

Fernando Pessoa

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My susceptibility to some kinds of fright (fear) was great. In the street, a man walking towards me, that is to say, in a contrary direction, pulled out a handkerchief in front of me; I started violently, believing, unconsciously, I think, that he was pulling out an arm or revolver.

My short sight — not one the whole very short, but excessively short in what relates to features, to gestures in other people — aided my unbalanced brain. My imagination misinterpreted the character of their glances. I distorted, I knew not how, the value and the gist of their gestures.

My very sense of hearing was weak; the words I caught I applied, contorting them, to myself. I saw in every word a term to slight, in each phrase, badly snatched, the shadow and the glimpse of an insult.

The people in the street laughed: it was at me. My weak sight did not allow me to kill the illusion. The eye glasses I had in my pocket I dared not put on, for I feared to find my suspicion true.

I longed for a great self-esteem, that I might forget myself in myself. I desired, oh, how I desired! — an impulse all to benevolence that I might forget me in others. I longed to die, to drop my personality, to let life drop away. I longed to be freed from everything, far away, very far. I wished to look no more upon the faces of men.

In these hours of intense pain I often desired a friend, one that might well comprehend me: my richest dream was of a dog. I often dreamt of having for companion a little child, one picked up stray from the streets. But in my greatest agonies, in the acutest trances of my woe, I desired naught save to forget. Earth, nature, men, ants, beasts, birds — I longed to be at rest from these. I pined for a sleep that nothing within life can give. My thoughts were of death, of the complete mortality of the soul.

As I walked along the pavements it seemed that all laughter was of me, that I was the object of all ridicule.

[...]

My ear, halfway weak, appeare to prove supersensitive to conversations not read behind me. The words I caught I misinterpreted for my own pain and suffering.

s. d.

Pessoa por Conhecer — Textos para um Novo Mapa . Teresa Rita Lopes. Lisboa: Estampa, 1990: 11.