

35 SONNETS

BY

FERNANDO PESSOA

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XI.

Like to a ship that storms urge on its course,
 By its own trials our soul is surer made.
 The very things that make the voyage worse
 Do make it better; its peril is its aid.
 And, as the storm drives from the storm, our heart
 Within the peril disimperilled grows;
 A port is near the more from port we part—
 The port whereto our driven direction goes.
 If we reap knowledge to cross-profit, this
 From storms we learn, when the storm's height doth drive—
 That the black presence of its violence is
 The pushing promise of near far blue skies.
 Learn we but how to have the pilot-skill,
 And the storm's very might shall mate our will.

XII.

As the lone, frightened user of a night-road
 Suddenly turns round, nothing to detect,
 Yet on his fear's sense keepeth still the load
 Of that brink-nothing he doth but suspect;
 And the cold terror moves to him more near
 Of something that from nothing casts a spell,
 That, when he moves, to fright more is not there,
 And's only visible when invisible:
 So I upon the world turn round in thought,
 And nothing viewing do no courage take,
 But my more terror, from no seen cause got,
 To that felt corporate emptiness forsake,
 And draw my sense of mystery's horror from
 Seeing no mystery's mystery alone.

XIII.

When I should be asleep to mine own voice
 In telling thee how much thy love's my dream,
 I find me listening to myself, the noise
 Of my words othered in my hearing them.
 Yet wonder not: this is the poet's soul.
 I could not tell thee well of how I love,
 Loved I not less by knowing it, were all
 My self my love and no thought love to prove.
 What consciousness makes more by consciousness,
 It makes less, for it makes it less itself.
 My sense of love could not my love rich-dress
 Did it not for it spend love's own love-pelf.
 Poet's love's this (as in these words I prove thee):
 I love my love for thee more than I love thee.

XIV.

We are born at sunset and we die ere morn,
 And the whole darkness of the world we know,
 How can we guess its truth, to darkness born,
 The obscure consequence of absent glow?
 Only the stars do teach us light. We grasp
 Their scattered smallnesses with thoughts that stray,
 And, though their eyes look through night's complete mask,
 Yet they speak not the features of the day.
 Why should these small denials of the whole
 More than the black whole the pleased eyes attract?
 Why what it calls «worth» does the captive soul
 Add to the small and from the large detract?
 So, out of light's love wishing it night's stretch,
 A nightly thought of day we darkly reach.

XV

Like a bad suitor desperate and trembling
 From the mixed sense of being not loved and loving,
 Who with feared longing half would know, dissembling
 With what he'd wish proved what he fears soon proving,
 I look with inner eyes afraid to look,
 Yet perplexed into looking, at the worth
 This verse may have and wonder, of my book,
 To what thoughts shall't in alien hearts give birth.
 But, as he who doth love, and, loving, hopes,
 Yet, hoping, fears, fears to put proof to proof,
 And in his mind for possible proofs gropes,
 Delaying the true proof, lest the real thing scoff,
 I daily live, i'th' fame I dream to see,
 But by my thought of others' thought of me.

XVI.

We never joy enjoy to that full point
 Regret doth wish joy had enjoyèd been,
 Nor have the strength regret to disappoint
 Recalling not past joy's thought, but its mien.
 Yet joy was joy when it enjoyèd was
 And after-enjoyed when as joy recalled,
 It must have been joy ere its joy did pass
 And, recalled, joy still, since its being-past galled.
 Alas! All this is useless, for joy's in
 Enjoying, not in thinking of enjoying.
 Its mere thought-mirroring gainst itself doth sin,
 By mere reflecting solid life destroying.
 Yet the more thought we take to thought to prove
 It must not think, doth further from joy move.

XVII.

My love, and not I, is the egoist.
 My love for thee loves itself more than thee;
 Ay, more than me, in whom it doth exist,
 And makes me live that it may feed on me.
 In the country of bridges the bridge is
 More real than the shores it doth unsever;
 So in our world, all of Relation, this
 Is true—that truer is Love than either lover.
 This thought therefore comes lightly to Doubt's door—
 If we, seeing substance of this world, are not
 Mere Intervals, God's Absence and no more,
 Hollows in real Consciousness and Thought.
 And if 'tis possible to Thought to bear this fruit,
 Why should it not be possible to Truth?

XVIII.

Indefinite space, which, by co-substance night,
 In one black mystery two void mysteries blends;
 The stray stars, whose innumerable light
 Repeats one mystery till conjecture ends;
 The stream of time, known by birth-bursting bubbles;
 The gulf of silence, empty even of nought;
 Thought's high-walled maze, which the outed owner troubles
 Because the string's lost and the plan forgot:
 When I think on this and that here I stand,
 The thinker of these thoughts, emptily wise,
 Holding up to my thinking my thing-hand
 And looking at it with thought-alien eyes,
 The prayer of my wonder looketh past
 The universal darkness lone and vast.

XIX.

Beauty and love let no one separate,
 Whom exact Nature did to each other fit,
 Giving to Beauty love as finishing fate
 And to Love beauty as true colour of it.
 Let he but friend be who the soul finds fair,
 But let none love outside the body's thought,
 So the seen couple's togetherness shall bear
 Truth to the beauty each in the other sought.
 I could but love thee out of mockery
 Of love and thee and mine own ugliness;
 Therefore thy beauty I sing and wish not thee,
 Thanking the Gods I long not out of place,
 Lest, like a slave that for kings' robes doth long,
 Obtained, shall with mere wearing do them wrong.

XX.

When in the widening circle of rebirth
 To a new flesh my travelled soul shall come,
 And try again the unremembered earth
 With the old sadness for the immortal home,
 Shall I revisit these same differing fields
 And cull the old new flowers with the same sense,
 That some small breath of foiled remembrance yields,
 Of more age than my days in this pretence?
 Shall I again regret strange faces lost
 Of which the present memory is forgot
 And but in unseen bulks of vagueness tossed
 Out of the closed sea and black night of Thought?
 Were thy face one, what sweetness will't not be,
 Though by blind feeling, to remember thee!

XXI.

Thought was born blind, but Thought knows what is seeing.
 Its careful touch, deciphering forms from shapes,
 Still suggests form as aught whose proper being
 Mere finding touch with erring darkness drapes.
 Yet whence, except from guessed sight, does touch teach
 That touch is but a close and empty sense?
 How does mere touch, self-uncontented, reach
 For some truer sense's whole intelligence?
 The thing once touched, if touch be now omitted,
 Stands yet in memory real and outward known,
 So the untouching memory of touch is fitted
 With sense of a sense whereby far things are shown
 So, by touch of untouching, wrongly aright,
 'Touch' thought of seeing sees not things but Sight.

XXII.

My soul is a stiff pageant, man by man,
 Of some Egyptian art than Egypt older,
 Found in some tomb whose rite no guess can scan,
 Where all things else to coloured dust did moulder.
 Whate'er its sense may mean, its age is twin
 To that of priesthoods whose feet stood near God,
 When knowledge was so great that 'twas a sin
 And man's mere soul too man for its abode.
 But when I ask what means that pageant I
 And would look at it suddenly, I lose
 The sense I had of seeing it, nor can try
 Again to look, nor hath my memory a use
 That seems recalling, save that it recalls
 An emptiness of having seen those walls.

XXXV.

Good. I have done. My heart weighs. I am sad.
The outer day, void statue of lit blue,
Is altogether outward, other, glad
At mere being not-I (so my aches construe).
I, that have failed in everything, bewail
Nothing this hour but that I have bewailed,
For in the general fate what is't to fail?
Why, fate being past for Fate, 'tis but to have failed.
Whatever hap or stop, what matters it,
Sith to the mattering our will bringeth nought?
With the higher trifling let us world our wit,
Conscious that, if we do't, that was the lot
The regular stars bound us to, when they stood
Godfathers to our birth and to our blood.



