

Fernando Pessoa

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The five poems which form this volume, though each is obviously independent of any other and of all, are nevertheless linked by the circumstance that they are or represent stages in historical psychology. They express five concepts of the world, considered through the sexual emotion, and are thus weltanschauungen of the instinctive.

The first poem, Antinous, represents the Greek concept of the sexual world. Like all primitive concepts, it is elaborate; like all innocent concepts, it is substantially perverse. That it may show up as primitive, the emotion depicted is purposely a non-primitive one; that it may blossom as innocent, it is developed into a metaphysics, but, as is right in innocence, the metaphysics is added to, not put into, the substance of the main theme.

The second poem, Epithalamium, represents the Roman concept of the sexual world. It is brutal, like all colonial emotion; bestial, like all natural things, when they are secondary, as they were with men like the Romans, who were animals guarding a state. In this poem there is no metaphysics. In this poem there could be no perversity. The setting, as in Antinous, has no converse with the theme. A normal Christian marriage is the setting; against that dull black scenario the animalism of the Roman instinct is made to stand out like a naked monster born of the world.

The third poem, Prayer to a Woman's Body, represents the Christian concept of the sexual world. It has nothing to do with the Christian concept of the world itself, as, indeed, the normal Christian has nothing to do with it. The confusion of the sensual and of the spiritual, which the Christian mystics apply to saints of the other sex, (...)

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Pessoa por Conhecer — Textos para um Novo Mapa . Teresa Rita Lopes. Lisboa: Estampa, 1990: 38.