

***The
Collected
Poems
of
Álvaro
de
Campos
vol. 2***

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The Collected Poems of Alberto Caeiro

The Collected Poems of Álvaro de Campos Vol. 1

The Collected Poems of Álvaro de Campos Vol. 2

(translated by Chris Daniels)

Lisbon: What the Tourist Should See

Zbigniew Kotowicz: *Fernando Pessoa – Voices of a Nomadic Soul*

Fernando Pessoa

*The Collected Poems of
Álvaro de Campos*

Vol. 2 (1928–1935)

**translated by
Chris Daniels**

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Collected Poems

Vol. 2

1928–1935

TOBACCO SHOP

I'm nothing.
I'll never be anything.
I can't wish I were anything.
Even so, I have all the dreams of the world in me.

Windows of my room,
Of my room, one of the millions in the world no one knows who owns
(And if they knew, what would they know?),
You open onto the mystery of a street crossed constantly by people,
Onto a street inaccessible to all thought,
Real, impossibly real, certain, unknowably certain,
With the mystery of things beneath stones and beings,
With death putting moisture on walls and gray hairs on men,
With Destiny driving the cart of everything down the road of nothing.

Today I'm vanquished, as if I knew the truth.
Today I'm lucid, as if I were about to die,
And had no more brotherhood with things
Than in a farewell turning that house and that side of the street
Into a row of coaches, a conductor's whistle
From inside my head,
A jolt of nerves and creaking bones in departure.

Today I'm perplexed, like someone who's thought and discovered and lost.
Today I'm divided between the loyalty I owe
The Tobacco Shop across the street, as a real thing outside,
And the feeling that everything's a dream, as a real thing inside.

I've failed in everything.
Since I've proposed nothing, maybe everything was nothing.
The learning they gave me,
I used it to sneak out the back window.
I went to the country with grand intentions,
But all I found there were grass and trees,
And when there were people, they were the same as the others.
I leave the window, sit in a chair. What should I think?

How do I know what I'll be, when I don't even know what I am?
 Should I be what I think? But I think about being so many things!
 And there are so many thinking they're the same thing—they can't all be!
 Genius? At this moment
 A hundred thousand minds like mine dream themselves geniuses like me,
 And history won't remember, who knows?, not even one,
 Nor will there be anything but the midden of future conquests.
 No, I don't believe in myself.
 In every asylum there are so many nut-cases with so many certainties!
 I, who have no certainties, am I more right or less right?
 No, not even in myself . . .
 In how many of the world's garrets and non-garrets
 Are there dreaming at this hour how many geniuses-unto-themselves?
 So many high and noble and lucid aspirations—
 Yes, truly high and noble and lucid—
 Who knows if they're plausible—
 Will they ever find the light of day, the ears of people?
 The world is for those who were born to conquer,
 Not for those who dream they can conquer it, even if they're right.
 I've dreamed more than Napoleon accomplished.
 I've clasped to my hypothetical breast more humanity than Christ ever did.
 I've made more philosophies in secret than Kant ever wrote.
 But I am, and may always be, the one in the garret,
 Even if I don't live in one;
 I'll always be *he wasn't born for this*;
 I'll always only be *oh, but he had such qualities*;
 I'll always be the one who waited for someone to open the door at the
 foot of a doorless wall,
 Who sang a ditty of the Infinite in an overgrown field,
 Who heard the voice of God in a closed-up well.
 Do I believe in myself? No, nor in anything else.
 Let Nature pour over my ardent head
 Its sun, its rain, the wind that finds my hair
 And let the rest come if it comes, or is to come, or doesn't come.
 Cardiac slaves of the stars,

We conquer everything before we get out of bed;
But we wake up and it's opaque,
We get up and it's alien,
We go out and it's the entire world,
And then the solar system and then the Milky Way and then the Indefinite.

(Eat chocolates, little girl:
Eat chocolates!
See, there are no other metaphysics in the world beside chocolates.
See, all religions teach no more than a candy store.
Eat, dirty girl, eat!
If only I could eat chocolates as truthfully as you do!
But I think and, tearing the silver paper, which is really only tin foil,
I drop everything on the ground, as I've dropped my life.)

But at least there remains from the sorrow of what I'll never be,
The rapid calligraphy of these verses,
Portico leading into the Impossible.
At least I consecrate to myself a tearless contempt,
At least I'm noble in the grand gesture with which I toss
The dirty clothing I am, without a laundry-list, into the course of things,
And stay home without a shirt.

(You, who console, who do not exist and so console,
Whether Greek goddess, conceived as a statue come to life,
Or Roman patrician, impossibly noble and malignant,
Princess of troubadours, most gentle and colorful,
Marquise of the eighteenth century, décolletée and distant,
Or celebrated coquette of our parent's time,
Or something else modern—I don't know quite what—
All of it, whatever it might be, be it, and let it inspire me if it can!
My heart is an overturned bucket.
As those who invoke spirits invoke spirits I invoke
Me to myself and encounter nothing.
I go to the window and see the street with absolute clarity.

I see the shops, I see the sidewalks, I see the cars pass by,
I see the clothed living entities who cross.
I see the dogs which also exist,
And all of it weighs upon me like a curse of banishment,
And all of it is foreign, as is everything.)

I lived, I studied, I loved, I even believed,
And today there's no beggar I don't envy solely because he's not me.
I see his tatters and his sores and his lies,
And I think: maybe you've never lived, studied, loved, and believed
(Because it's possible to make reality of all this without making anything
of all this);
Maybe you've hardly existed, like a lizard with its tail cut off,
The tail squirming just short of the lizard.

I've made of myself what I haven't known,
And what I could have made of myself I didn't.
The masquerade I wore was wrong.
They believed the mask; I didn't contradict them, and lost myself.
When I wanted to take off the mask,
It was stuck to my face.
When I finally got it off and looked in the mirror,
I'd already aged.
I was drunk, I didn't know how to put on a mask I hadn't even taken off.
I threw away the mask and slept in the cloakroom
Like a dog tolerated by the management
For not making trouble
And I'm going to write it all down to prove I am sublime.

Musical essence of my useless verses,
If only I could encounter you as something I'd made,
And not remain always in front of the Tobacco Shop in front of me,
Crushing underfoot the awareness of existing and existing,
Like a rug a drunkard stumbles on,
Or a doormat the gypsies stole, even though it was worthless.

But the owner of the Tobacco Shop came to the door and stayed there.
I look at him with the discomfort of a misturned neck
And the discomfort of a misunderstanding soul.
He will die and I will die.
He'll leave his sign behind, I'll leave my verses.
At a certain point his sign will die, and my verses will die.
After that, the street where his sign was will die,
And the language in which I had written my verses.
Then the turning planet, where all of this took place, will die.
On other satellites in other systems something like people
Will continue making things like verses and living under things like signs,
Always one thing across from the other,
Always one thing just as useless as the other,
Always the impossible just as stupid as the real,
Always the mystery of the depths just as certain as the dream of the
mystery of the surface,
Always this thing or that thing or neither one thing nor another.

But a man went into the Tobacco Shop (to buy tobacco?),
And plausible reality suddenly falls on top of me.
I start up energetic, convinced, human,
And plan to write these lines wherein I say the contrary.

I light a cigarette while thinking about writing them
And the cigarette tastes like liberation from all thought.
I follow the smoke like a path all its own,
And enjoy, in a moment both sensitive and competent,
The freeing of all my speculations
And the awareness that metaphysics is a consequence of being cranky.

Then I sit back in the chair
And continue smoking.
While Destiny grants it me, I'll continue to smoke.

(Maybe I'd be happy
If I married my washerwoman's daughter.)
That sinks in. I get out of the chair. I go to the window.

The man came out of the Tobacco Shop (stuffing change into his pants
pocket?).
Hey, I know him: it's Esteves, who is without metaphysics.
(The Owner of the Tobacco Shop came to the door.)
As if by divine instinct, Esteves turned and saw me.
He waved goodbye, I shouted *So long, Esteves!*, and the universe
Reconstructed itself to me with neither ideal nor hope, and the Owner
of the Tobacco Shop smiled.

Lisbon, January 15, 1928

(variant title: March of the Downfall)

Almost without wanting to (as if we knew!) great men rise out of
common men
Sergeant to emperor by imperceptible transitions,
Accomplishment mixes
With the dream of accomplishment to come,
And the road rolls its quick, invisible degrees.
Oh, those who see the end from the very start!
Oh, those who aspire to climb the flight!
The conqueror of every empire was always an assistant book-keeper,
Every king's lover—even those already dead—, a pensive, caring mother,
If only I could see souls inside, like bodies outside.

Ah, desire, what a prisonhouse!
What a madhouse, the meaning of life!

(1928?)

NEIGHBORHOOD GAZETTE

Babylon's Lloyd Georges left
No trail on history.
Briands of Assyria or Egypt,
Trotskys of some Greek
Or Roman colony gone by—
All dead names, even written.

Only foolish poets, madmen
Who made their own philosophies,
And judicious old geometrists
Have survived that anterior,
Miniscule darkness—
Even history's not history.

Oh great men of the Moment!
Oh great seething glories
Obscurity flees!
Take it all unthinking!
Pad your fame and bellies—
Tomorrow's for the madmen of today!

(1928)

(variant title: *Futurist Gazetteer*)

In the darkling idiot conflict
Between light and shopkeeper,
Let the following truth
Be lit, however lightly.

Shopkeepers are accustomed
To mark up 100 percent
And protest any surplus
Paltry in their purview.

They cry dark perdition
When their exalted betters
Fail to uphold correct
Cutpurse tradition.

Shopkeepers, issue forth!
Steal 200 percent—:
End the endless argument
Between Cosa Nostra and Camorra . . .

★ ★ ★