

Fernando Pessoa

## **Now are no Janus' temple-doors thrown wide**

Now are no Janus' temple-doors thrown wide  
To utter thoughts of war upon the land.  
Now doth no double facing God divide  
Him from himself, that sight of him may brand  
The symbol of opposed things upon  
Our hearts that at our eyes on him are thrown.  
Now do no pagan cults tremble at Mars' name  
Because bad-auguring birds like clouds have flown  
O'er nations' frontiers, nor do oracles frame  
Strange answers unto ears of armoured chiefs,  
Replies that leave perplexed their perplexed eyes  
That know not whether that heart-pang they hear  
Is the first grief heralding their peoples' griefs  
Or the strange cold that the Gods' mysteries  
Speak to his soul that is to conquest near.

No. All is dead that wreathed war round with Gods.  
Nor omens mute, nor the foiled sacrifice,  
No dim words spoken by spilt blood on sods.  
Nay, nor the later sense that vice and sloth,  
When in a people's heart they nestle both  
Do on them call the wrath of heaven, us move.  
Our souls are void, like a stage mummer's cries  
And our hate and our love mock hate and love.

Something of coldness, like the coming winter,  
Crosses our autumn like a profecy.  
Round our leaves now no swallows circle and twitter.  
No more, no more, shall we heart-wholesome be.  
There is a sadness that with us doth stay  
Like a billeted guest, and far away

Our ultimate death awaits us like a sea.

Alas! that even the poesy of wars  
Should, like a tired thing, have gone where things go.  
Alas! alas! that we have come thus far  
Knowing still the same nothing that we know,  
To meet more than ourselves, nor no throe  
That shall be herald of a newer man.  
And ever as the old woes the cold new woe  
Fills with its deathless measure our life's span.

No, even the Christian manner of love or hate  
Is dead. No God that lives in us survives  
The winter in us that snow-kills God and Fate  
And has iced o'er the rivers of our lives.  
With cuirass and with pike we laid aside  
All that made battle worth the death in it.  
Our science-made war-gestures now deride  
The great eternal things that war doth fit  
With helm and armour.  
With mortal pomp yet pomp. We are on death's side.

All is as if were not part of it.  
All clashes, rings and turmoils as if far.  
The foiled imagining within our wit  
Ousts war's clear image with bare thought of war.  
Our plans are cold, our courage cold, our eyes  
When they look inwards dream but the far plain  
And vague, picture-seen faces and their pain  
Touches no sense of ours, nor do dreamed cries  
Rise in us. What cold thing has become of  
Our very hatred? What way has strength gone?  
We die as if the sky were not above  
Our heads and beneath us sand, grass and stone.

The great eternal presence of all things  
No longer doth with us collaborate

To lift our hearts up on invisible wings  
And bid us tremble at the thrill of Fate.  
The possible fall of empires doth no more  
Touch us with that great and mysterious dread  
That John on Pathmos saw rise o'er his head  
Like a space-filling sea without a shore.

Alas! our nobler fear has gone away  
Where our weariness pointed. We are blind  
And learned to blindness. Our wild gestures stray  
From us like leaves that fall far off with the wind,  
And we fight clearly, coldly, night and day.

These things I thought, knowing that far behind  
My visible horizon war was slave  
Of that Invisible Master who doth wave  
His speechless hand o'er continents and seas  
And men like reaped things fall, and the blind wind  
With groping hands that in the night are blind  
Touches the dead men's faces' mysteries.

This I thought when, lo! before me there was  
A door of iron, or what iron seemed,  
An unsized portal, and its live-seeming lock  
Seemed all the uses of a lock to mock.  
To see that door was to know none could pass  
Through it, nor could its other-side be dreamed.

A ribbon of broad stairs led up to it  
But had no meaning, like a laugh unseen,  
I looked and the door seemed to sway as hit  
By blows, but no blows fell on it. That screen  
Was interposed between me and no scene,  
Yet, like an eye staring from out the night,  
It touched my heart cold with its iron mean.  
And this was not in space nor in a light.

Somewhere in me where dreams do themselves show  
And have an inner meaning God doth know,  
The door was set, and it seemed to my soul  
That there since some inner eternity  
It ever had been and I something had seen,  
Yet half forgot, that like a half-shown scroll,  
Concealed its sense in what it showed to me.

And lo! as my heart looked, the door grew clear  
As a near-lit thing seen in a black night,  
And a great sense of a great coming fear  
Was fear already in my heart's affright.  
Then as I looked I saw — yet it did seem  
That in my vision that had ever been —  
From beneath the strange door down the steps flow  
A string of silent blood, that step by step,  
Fell with a motion desolate and slow.

The thin red stream seemed conscious of its course  
Though its course seemed to be none, but to fall.  
I looked and it fell ever, with a force  
Of relinquishment to its fall, a knell  
To some hope in me, and the blood  
That ever was but a small line did flood  
All my pained soul and made it red. The spell  
Of its thin redness spreade o'er my thought's mood  
And all my thoughts became a great red wall  
Set up in front of what in me doth brood.

Then everything shifted, yet was the same.  
I looked on as one who sees a child's game  
And finds its eyes at interest in it  
And knows not why. A sense of end did hit  
My power of having feelings with a rain  
That did with deep red all my dim soul stain  
As it had stained that soul.

Then all the outer world was dashed to night  
And, though no floor remained, no sides, no light  
To that space-missed new world, set far from being,  
Yet by some clearer virtue of my seeing  
All I saw was without nor left nor right  
With a name to it, without a place  
Even in itself, without an I to see.  
The mere great door and the red blood's thin trace  
And all the rest was void and mystery.

Then all again seemed changing unto some  
New, unimaginable and fearful thing.  
The door and that blood-line seemed to come  
A strange new-featured Face looking out through  
The Universe's whole frame, traversing  
It like light an invisible glass — a wing  
Belonging to no bird our thoughts construe.

Then the door seemed to recede — nay, to have  
Receded, when I knew not, nor was there  
A when, for Time seem'd as seems a far wave  
On a wide sea, something gone past. The bare  
Eternal door seemed to have gone to the end  
Of a visible infinity, and all  
That now remained on which my soul could spend  
Its terror was the blood ever at its fall.

Then, though still the same small line of red,  
The blood seemed to grow glass and in it I saw  
A mighty river full of strange things — dead  
Men, children, wrecks of bridges, cities, thrones,  
And still the line was a small red line, (. . .)  
Of other meaning than that  
That before God for the clear world atones.

But the (. . .) visions in that line contained  
Seemed wide as space. The red line seemed a slit

In a thin door through which our eyes can see  
Large fields, a city and the whole sky stained  
With clouds, and all this in the line could be;  
And from some unknown where I looked on it.

It seemed the edge of a cube opening  
Sideways to sides of visions, more and more.  
Now and then across its glass — like being a wing  
Passed a tremor ran over everything  
That had in it a clear and tragic being.  
Then ceased. And from, past space, the door  
Still held my unconscious consciousness of seeing.

It seemed sometimes a bright, red moving veil  
And through it as through a stained window I guessed  
A night and stars on a vague pale day pressed,  
On a same horizon desolate and pale.

Then, as I stared, suddenly before me,  
Like a fan suddenly opened, the blood-line  
Took space from side to side, leaving naught to me  
Left or right of it. Its red (...) fact  
Became a red Niagara, a cataract.  
But there were no steps, nothing: it did fall  
As if drawn in the air, over no edge, and all  
Was this and this was its own mystery.

Then lo! over the edge, no longer now,  
But empires rolled, and I saw Greece and Rome  
Pass. And still over the eternal flow  
Reddened from left to right my inner sight's home  
Of seeing. And all like to God's blood did come  
Like a great rain off a huge thorn-crowned brow.

And I saw more and more strange empires roll  
Down and some I knew not, nor seeing them, guessed.  
Awhile their falling the fall's brink caressed

Then they sunk down somewhere within my soul,  
And my soul was the soul of all the world,  
And from my (...) eyes that saw all this  
Suddenly I felt, as if a flag unfurled,  
God in me look out at these mysteries.

My eyes seemed windows of another sight  
Of someone set behind my soul in the night  
Looking through my eyes and my sight, mine own  
Was but a glass those unknown eyes looked through,  
And still the vision was blood falling down  
In cataracts into Mystery, red and slow.

I became one with world and Fate and God,  
And the great River that came on and fell  
Let me see through its veil of (...) blood  
The stars shine and a vague moonlight, then fell  
Something from me. The cataract came more near  
To my sight; then it seemed into mine eyes  
To creep to become with them and the fear  
To pass behind them into some soul (...).

Then all that did remain was the stars light  
And again in the dark infinity  
My pity and my dread alone with me  
And my dream's meaning like a paling night.

7-1-1915

**Poesia Inglesa.** Fernando Pessoa. (Organização e tradução de Luísa Freire. Prefácio de Teresa Rita Lopes.) Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1995: 452.

1ª publ.: «Poesias Inglesas Inéditas de Fernando Pessoa sobre a Primeira Guerra Mundial». Georg Rudolf Lind. in **Ocidente**, nº 405. Lisboa: Jan. 1972