

Fernando Pessoa

[Carta a Frank Palmer — 1915]

Frank Palmer

Another reason, besides, makes me write. You will excuse me if the following paragraphs are somewhat lengthy, but they could not be very short if were clearly to explain to you what the matter is.

By this post I am sending, registered, a number of a review, *Orpheu*, of which I am part-editor. It is a review of all kinds of advanced literature, from a quasi-futurism to what we here call intersectionism. We intended at some time this year to bring out a supplement (the size of a usual number — 80 pages) in English, for this purpose, and to be quite sure of our way, I should like to know the following things:

Considering that the number would be printed here (as is most convenient for our personal supervision, though it would be more perfectly produced in England) what have we to do to sell it there? Would it not be the best method to send it to a bookseller there, who would distribute it over the others? On what conditions is that done, that is to say, what commission does a house in these circumstances require on the price? What would be the highest possible saleable price for a review like the one sent, in England? Would you care to do this for us? If not, could you indicate any one who would?

There is another important question. Our review contains certain poems and prose works which are «objectionable» from a strictly moral standpoint. In the present number the central part of Álvaro de Campos «Marine Ode» (*Ode Marítima*) is in this case.

The worst which the English number of the review would have is the poem of mine, written in English, called «Antinoüs» of which I send you a copy herewith (to avoid lengthy and unsatisfactory explanations). Could a review be sold in England with a poem like this inserted? Fundamentally, it is really not quite as «bad» as Shakespeare's sonnets, but no one ever sees anything fundamentally.

I should be much obliged if you could answer these questions as soon as you possibly can. I should explain that the publication of the English supplement is

not definitely decided on as yet; it is as well, however, to know all particulars as soon as possible, so that our decision may not be hampered or delayed by ignorance of them.

Suppose a review or book were really published or introduced into England bearing such a composition, would could happen? I ask this because I am not familiar with proceedings (legal) possible on this line. Here in Portugal, though a fairly stringent law exists on this and kindred subjects, yet only political writers, and that only at periods of great excitement, run any risk. From the moral standpoint, almost any kind of literature can be published, even going into the clearly obscene.

1915

Pessoa Inédito. Fernando Pessoa. (Orientação, coordenação e prefácio de Teresa Rita Lopes). Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1993: 182.