

Fernando Pessoa

The romanticists, the Coimbra School and the *Nephele bats* all represent. . .

The romanticists, the Coimbra School and the *Nephele bats* all represent failures in Portuguese literature, in so far as they did not effect 1) a fundamental change in such portions of national consciousness as literary influence can reach and transform, 2) a really coherent body of thought and art conceivable only as Portuguese. That is to say, they did not realise the creation of a national *Weltanschauung*, as the generally adopted German word defines it. They did not create a definitely Portuguese consciousness of the Universe.

They were bound to fail because they had no ground to work upon. No basis had been given them on which to rear the superstructure of their art. Culture-contacts, abundant and mutually contradictory, are effective in vitalising a nation and a literature when they act upon a national consciousness ready to synthesise them. There is no synthesis where there is no criterion for synthesis; for the same reason that you cannot put things into a box if you have not got the box.

Properly speaking, neither of the movements cited were movements at all. They were merely tendencies if by tendency we can agree to understand a movement that does not reach realisation. There can be no movement where there is not an element to unify the efforts of a number of individuals, and no number of individuals can be unified without the existence of a national consciousness; they can come together for the reason that they are more or less similar as to temperament, and because individual character, though it may bring men together, separates them still more, once they really work out their souls into definite self-expression.

The saudosist movement had to precede the final synthetic movement. The saudosists represent the definite creation of a Portuguese *Weltanschauung*; the movement will be complete when that *Weltanschauung*, once obtained and defined, is brought into European activity through the contact with alien cultures. It is this which Sensationism has taken upon itself to do, and its artists have already done much.

The saudosist movement was itself possible only after a succession of culture contacts had so shaken and stirred national consciousness that it had found itself at last.

We are entering on the beginning of the Golden Age of Portuguese literature. Portugal has found itself at last, it is at last beginning to shake off the leaden weight of the anti-nationalist tradition represented by the Italianated Camões, by the Spanish followers and by the Frenchified idiocy of which Bocage is one of the lamentable representatives. The contact with rich cultures has only served to stir us to a national awakening. But we do not fall into the narrowness of regionalist movements and such like; we must not be confounded with things like the «Celtic Revival» or any Yeats fairy-nonsense. We are not Portuguese writing for Portuguese; we leave that to journalists and political leaderwriters. We are Portuguese writing for Europe, for all civilisation; we are nothing as yet, but even what we are now doing will one day be universally known and recognised. We have no fear that it will be otherwise. It cannot be otherwise; we realise sociological conditions the outcome of which is inevitably that.

We work away from Camões, from all the tedious nonsenses of Portuguese tradition, towards the Future.

1914?

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