

Alexander Search

## A WINTER DAY

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I

'Tis a void winter day, sad as a moan.  
A sense of loneliness, as of a stone  
Upon a grave, or of a rock in sea  
Rests like a mighty shadow over me.  
I am unnerved, unminded by the pall  
Of solemn clouds that, weighty over all,  
Curtail the vision; and upon mine ear

The City's rumble brings despair and fear  
To crush my spirit free and wild.

    The rain,  
Reiterated horribly, again  
Beast with its drops at my cold window-pane  
With such a sound as makes us know it cold.  
The world is ghostly, undaylike and old,  
And weary passengers, with cautious tread,  
Yet hurried, walk within the streets soul-dead  
In the unkindness of their hue of lead.

The streets are streamlets, and perpetual  
A sound of little waters, on roof, on wall,  
Down in the streets, in pipes, in window-glass  
And into rooms doth wetly come and pass.

    All is the rain's.  
All is pale wetness, darkness inly cold,  
A sentiment of waste things and of old  
Making all things exterior sorrows, pains;

And all we hear and feel and know and see  
Is wrapt around as with a masking cloak  
In inconceivable monotony.

All in the houses and up from the street  
Is a long watery shuffle of heavy feet,  
A sound of drenched garments, and a sense  
Of a sad chillness, latently intense.  
Through cracks in doors and windows a gust cold  
Of wind penetrates like a memory of old  
Times to make freeze my body, ill reclined  
Upon a couch, a sufferer with my mind.

Life in the streets is sad, a monotone  
More dull than usual ordinariness:  
Business and work have lost their usual stress,  
The vender's cries are each of them a moan  
Grotesque, desolate, as forlorn and half-dead  
Hearts might produce which make a war (?) attempt  
At talking normally, as if they not bled.  
Half-childish urchins, gloriously unkempt  
Laugh at the water that cart-wheels upshed.

The muddy urchins in the streets that play  
Make shades of envy in my soul to stay.  
Couples, some newly-married, others not,  
Who in the commonness of their no-thought

Have a deep happiness I would not have,  
A joy to which I would prefer the grave,  
Pass in the street. some gay and some sedate.  
I feel me no like men in any way.  
I envy those — I speak true — without hate  
And without admiration, isolate (?).  
I would that I were happy as they are  
But not with that their happiness. Thus far  
Such living as theirs is were unto me

Misery, penury, monotony.

Alas for all who dream! Alas for us,  
Poor poets, more or less mad, more or less  
Foolish! In this consists true happiness!  
In knowing how to be monotonous.  
Happy are they who can see without sorrow  
    To-day yield us to-morrow  
And yet to-morrow and to-day to them  
Different days because different days,  
Which are to me (save that they pass) the same.

## II

The view I have of this cold winter day,  
The deep depression that makes my thoughts stray  
Is but a symbol and a synthesis  
Of what my life perpetually is.

How deep my thoughts in pain and sadness are!  
How wreck'd my soul in its intense despair!  
How desolate, disconsolately mute  
My heart is of the words that like scents shoot  
From the full flower of true youthfulness!  
How locked am I within my own distress!  
How in the tragic circle soul-confined  
    Of my abhorred self!  
Not one ambition leads me — power nor pelf,  
No wish for fame, no love of poor mankind.  
But I am weary, desolate and cold  
E'vn as this winter day. I have grown old  
In watching dreams go by and pass away  
    Leaving a memory pure and bright  
    Of aught that was and died as light  
Without the living horror of decay.

Is this thy life, irresolute soul of mine?

How pale the sun of thy sad morn doth shine!  
How it forebodes the cloudiness that comes  
Outstretched wings of the storm whose muffled drums  
Of warning in the paling day are heard  
Deep in the distance lesseningly blurred.

Thou look'st not death nor evil in the face  
Poor soul despairing in life's troubled race!  
All forms of life, all things have been to thee  
Mutations of eternal misery.  
All years, all homes to thee have been  
In the same drama many a change of scene.  
Thou hast not learned to live, but thou dost cling  
Madly to life (dreading Death's night severe),  
As if life or the world were anything!

s. d.

**Poesia Inglesa.** Fernando Pessoa. (Organização e tradução de Luísa Freire. Prefácio de Teresa Rita Lopes.) Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1995: 200.