραντες εκτ?σεις της ψυχ?ς με πυξ?δα την α?σθηση και την ευφυ?α μας θα
μπορ?σουμε να διακρ?νουμε αν οι μορφ?ς του ονε?ρου στην πραγματικ?τητα τους, ε?ναι
διαφορετικ?ς η μ?α απο την ?λλη.

Ο Πεσσ?α ε?ναι ο αταξ?δευτος λογοτ?χνης που προσπαθε? να μας πε?σει εμμονικ? πως η
καλλι?ργεια της γν?σης, της ευαισθησ?ας και της καταν?ησης υπ?ρχουν στον καθ?ναν μας.

Θεωρε? πολ?τιμη και μεγαλει?δη την ευαισθησ?α του ατ?μου η οπο?α για να αποκτηθε? απαιτε?
απομ?κρυνση απο την πραγματικ?τητα.

Με παρ?λληλη μελ?τη και λεπτομερ? αν?λυση βαθα?νει και καλλιεργε?ται η ευαισθησ?α, αφο?
αποκλειστικ? μ?σα μας υπ?ρχουν και διχοτομο?νται τα π?ντα.

Η ψυχ?, το "ε?ναι" και το μη "ε?ναι" του Πεσσ?α ταυτ?ζονται με τα αντ?στοιχα ?λη της
ανθρωπ?τητας.

Παραθ?τω δυο αποσπασμ?τα, ?να απο το "Βιβλ?ο της Ανησυχ?ας" και ?να απο το πο?ημα "Η
π?λις" του Καβ?φη επειδ? θεωρ? πως αν ο ποιητ?ς μας ε?χε ασχοληθε? με την πρ?ζα κ?πως ?τσι -
?σως και καλ?τερα- θα ?γραφε.

«Να ταξιδ?ψω; Για να ταξιδ?ψω φτ?νει να υπ?ρχω: πηγα?νω απ? μ?ρα σε μ?ρα, σαν απ? σταθμ? σε
σταθμ? στο σιδηρ?δρομο του κορμιο? μου, ? του πεπρωμ?νου μου, σκυμμ?νος π?νω απ? τα
πρ?σωπα και τις χειρονομ?ες, π?ντα ?δια και π?ντα διαφορετικ?, ?πως, τελικ?, ε?ναι και τα τοπ?α.

[...]

Γιατ? να ταξιδ?ψω; Πο? αλλο? θα βρισκ?μουνα παρ? μ?σα σε μ?να τον ?διο;»
Φερν?ντο Πεσσ?α, Το βιβλ?ο της ανησυχ?ας.

.....
«Καινο?ριους τ?πους δεν θα βρεις, δεν θ?βρεις ?λλες θ?λασσες.
Η π?λις θα σε ακολουθε?. Στους δρ?μους θα γυρν?ς
τους ?διους. Και στες γειτονι?ς τες ?διες θα γερν?ς·
και μες στα ?δια σπ?τια αυτ? θ' ασπρ?ζεις.
Π?ντα στην π?λι αυτ? θα φθ?νεις. Για τα αλλο? - μη ελπ?ζεις-
δεν ?χει πλο?ο για σε, δεν ?χει οδ?.
?τσι που τη ζω? σου ρ?μαξες εδ?
στην κ?χη το?τη την μικρ?, σ' ?λην την γη την χ?λασσες.»
Κ.Π.Καβ?φης, Η π?λις.

Καλ? αν?γνωση.
Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς.

Szplug says

Humans are social beings, to the extent that those who prefer solitude to the company of others are usually perceived as troubled individuals, outside of the norm; it took me a *long* time to feel comfortable with being alone, with dampening the guilt that flared up in me every time I begged off going out with a group of friends. It is always a welcome reinforcement when I come across a book penned by a fellow recluse—and *The Book of Disquiet* could be a solitary soul's bible, so powerfully does it speak in the language of single-place table settings, corner-chair cobwebs and bachelor apartments. It has achieved pride of place on my bedside stack, where I can ladle myself servings of Pessoa's wisdom at leisure.

This book's voluntarily alone author is Fernando Pessoa, a Portuguese poet, writer, and polylinguist who invented fully-fleshed out *heteronyms*—distinct and separate personalities of differing nationality and gender—in order to pursue his writing in various idiosyncratic shades and styles. *The Book of Disquiet* is a collection of the aphoristic prose-poetry musings of one such *heteronym*, that of Bernardo Soares, assembled from notes, entries, and jottings made over a span of some thirty years and left unpublished at the time of Pessoa's death in 1935. Richard Zenith, the editor and translator of this stunning, haunting, and achingly beautiful paean to the imaginary potentiality of man, has compiled the definitive edition of this tome in a truly outstanding translation that captures the expressive eloquence of Pessoa and his magical, metaphorically rich manner of constructing word images to portray his unique way of life.

There is no finer encomium to the shattering melancholy and bracing affirmation of loneliness and solitude than the five hundred plus entries that make up *The Book of Disquiet*; and few better descriptions of

existential nausea, of the desperate efforts to perceive a reason to continue with the painful disappointments, shadow terrors, and numbing meaninglessness of human existence. As Pessoa—writing as Soares—quietly and unassumingly goes about his daily rituals of walking, working as a book-keeper and inhabiting the well-trod spaces of his rented room in the real world, he is living a rich existence within the wildly creative contours of his mind: as a knight errant, a rich merchant, a pirate, a voyager, a lover of countless women, a guide to the cosmos, an inhaler of sunrises and embracer of sunsets, the guiding hand of every drop of Lisbon's morning showers, the leaves shaken by a sudden burst of wind. Having been sentenced to a term of life by an errant universe, Pessoa decided to renounce action and ambitions in what we hold to be *real* life to pursue a variegated and abundant existence within the realm of dreams. As our life is measured through the archived clippings of one's memory, whether one actually *performed* the deeds recalled matters less than the detail and substance they contain.

Such, at least, is the defense offered by Pessoa; yet often his solipsistic persuasions are contradictory, defensive; and when the mask slips we can see the depth of pain and loneliness underneath the placid surface of his imaginary life. There is much repetition and mulling over of themes from different angles, but the writing is so expressive and raw and honest that, to myself at least, it never becomes tedious—even as the *tedium* of existence, the stretching of the soul on the rack of time, is one of the principal ideas that populate Pessoa's thoughts and entries. It is as if *tedium* was experienced as a box of chocolates, each colour and coating, each form and flavour, each taste and texture, mulled over, pondered, drawn out and examined, and then set to paper as a running record to remind of an eccentric daily pleasure.

This is a book to be mused upon and savored, one that can be imbibed in different ways: it can be read straight through—the way I approached it, drawn into a white heat of blistered enthrallment—or sparingly sampled over weeks, months, even years. The order the aphorisms are assembled in is purely a construction of Zenith; he stresses such in his introduction and encourages each reader to create their own sequence for the collected entries. However the reader decides to approach *The Book of Disquiet*, they will be rewarded with the inventive honesty of a hale and wounded man from a work that is truly *sui generis*.

I've recently picked up the Serpent's Tail Extraordinary Classic edition, which features a translation by Margaret Jull Costa, who performed similar duties for José Saramago's last half-dozen books. Distinct from Zenith, obviously, but just as potent and powerful—and the differently parsed words and sentences only serve to present Pessoa's incomparable poetry of loneliness in a new light, equally fulgent and searing, just focussed from an alternate angle. A richly marbled interiority of immanent pain and transcendent beauty.

Revisiting the disquietude of early modern Lisbon, I'm reminded anew how this collection of Pessoa's dispassionate passion is one whose title is so perfectly matched to the content within that one can sit there (all by oneself, of course) cushioned within the utter silence of an unvoiced existence, serving as an unexciting urban renewal zone for migratory dust motes and unimpressive highland anchored lethality for predatory silken arachnids, with a nigh sardonic set to the tight-lipped, hesitantly-committed smile of satisfaction that imprints itself upon one's otherwise stoney visage, and marvel at how much one man's textually decanted imaginative impressions and gossamer ruminations running the interior gauntlet of un-lived memories, unacted performances, unconsummated affairs, unshed tears, unwatched observations, unwinged flights, ungrounded fears, un-felt kisses, untouched caresses, uninvolved emotions, unexercised exertions, untasted repasts, unliked friendships, unmet acquaintances, untold stories, unpoured libations, undone happenings, unannounced recollections, unlit umbrages, unformed expressions, untraveled journeys, unnoticeable leavenings, un-housed guilts, and unarticulated speechifications resonate, to the fullest extent, with the plucked strings ever aquiver within the utterly empty, lonely, and withdrawn chambers of the mind-and/or house-bound soul.

