

# Fernando Pessoa through the Eyes of Hubert Jennings: the master of multiplicity turned literary character

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## Keywords

Fernando Pessoa as literary character, Hubert Jennings, short stories, 1968 Lisbon, translations, *Judica Me Deus*, *The DHS Story*, *At the Brasileira*, *O Mostrengo*, *Adamastor*.

## Abstract

Here we present three short stories written by Hubert Jennings while he lived in Portugal, in 1968 and 1969: “Rua Dona Estefânia,” “From a Lisbon Window,” and “At the Brasileira” —the first two unpublished, and the latter having four different versions (three recently found in the Jennings archive, and one published in 1988 in the South African journal *Contrast*). The introduction to these texts also analyzes the short story “Judica Me Deus,” the only fictional chapter of Jennings’s book *The DHS Story*, in which, seemingly for the first time, Fernando Pessoa was turned into a literary character. By focusing on “At the Brasileira” and “Judica Me Deus,” comparing and contrasting how those pieces recreate Pessoa, this presentation places Jennings among authors such as José Saramago and Antonio Tabucchi, who would later also turn Pessoa and/or his heteronymous personae into elements of their own fictional worlds.

## Palavras-chave

Fernando Pessoa como personagem, Hubert Jennings, contos, Lisboa 1968, traduções, *Judica Me Deus*, *The DHS Story*, *A Brasileira do Chiado*, *O Mostrengo*, *Adamastor*.

## Resumo

Aqui apresentamos três contos escritos por Hubert Jennings durante sua estada em Portugal, em 1968 e 1969: “Rua Dona Estefânia”, “From a Lisbon Window” e “At the Brasileira” —os dois primeiros inéditos, e o último contando com quatro versões diferentes (três delas recentemente encontradas no espólio Jennings, e a última publicada em 1988 no periódico Sul-Africano *Contrast*). A introdução a esses textos também analisa o conto “Judica Me Deus”, o único capítulo ficcional do livro de Jennings *The DHS Story*, em que, aparentemente pela primeira vez, Fernando Pessoa foi transformado num personagem literário. Ao enfocar “At the Brasileira” e “Judica Me Deus”, comparando e contrastando como essas obras recriam Pessoa, esta apresentação situa Jennings entre autores como José Saramago e Antonio Tabucchi, que também transformariam Pessoa e/ou suas personae literárias em elementos de seus próprios mundos ficcionais.

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*Son tantas sombras en un mismo cuerpo  
y debemos subirlas a la cumbre del Chiado.  
A cada paso se intercambian idiomas,  
anteojos, sombreros, soledades.*

Eugenio Montejo, "La estatua de Pessoa"  
(MONTEJO, 1987: 118)

What is it about Fernando Pessoa that transforms in multiplicity everything he touches? How many faces and names does his name contain?<sup>1</sup> How many voices can his voice create? How many lives from his life? Pessoa had multitudes within him. And perhaps he envisioned the multitudes to come, the multitudes beyond. One of these lives willingly transformed by Pessoa's touch was that of Hubert D. Jennings. He chose to turn his path, he chose to let his world tremble with the impact of Pessoa's words, of his presence. He decided to follow Pessoa's footsteps; he prepared his ear for polyphonies. After discovering that Pessoa had been in the same school where he had taught, Jennings looked for the poet's traces; then, he unveiled the facts and filled the gaps with his own fiction.

Jennings moved to Lisbon for two years, learned Portuguese, and spent a good part of his later life writing about Pessoa. However, Jennings had been writing about Pessoa before that. *The D.H.S. Story* was published in 1966. In this book, an account of the history of the Durban High School in South Africa, Jennings explores Pessoa's life, with the approach of a biographer (particularly in the chapter about Pessoa "That Long Patience which is Genius") and by means of fiction (in the chapter "Judica Me Deus"). Then, Jennings continued his search for Pessoa by following his traces. He landed in Lisbon on March 1, 1968, having completed, at the age of 71, his recreation of Pessoa's route from South Africa to Portugal. He was a broad scholar, a careful biographer, a perceptive translator who understood the rhythm of poetry and even wrote poems himself.

Among a collection of original narratives, Hubert Jennings wrote three short stories during his time in Lisbon. One of them is "At the Brasileira,"<sup>2</sup> which I will study in detail, as it turns Pessoa into a literary character; the other two, "Rua Dona Estefânia" and "From a Lisbon Window," explore the urban experience of Lisbon from the perspective of a foreign narrator who has just arrived at the city.

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<sup>1</sup> As compiled by Jerónimo Pizarro and Patricio Ferrari in *Eu Sou Uma Antologia* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-China, 2013), Fernando Pessoa created up to 136 fictitious authors.

<sup>2</sup> Three different versions of "At the Brasileira" were found among Jennings's papers. During the preparation of this text, it was discovered that a fourth version of the short story (very similar to the third) had been published in the South African literary journal *Contrast* #66 (1988); all four versions of "At the Brasileira" are facsimiled as annexes at the end of this text.

“Rua Dona Estefânia” focuses on the public aspect of the city, by describing the particularities of a street: “It is a street that comes from nowhere, goes nowhere, but it is always crowded with cars, people, trams, all busily going nowhere.” The narrator gradually focuses on characters of the city: a blind man playing music, a waitress worrying about her husband who steals money from her. These descriptions of the city possibly contain common interiority, a Portuguese spirit that is reflected in urban space. The city has the ability to listen to the laments of these lost urban characters: “For a moment the street stops and listens. They do not know it, but this is the voice of the old Portugal speaking from his darkened soul to theirs. The music fades.”

“From a Lisbon Window,” on the other hand, develops a point of view that is more individual, interior, and private. Although the story also starts with an ample depiction of Lisbon and its views, the narrator then gives a detailed account of his first apartment in Lisbon, of the multiple locks and difficult access, and shares with the reader his estrangement when he first arrived in Lisbon: “I did not always enjoy this spacious view. My first five weeks in Lisbon were spent in an acute state of claustrophobia in the gloomiest room I have ever inhabited and the nearest thing I can imagine to a medieval dungeon.” The system of locks becomes the central theme of the story, implying, perhaps, a synecdoche of the city: “Two things I shall never understand: the mysteries of Portuguese architecture and the reason for these elaborate security precautions.”

When presenting these newly discovered stories, one might note that it is a beautiful coincidence how Pessoa’s and Jennings’s archives were discovered. After Pessoa’s death all his unpublished manuscripts were found, all these words that had been kept, but most of his production—the core of his literary world—remained hidden; we are finding now, in a similar way, Jennings’s short stories and papers that even his family barely knew existed. To complete the circle, many of these found papers are precisely about Pessoa: biographical research, scholarly pursuits, translations, fictionalization, imagination and possibility. Everything is in tune with Pessoa’s voice, with his main concerns: what might have been, even if it never was, the realm of impossible conditionality, the realm of “what if?” What if Pessoa had extemporaneously encountered Camões at a literary café in Lisbon? What if we knew more of Pessoa’s first attempts to write poetry when he was a teenager in South Africa?

Jennings, in his short story “At the Brasileira” and in the fictional chapter of *The D.H.S. Story*, “Judica Me Deus,” explored these fictional possibilities by recreating Pessoa as a literary character. Besides Jennings, other writers have turned Pessoa into a character: José Saramago, in *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, and Antonio Tabucchi, in *Gli Ultimi Tre Giorni di Fernando Pessoa*, are the most famous examples. Pessoa, the master of masks, the master of heteronymism, is suddenly transformed into a literary character. Pessoa, who created writers in

order to give them voices, has also received voices from other writers who have looked for him. And Jennings was a writer. Perhaps his creative impulse could not resist Pessoa's. It may not have been enough to read him and to write about him. He had to write *Pessoa*, to give him a new flesh, a flesh made of his own words. He turned him into a literary character. He forged a new voice with which the master was to speak.

In order to explore the complexity of how Jennings recreates Pessoa as a literary character, I will focus on two texts that have Pessoa as a protagonist, among the diversity and richness of Jennings's corpus: the first one, "At the Brasileira," is a short story in which Pessoa, sitting in a café, encounters Luís de Camões (which Jennings writes "Camoens"); as readers, we have access to their conversation, to Pessoa's moment of writing and to Jennings's own translation of one of the poems of *Mensagem* ("O Mostrengo"). The second text I will analyze is the chapter "Judica Me Deus" from *The D.H.S. Story*, a historical account of the school in South Africa where Jennings taught and Pessoa studied, and which includes this fictional chapter which imagines an episode of Pessoa's adolescence. Jennings's characterization of Pessoa allows for multiplicity; he would let us see Pessoa as a shy and already genius teenager (in the fictional chapter of the *DHS Story*) as the great poet who can encounter Camões, talk to him, drink with him, and discuss poetry (in "At the Brasileira").

In "At the Brasileira," the narrator takes plenty of time to let the reader know that Pessoa is Pessoa and Camões is Camões. He builds suspense by approaching them from afar, from the perspective of a distant witness. After introducing the café, describing it as a more literary than political place, Pessoa's appearance on the text starts as a series of traces that the reader has to follow and reconstruct. He is first a "figure": "One of these, a slight figure in a dark suit, which had obviously seen its best days but was meticulously brushed, put down his fountain pen and paper and began to stare at a glass of brandy through thick pebble spectacles." Then, directly addressing the reader, the narrator builds Pessoa's uniqueness as a shared perception, as a matter of complicity with the reader: "It was only when you saw the eyes behind the glasses, brown pools of liquid light with tragic depth of melancholy and despair, that you realized this was no common face."

While Pessoa is staring at the glass, Camões arrives first as a sensorial impression—"A sharp metallic clink sounded on the table before him"—then as an unidentified "someone," and, just when their conversation is advanced, Pessoa identifies him precisely from his images, from his words, and, one could say, from his narrative and literary universe: "I have lived with one hand on the sword and the other upon sorrow." "Indeed, yes. So you are Luis de Camoens?" Jennings's narrative technique builds a setting in which words, spaces and ambiances recreate each other. The characterization of the poets is progressive and diverse, first by

their appearance—their subtle actions and ways towards each other; then, by their meaningful conversation; and, finally, by their work: a poem is what closes the short story, followed by an approving applause of the public who hears it. And not just any poem—a poem from *Mensagem*, a book in which Pessoa recreates the mythic history of Portugal, as Camões had done with *Os Lusíadas* (in a way, the poets “compete” with their own poetic Portugals).

Pessoa and Camões both speak with consciousness of being the great poets of their time. Camões starts the dialogue:

“You too are a poet?”  
 “The greatest of my time.”  
 And the cloaked man nodded approvingly.  
 “I was the greatest of my time.”  
 “I know. I have tried to be greater.”

Moreover, the reader of “At the Brasileira” has strong reasons to believe that Camões appears as Pessoa’s inspiration, that the result of their conversation is the poem, that the English translation of “O Mostrengo” included in the short story, is somehow part of a creation of a new Pessoa. We see Pessoa in the present; we are spies, looking in on his moment of writing.

One could also examine this translation and wonder what face of Pessoa Jennings highlights. Comparing his translation with other English translations of the same poem, Jennings’s appears more musical and less literal; he chooses to convey rhythm over sense, in order to keep the rhyme. The first verse illustrates Jennings’s translation choices. It is originally “O mostrengo que está no fim do mar” (Pessoa, 1934: 79) and Jennings translates: “The monster who lives at the end of the world.” For the sake of comparison, let’s take into account Campbell’s translation (*apud* MONTEIRO, 1998: 135)—as Campbell was the translator Jennings used to quote before he could translate himself from the Portuguese, as we will see in “Judica Me Deus.” George Monteiro includes Campbell’s translation in his book *The Presence of Pessoa* (MONTEIRO, 1998). Campbell chooses to keep the image of the sea (though his word choice is “ocean”), but he puts it on the following verse, breaking, perhaps, the rhythm with which the original releases the semantic information about *O Mostrengo*: “The monstrous thing that at the verge / Of ocean lives, rose from the surge” (MONTEIRO, 1998: 135). Campbell’s choice, unlike Jennings’s, takes away an amount of subjectivity from the monster by adding “thing”: the monstrous thing is an object, not a subject. And, as an heir of Adamastor, the marine monster that appears in Camões’s *Os Lusíadas*, Pessoa’s Mostrengo would at least have had the potential to say *eu sou*, as Adamastor does (*Lusíadas*, V, 50, i).

All translations require a choice, and Jennings made his. Besides keeping the breath of the Portuguese decasyllable and maintaining the rhyme, a difference of sense between “sea” and “world” is more than evident. In translation, every

choice is significant. To keep. To let go. To let go in order to keep. Translation is a matter of choice, and building characters also implies choosing: a writer chooses to characterize literary figures and give them a certain flesh, a certain interiority. Jennings is making choices at many levels: as a translator, as a reader of Pessoa, as a story maker. One could wonder: what kind of inspiration does Jennings's Pessoa embody? There is no definite answer, but Jennings's choice to include a poem in his short story about Pessoa (and to translate it in a particular way) makes a case for his version of Pessoa. Jennings's choice raises questions and, perhaps, leaves his readers wondering what aspects of Pessoa would they defend, and what Jennings's fictional appropriation can add to their own readings of Pessoa.

In the story, before scribbling the poem, Pessoa converses with Camões precisely about his encounter with Adamastor. During this conversation, Camões (the poet adventurer) is interrogated by Pessoa (the poet of possibility, the poet of seeing the wholeness of the world through imagination) about fear, the fear one would feel in front of a monster. Pessoa wants to know about this fear, assuming Camões would not feel it: "It makes little difference to me and those like me, the fear is the same. But you are a soldier and valorous, you feel no fear." Yet Camões answers: "Not so, my friend. On the contrary, on the field of battle we are terrified."

In a way, the poem could be read as the climax of the story and of this conversation that, besides an encounter between poets, comprises a poetics. The poem could be read as a possible account, through Pessoa, of Camões's encounter with monstrosity: that of the real and that of the unreal, that of the world and that of the imagination, always diffusing borders. It could also be read an imaginative adventure of embodying all possibilities by looking through the window; or as the particular consciousness of an encounter with the radical otherness, perhaps also in terms of voice, in terms of what poetry is or can be.

There is a clear difference of registers between the English of the narration and the English of the poem. Jennings's translation of "O Mostrengo" lets us see through his deep knowledge of poetry, musicality, metrical rules, poetic construction of images, and poetic registers that have a logic of their own and, in terms of characterization, contribute to Pessoa's appearance as a poet—a poet who can switch registers, a poet taken from a daily life situation of having a drink at a bar, transformed by a natural encounter with Portugal's greater poet, and then able to write poetry in the higher register right in front of the reader's eyes.

As this short story is so rich in terms of genres, there is also an important element of theatricality. Most of the text is structured as dialogue; we get direct access to the poets in conversation—the exact words they say, even their movements, are carefully described almost as stage directions. Pessoa's appearance and the precise description of his manner of staring at the glass is an example of that. In fact, the earliest versions of the text were even more theatrical. The first

was clearly structured as a scene of a play, with a brief introduction by the narrator (more explicitly a stage direction than in the final version), and then the whole text comes as a dialogue in script which, nevertheless, maintains the ambiguity of the poets' identities (which the narrator willfully establishes in the short story). The dialogues look like this:

“POET: What was that?  
 THE OTHER: My sword.  
 POET: Ah, I see. Of course.”

In this first version Jennings neither includes the poem at the end nor develops the narrator's building of suspense. Still, it is important to highlight the theatrical origin of the story, because it is reflected in the way Pessoa and Camões are built as literary characters in this narration. Moreover, Jennings's choices towards narrative weave a character of generic complexity, allowing the reader to access Pessoa from different literary registers.

In the chapter “Judica Me Deus” of *The D.H.S. Story*, we see Pessoa as a shy teenager, scribbling poems in a high school in South Africa, and copying by heart a translation from Greek. Jennings includes a comment on Pessoa's English in the chapter “That Long Patience which is Genius,” which is a biographical account with historical sources and rigorousness. “Nevertheless, English and all it stands for, became from those days an integral part of his life and perhaps the main source of his inspiration” (JENNINGS, 1966: 101). Jennings builds from history the pillars on which his fiction is to stand, not only to give it verisimilitude and nourishment, but to start questioning the boundaries between levels of reality, as we will see in the fictional section. One could argue that the core of this characterization of Pessoa, unlike in “At the Brasileira,” is the radical change of context and of focus. Of course, an ambiguous and fantastical encounter between Pessoa and Camões is a radical shift in perspective, but still, Pessoa's most important element of characterization is the fact that he is a poet. This also occurs (but in a different way) in “Judica Me Deus”; here, the reader has access, through the teacher's eyes, to Pessoa's literary genius. A scene of Pessoa's school years, recreated through narrative, lets us see this poet before he was a Poet, though Jennings playfully stresses temporality by choosing to include a later poem as if written by the young Pessoa.

To study this fictional chapter in context, it is relevant to consider that the book presents itself, from the title, as a faithful historical documentation: “The D.H.S. Story 1866-1966 Faithfully Recorded by Hubert D. Jennings.” And it is. It has sources, research, and rigorous historical reconstruction. In the more historical chapter about Pessoa, “That Long Patience which is Genius,” Jennings acknowledges his sources, the legitimacy of his information, the historical value of his work: “The information upon which the account that follows has been based,

was not easy to obtain. If, as seems likely, it is the first full description of his life which has been printed in this country, it is fitting that it should appear in the pages of the history of this School" (JENNINGS, 1966: 100).

Nevertheless, in an even more Cervantian manner, Jennings chooses Cervantes as epigraph for the whole book, precisely when he speaks about "los historiadores": "However it may be, it appears that Cide Hamet Benengeli was a very exact historian, since he takes care to give us an account of things that seem so inconsiderable and trivial. A laudable example which these historians should follow, who usually relate matters so concisely that we have scarcely a smack of them, leaving the most essential part of the story drowned at the bottom of the inkhorn, either through neglect, malice or ignorance" (JENNINGS, 1966: 4).

Jennings invokes Cervantes and his play with multiple historians, the master of fiction—of multiple levels of reality and narrators, of books within books. Cide Hamete Benengeli is, precisely, the untrustworthy historian, and Cervantes plays with that. Cide Hamete's manuscript is translated from Arabic by a translator that Cervantes's narrator/editor finds. And then, contrasting with Cide Hamete's silences and gaps of narration, Cervantes declares about the truthfulness of historians: "pues cuando pudiera y debiera extender la pluma en alabanzas de tan buen caballero, parece que de industria las pasa en silencio: cosa mal hecha y peor pensada, y debiendo ser los historiadores puntuales, verdaderos y nonada apasionados"<sup>3</sup>. By invoking Cervantes, Jennings might have been giving the reader some clues towards approaching his historical account as well as his fiction, towards being ready to let the levels of truth overlap.

In fact, the chapter of *The D.H.S. Story* where Pessoa appears as a literary character—a sixteen-year-old boy discovering his poetic genius—acknowledges its fictionality as an obvious condition that the reader is to notice: "Footnote: This chapter, it need hardly to be said, is not factual" (JENNINGS, 1966: 116). The fictional episode shows young Pessoa from the perspective of a teacher, who starts to grasp the genius of this Portuguese boy. Thanks to Jennings's narrative choices, we see Pessoa from a different perspective: we see him observed from afar. The teacher remembers: "What was it?... when that young Portuguese was there... what was his name? Fernando something... Fernando Pessoa..." (JENNINGS, 1966: 113).

This appreciation contrasts with "At the Brasileira," in which, through an omniscient third person narrator, we get closer access to Pessoa, at least in terms of temporality. The narrator gives an account of the narrative events as they happen: the voice speaks from the same temporal realm and not through the filter of memory (as in "Judica Me Deus"). Moreover, we see the account of Pessoa's

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<sup>3</sup> Translation: "For where he could and should have licensed his pen to praise so worthy a knight, he seems to me deliberately to have written nothing. This is ill done and worse contrived, for it is the business and duty of historians to be exact, truthful, and wholly free from passion." (CERVANTES, 1981:68)



conversation with Camões in a theatrical way: we get a transcription of their exact dialogues and a detailed description of their movements. This level of detail puts the reader in the position of a witness, as if sitting at the next table of the café while they speak.

In “Judica Me Deus,” as in “At the Brasileira,” the reader has access to Pessoa in the moment of writing, also getting a transcription of the resulting poem. Here prose and poetry come together to characterize Pessoa, both as a literary character pulling forward the strings of a narrative and as the poet who writes those particular poems. In “Judica Me Deus,” the description of Pessoa while writing is as follows: “Only Pessoa sat still, gazing out of the window as though he had not heard the order. ‘Pessoa!’ he called out at last. The boy gave him that long musing glance of his, then took out his book and began to write fluently, without looking at the text” (JENNINGS, 1966: 113). Here, Old Nick, the teacher, does what perhaps all readers of Pessoa would have liked to do: he looks behind his shoulder when he is writing: “He made a pretense of going round the class and reading the boys’ work, but he was interested only in what young Pessoa was writing” (JENNINGS, 1966: 114). The result is a translation from Greek in which Pessoa intervenes according to his own poetic criteria; the teacher recognizes, in his changes, his sense of humor, irony, and literary intuition. Then, Jennings transcribes one of Pessoa’s poems in Campbell’s translation—and this is what young Pessoa shows to his teacher. Unlike in “At the Brasileira,” here Jennings does not include his own translation of the poem, but chooses Campbell’s instead. When Jennings wrote this chapter, he had not learned Portuguese yet, so he had to rely on somebody else’s translation; but afterwards Jennings would become an avid translator of Pessoa, recreating not only “O Mostrengo” but also the whole body of poems of *Mensagem*.<sup>4</sup>

Jennings’s choice of the poem is significant, perhaps even ironic. The original poem (“O que me dói não é,” included in *Cancioneiro*) was one of Pessoa’s later poems (1933); it was written just a couple of years before his death, but in Jennings’s fictional construction he writes it as a teenager, while still in high school in South Africa. In Jennings’s chapter, Pessoa does not even admit to having written the poem; he tells the teacher that a friend of his wrote it, thus contrasting Jennings’s account with the actual date of this poem. The multiple levels of language and temporality come together: a poem originally written in Portuguese appears translated in English (by one of Pessoa’s first translators) and within the context of a fictional episode of Pessoa’s adolescence, the period when he acquired his knowledge of English and English Literature. Of course, Jennings is playing with the rules of fiction; he is creating different possibilities and realities with the way he configures the narrative, mingling prose and poetry, poetic and narrative

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<sup>4</sup> A complete translation of *Mensagem* has recently been found among Jennings’s papers.

registers, historical research, fictional creation, different temporalities—inventing a new chronology and origin for texts that exist in the actual corpus of Pessoa’s work.

In addition to Jennings, other writers have felt the impulse to turn Pessoa into a character. Pessoa has gone beyond his language. Tabucchi recreated him in Italian in *Gli Ultimi Tre Giorni di Fernando Pessoa*, where the reader sees the poet concerned with day-to-day life, as the book opens precisely with the Portuguese poet wondering if he has time to go to the barber before going to the hospital. “Prima devo radermi, disse lui, non voglio andar all’ospedale con la barba lunga”<sup>5</sup>. Tabucchi’s narrator creates a dramatic impact with his characterization of Pessoa, contrasting the nearness of death and the prosaic aspects of life.

José Saramago, in his novel *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, continued the story of the only heteronym to survive Pessoa (in Saramago’s fiction): Ricardo Reis. Saramago’s reader gets access to Reis’s consciousness, to his estrangement (even in linguistic terms) when he returns to Lisbon, as he arrives speaking with a Brazilian accent from all the time he has spent in Brazil. “Ah, é português, pelo sotaque pensei que fosse brasileiro, Percebe-se assim tanto, Bom, percebe-se alguma coisa, Há dezasseis anos que não vinha a Portugal, Dezasseis anos são muitos, vai encontrar grandes mudanças por cá”<sup>6</sup> (SARAMAGO, 2005: 13). Still, Reis remembers: “Ao viajante não parecia que as mudanças fossem tantas”<sup>7</sup>. Saramago’s fictionalization continues with this narrative impulse past Pessoa’s death, posing new “what ifs?” Jennings made us wonder, what if Pessoa had encountered Camões in a café in Lisbon? What if a teacher had very early discovered Pessoa’s poetic genius in a high school in South Africa? Now Saramago makes us wonder: what could have happened with the surviving heteronym? What kind of strangeness and familiarity could Ricardo Reis have felt when returning from Brazil?

Writers have asked themselves questions about Pessoa, as have all his multiplying readers. Writers have lent their narrative universes and languages to explore Pessoa as a character. And, in fact, contemporary writers in Portugal continue to re-elaborate the poet. José Flórido, in *Conversas Inacabadas com Alberto Caeiro*, recreates Caeiro as a character. Valter Hugo Mãe went further, recreating a

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<sup>5</sup> Translation: “First, I must shave, he said. I don’t want to go to the hospital unshaven.” (TABUCCHI, 1999: 91).

<sup>6</sup> Translation: “Ah, you’re Portuguese, from your accent I thought you might be Brazilian. It is so very noticeable. Well, just a little, enough to tell the difference. I haven’t been back in Portugal for sixteen years. Sixteen years is a long time, you will find that things have changed a lot around here.” (SARAMAGO, 1991: 7).

<sup>7</sup> Translation: “His passenger did not get the impression that there were many changes.” (SARAMAGO, 1991: 7).

character out of—not Pessoa himself or one of his heteronyms—but a character from “Tabacaria,” Esteves, “O Esteves sem metafísica” (PESSOA, 1933), was to be transformed into narrative complexity. Along with Flório and Hugo Mãe, there are other contemporary Portuguese writers who continue to explore the subject, such as Antônio Chibante, who recreates Pessoa as a character in *Despedida de Fernando Pessoa*; Ricardo Belo de Moraes, who writes a fictionalized biography of the poet (*O Quarto Alugado*); and José Eduardo Agualusa, whose character is one of Pessoa’s early heteronyms, Charles Robert Anon.<sup>8</sup>

There is much to explore on this question of how Pessoa, whose work is marked by multiplicity, has become a literary character in the hands of various writers from diverse traditions. The case of Jennings is particularly compelling because of the complexity in terms of genres, of history melting with fiction, fiction with poetry, poetry with theater. And, of course, because we are lucky enough to have found his papers.

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<sup>8</sup> A non-exhaustive list of literary works that have recreated Pessoa as a literary character is included as an appendix.

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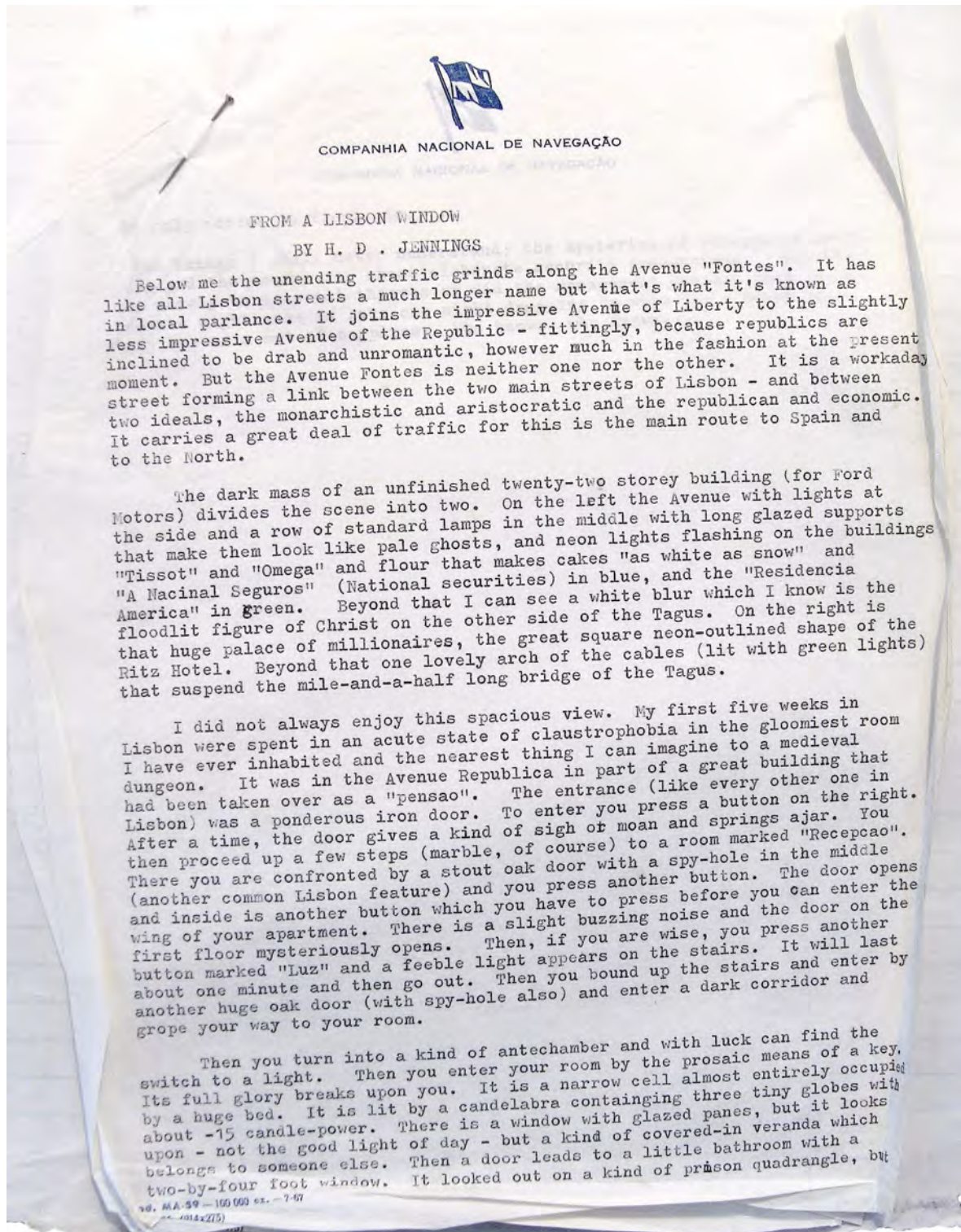
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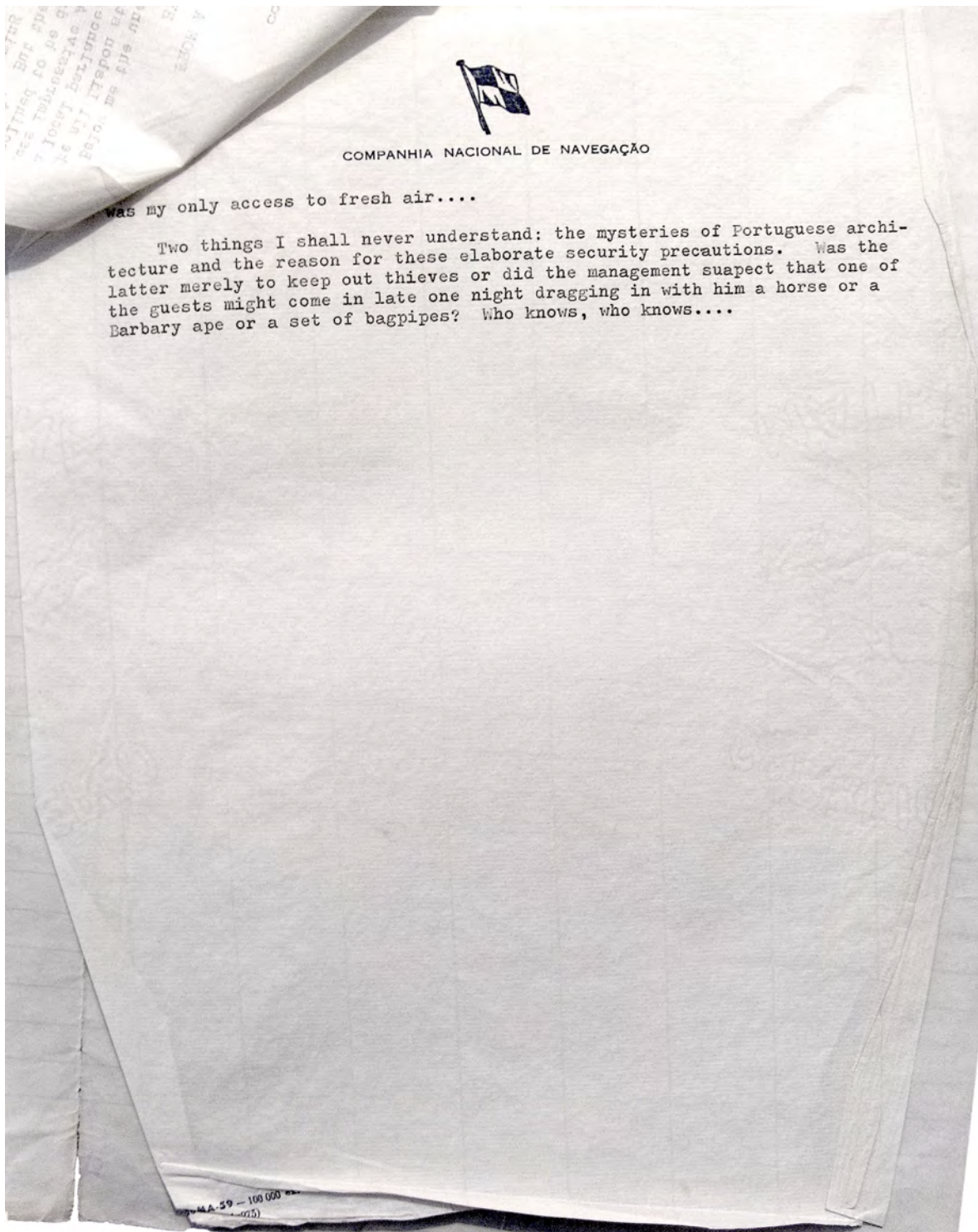
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## Documents

I. Unpublished. Two pages of a short story titled "From a Lisbon Window," typed by H. D. Jennings on both sides of a piece of paper with the letterhead of "Companhia Nacional de Navegação" (National Maritime Company). Found inside the folder "Stories—S1" which Jennings created for some of his papers. Datable to 1968.





was my only access to fresh air....

Two things I shall never understand: the mysteries of Portuguese architecture and the reason for these elaborate security precautions. Was the latter merely to keep out thieves or did the management suspect that one of the guests might come in late one night dragging in with him a horse or a Barbary ape or a set of bagpipes? Who knows, who knows....

## FROM A LISBON WINDOW

By H. D. Jennings

Below me the unending traffic grinds along the Avenue “Fontes”. It has[,] like all Lisbon streets[,] a much longer name but that’s what it’s known as in local parlance. It joins the impressive Avenue of Liberty to the slightly less impressive Avenue of the Republic—fittingly, because republics are inclined to be drab and unromantic, however much in the fashion at the present moment. But the Avenue Fontes is neither one nor the other. It is a workday street forming a link between the two main streets of Lisbon—and between two ideals, the monarchistic and aristocratic and the republican and economic. It carries a great deal of traffic[,] for this is the main route to Spain and to the North.

The dark mass of an unfinished twenty-two storey building (for Ford Motors) divides the scene into two. On the left the Avenue with lights at the side and a row of standard lamps in the middle with long glazed supports that make them look like pale ghosts, and neon lights flashing on the buildings “Tissot” and “Omega” and flour that makes cakes “as white as snow” and “A Naci[o]nal Seguros” (National securities<sup>9</sup>) in blue, and the “Residência América”<sup>10</sup> in green. Beyond that I can see a white blur which I know is the floodlit figure of Christ on the other side of the Tagus. On the right is that huge palace of millionaires, the great square neon-outlined shape of the Ritz Hotel. Beyond that one lovely arch of the cables (lit with green lights) that suspend the mile-and-a-half long bridge of the Tagus.

I did not always enjoy this spacious view. My first five weeks in Lisbon were spent in an acute state of claustrophobia in the gloomiest room I have ever inhabited and the nearest thing I can imagine to a medieval dungeon. It was in the Avenue República<sup>11</sup> in part of a great building that had been taken over as a “pensão”<sup>12</sup>. The entrance (like every other one in Lisbon) was a ponderous iron door. To enter you press a button on the right. After a time, the door gives a kind of sigh or moan and springs ajar. You then proceed up a few steps (marble, of course) to a room marked “Recepção”<sup>13</sup>. There you are confronted by a stout oak door with a spy-hole in the middle (another common Lisbon feature) and you press another button. The door opens and inside is another button which you have

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<sup>9</sup> “National Insurance” would be a more accurate translation.

<sup>10</sup> “Residencia America,” unstressed in the document.

<sup>11</sup> “Republica,” unstressed in the document.

<sup>12</sup> “pensao,” without tilde in the document.

<sup>13</sup> “Recepcao,” without cedilla or tilde in the document.

to press before you can enter the wing of your apartment. There is a slight buzzing noise and the door on the first floor mysteriously opens. Then, if you are wise, you press another button marked "Luz" and a feeble light appears on the stairs. It will last about one minute and then go out. Then you bound up the stairs and enter by another huge oak door (with spy-hole also) and enter a dark corridor and grope your way to your room.

Then you turn into a kind of antechamber and with luck find the switch to a light. Then you enter your room by the prosaic means of a key. Its full glory breaks upon you. It is a narrow cell almost entirely occupied by a huge bed. It is lit by a candelabra containing<sup>14</sup> three tiny globes with about—15 candle-power. There is a window with glazed panes, but it looks upon—not the good light of day—but a kind of covered-in veranda which belongs to someone else. Then a door leads to a little bathroom with a two-by-four foot window. It looked out on a kind of pr<o>/i\son quadrangle, but [2] was my only access to fresh air....

Two things I shall never understand: the mysteries of Portuguese architecture and the reason for these elaborate security precautions. Was the latter merely to keep out thieves or did the management suspect<sup>15</sup> that one of the guests might come in late one night dragging in with him a horse or a Barbary ape or a set of bagpipes? Who knows, who knows....

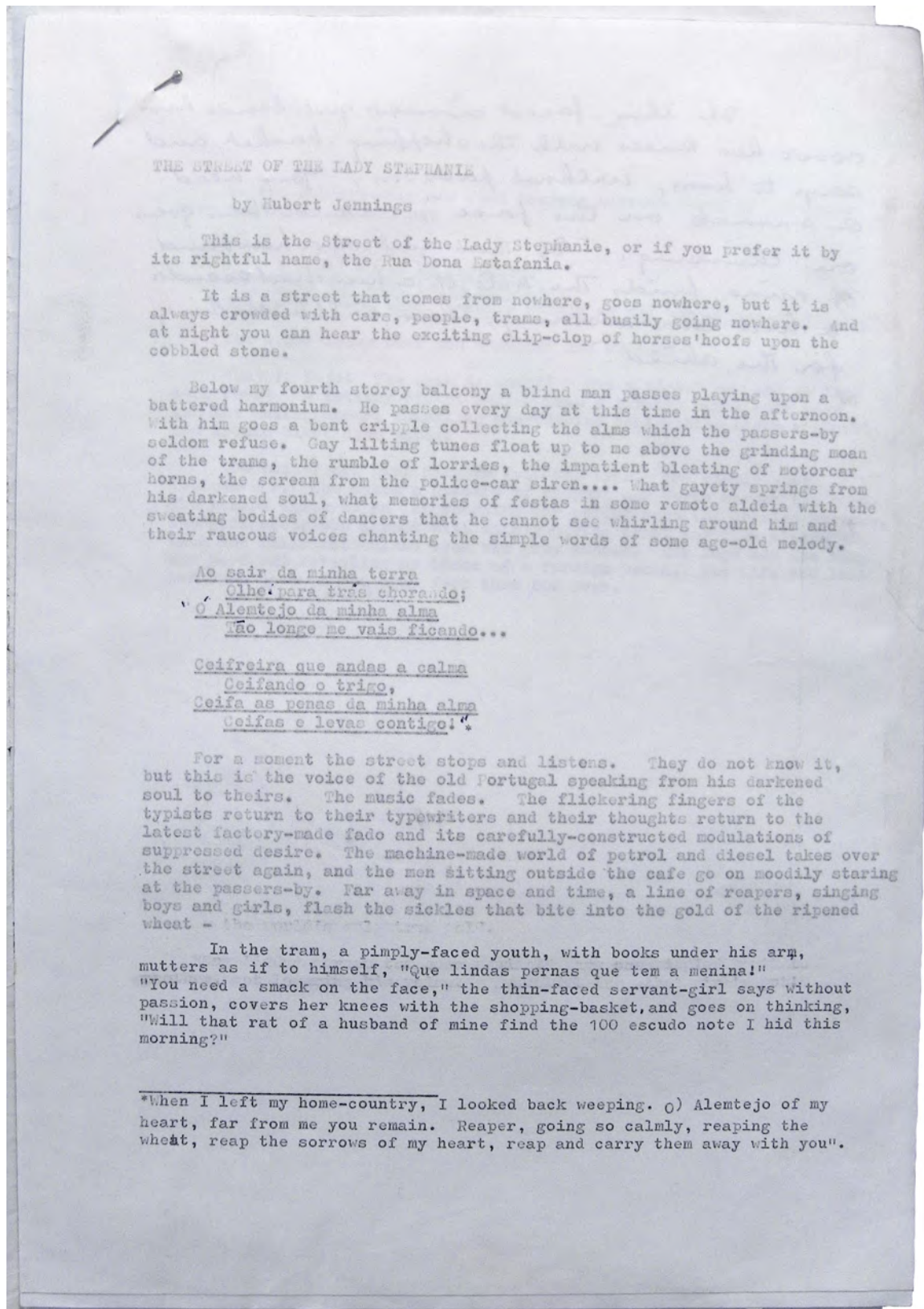
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<sup>14</sup> "containinging" in the document, a typo.

<sup>15</sup> "suapect" in the document, a typo.



II. Unpublished. Three pages of a short story titled "The Street of the Lady Stephanie," two of them typed and one handwritten by Hubert Jennings. Found inside the folder "Stories—S1" which Jennings created for some of his papers. Datable to 1968.



The thin-faced servant girl beside her covers her knees with the shopping-basket, and says to him, without passion, "You need a smack on the face". And then goes on thinking, "If that rat of a husband of mine finds the note of a hundred escudos I hid this morning, there will be nothing for the child."

In the tobacco-shop the Poet borrows another sheet of notepaper from the owner and writes:

I am nothing.

I shall never be anything.

I do not want to be anything.

But, apart from this, I carry within me all the dreams of the world.

The owner looks over his shoulder and smiles.

"Hoje! Hoje! The draw is today! Buy a ticket now and be rich tomorrow!" A lottery ticket seller with a raucous voice goes past and the knifegrinder, trundling one-wheeled contraption blows a shrill and ironic blast upon pipes.

The thin-faced girl alights from the tram. The pimply youth follows her. She makes a gesture of disgust and darts across the road. The braked tyres of an approaching car scream upon the cobbled surface. The girl meets the impact with wildly waving arms, and then staggers back and falls motionless upon the grey stones. Her legs now lie long and bare and revealing as those of a foreign woman. But life and lust and love have passed away from them for ever.

## THE STREET OF THE LADY STEPHANIE

by Hubert Jennings

This is the Street of the Lady Stephanie, or if you prefer it by its rightful name, the Rua Dona Estefânia<sup>16</sup>.

It is a street that comes from nowhere, goes nowhere, but it is always crowded with cars, people, trams, all busily going nowhere. And at night you can hear the exciting clip-clop of horses' hoofs upon the cobbled stone.

Below my fourth storey balcony, a blind man passes playing upon a battered harmonium. He passes every day at this time in the afternoon. With him goes a bent cripple collecting the alms which the passers-by seldom refuse. Gay lilting tunes float up to me above the grinding moan of the trams, the rumble of lorries, the impatient bleating of motorcar horns, the scream from the police-car siren.... What gayety springs from his darkened soul, what memories of *festas*<sup>17</sup> in some remote *aldeia* with the sweating bodies of dancers that he cannot see whirling around him and their raucous voices chanting the simple words of some age-old melody.

Ao sair da minha terra  
Olhe para trás chorando;  
"Ó Alentejo<sup>18</sup> da minha alma  
Tão longe me vais ficando...

Ceifeira<sup>19</sup> que andas a calma  
Ceifando o trigo,  
Ceifa as penas da minha alma  
Ceifas e levás contigo!"<sup>20 & 21</sup>

For a moment the street stops and listens. They do not know it, but this is the voice of the old Portugal speaking from his darkened soul to theirs. The music fades. The flickering fingers of the typists return to their typewriters and their

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<sup>16</sup> "Estafania," unstressed and with a typo in the document.

<sup>17</sup> All italics on Portuguese words are ours.

<sup>18</sup> "Alemtejo" in the document.

<sup>19</sup> "Ceifreira" in the document, a typo.

<sup>20</sup> Note with translation made by the author: When I left my home-country, I looked back weeping. ["]O' Alemtejo of my heart, far from me you remain. Reaper, going so calmly, reaping the whe<t>/a\t, reap the sorrows of my heart, reap and carry them away with you."

<sup>21</sup> Pessoa also has a poem about a reaper, with *incipit* "Ela canta, pobre ceifeira," first published in the journal *Athena* n. 3 (Lisbon: Dec. 1924).

thoughts return the latest factory-made *fado* and its carefully-constructed modulations of suppressed desire. The machine-made world of petrol and diesel takes over the street again, and the men sitting outside the cafe go on moodily staring at the passers-by. Far away in space and time, a line of reapers, singing boys and girls, flash the sickles that bite the gold of the ripened wheat—

In the tram, a pimply-faced youth, with books under his arm, mutters as if to himself, “Que lindas pernas que tem a menina!” “You need a smack on the face,” the thin-faced servant-girl says without passion, covers her knees with the shopping-basket, and goes on thinking, “Will that rat of a husband of mine find the 100 *escudo* note I hid this morning?”<sup>22</sup>

[3] In the tobacco-shop the Poet borrows another sheet of notepaper from the owner and writes:

I am nothing.  
I shall never be anything.  
I do not want to be anything.  
But, apart from this, I carry within me all the dreams of the world.<sup>23</sup>

The owner looks over his shoulder and smiles.

“*Hoje! Hoje!* The draw is today! Buy the ticket now and be rich tomorrow!” A lottery ticket seller with a raucous voice goes past[,] and the knifegrinder, trundling [a] one-wheeled contraption[,] blows a shrill and ironic blast upon pipes.

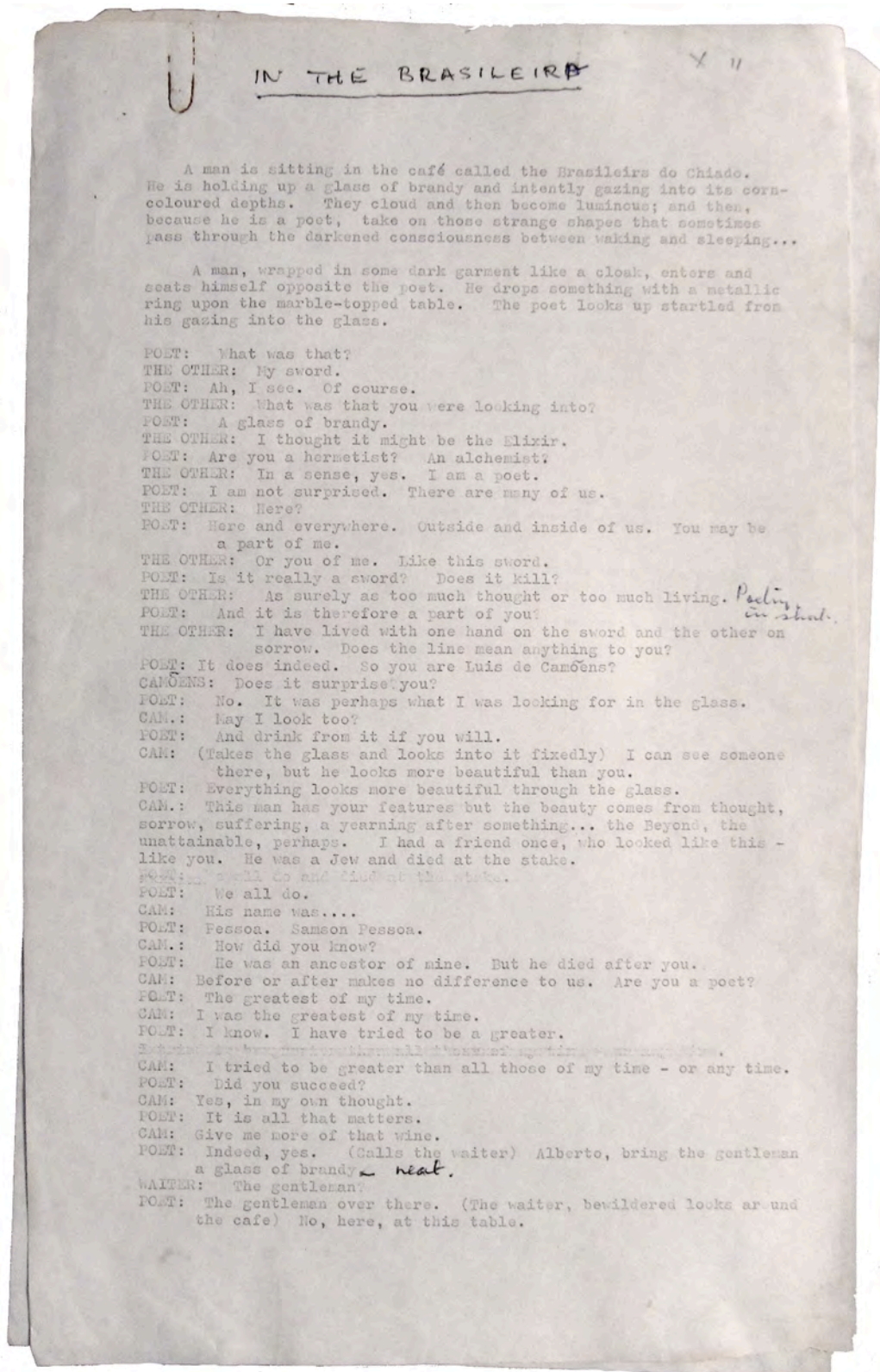
The thin-faced girl alights from the tram. The pimply youth follows her. She makes a gesture of disgust and darts across the road. The braked tyres of an approaching car screams upon the cobbled surface. The girl meets the impact with wildly waving arms, and then staggers back and falls motionless upon the grey stones. Her legs now lie long and bare and revealing as those of a foreign woman. But life and lust and love passed away from them for ever.

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<sup>22</sup> On the other side of the paper where page one is typed, we find another version of the last paragraph: [2] The thin-faced servant girl beside him covers her knees with the shopping-basket and says to him, without passion, “You need a smack on the face”, And then goes on thinking, ‘If that rat of a husband of mine finds the note of a hundred escudos I hid this morning, there will be nothing for the child.’

<sup>23</sup> These are verses from the poem “*Tabacaria*,” written by Pessoa (signed by Álvaro de Campos), which Jennings would later translate as “The Tobacco Shop” (JENNINGS, 1986: 126-129).

III. Unpublished. One piece of paper typed on both sides, with a short story titled "In the Brasileira," signed by Hubert Jennings (this is the first of four different versions of the same story). Found inside the folder "Stories—S1" which Jennings created for some of his papers. Datable to 1968.



2

WAITER (petrified) Yes, sir.  
 POET: Well, bring the gentleman his drink. And don't knock over his sword.  
 WAITER: (starting back) His sword?  
 POET: He always carries a sword. It is a part of him. But, as you see it can be detached. Now get the gentleman his drink.  
 WAITER: What gentleman, sir?  
 POET: The one you see before you. The great Luis de Camoens.  
 WAITER: The one whose statue's at the end of this street?  
 POET: Exactly.  
 WAITER: Well, sir, he's been a perching place for pigeons as long as I or anybody else can remember. All he wants is a bucket of cold water over his head to wash off the muck they left there. He doesn't want brandy, and, if you'll excuse me sayingso, sir, neither do you.  
 (He turns to serve other customers)  
 CAM: (in a voice of thunder) Bring it!  
 WAITER: ( a little grey about the gills) Did you speaks sir?  
 POET: No. But you heard the order.  
 WAITER: (subdued) Yes, sir.  
 He comes back running with the brandy and sets it down nervously on the table opposite the poet. He sees the glass lifted, tilted and then set back on the table empty.  
 Waiter: Holy Virgin!  
 He runs for the door. The customers watch him in astonishment. Somebody says "Earthquake!" and in a second they are all running for the door.)Camoens and the Poet are left sitting alone.)  
 CAM: We can now resume the pleasant conversation we were having before we were so rudely interrupted.  
 POET: For my part, I should like nothing better.

*Hubert Jennings*

## IN THE BRASILEIRA

A man is sitting in the café called the Brasileira<sup>24</sup> do Chiado. He is holding up a glass of brandy and intently gazing into its corn-coloured depths. They cloud and then become luminous; and then, because he is a poet, take on those strange shapes that sometimes pass through the darkened consciousness between waking and sleeping...

A man, wrapped in some dark garment like a cloak, enters and seats himself opposite the poet. He drops something with a metallic ring upon the marble-topped table. The poet looks up startled from his gazing into the glass.

POET: What was that?

THE OTHER: My sword.

POET: Ah, I see. Of course.

THE OTHER: What was that you were looking into?

POET: A glass of brandy.

THE OTHER: I thought it might be the Elixir.

POET: Are you a hermetist? An alchemist?

THE OTHER: In a sense, yes. I am a poet.

POET: I am not surprised. There are many of us.

THE OTHER: Here?

POET: Here and everywhere. Outside and inside us. You may be a part of me.

THE OTHER: Or you of me. Like this sword.

POET: Is it really a sword? Does it kill?

THE OTHER: As surely as too much thought or too much living. [→Poetry, in short.]

POET: And it is therefore a part of you?

THE OTHER: I have lived with one hand on the sword and the other on sorrow. Does the line mean anything to you?

POET: It does indeed. So you are Luis de Camões<sup>25</sup>?

CAMÕES: Does it surprise you?

POET: No. It was perhaps what I was looking for in the glass.

CAM.: May I look too?

POET: And drink from it if you will.

CAM: (Takes the glass and looks into it fixedly) I can see someone there, but he looks more beautiful than you.

POET: Everything looks more beautiful through the glass.

<sup>24</sup> Jennings writes both "Camõens" and "Camoens" in the document.

<sup>25</sup> "Brasileirs" in the document, a typo.



CAM.: This man has your features but the beauty comes from thought, sorrow, suffering, a yearning after something... the Beyond, the unattainable, perhaps. I had a friend once, who looked like this—like you. He was a Jew and died at the stake.

POET: We all do.

CAM: His name was....

POET: Pessoa. Samson<sup>26</sup> Pessoa.

CAM.: How did you know?

POET: He was an ancestor of mine. But he died after you.

CAM: Before or after makes no difference to us. Are you a poet?

POET: The greatest of my time.

CAM: I was the greatest of my time.

POET: I know. I have tried to be greater.

CAM: I tried to be greater than all those of my time—or any time.

POET: Did you succeed?

CAM: Yes, in my own thought.

POET: It is all that matters.

CAM: Give me more of that wine.

POET: Indeed, yes. (Calls the waiter) Alberto, bring the gentleman a glass of brandy[→—neat].

WAITER: The gentleman?

POET: The gentleman over there. (The waiter, bewildered[,]) looks around the cafe) No, here, at this table.

WAITER: (petrified) Yes, sir.

[2] POET: Well, bring the gentleman his drink. And don't knock over his sword.

WAITER: (starting back) His sword?

POET: He always carries a sword. It is a part of him. But, as you see it can be detached. Now get the gentleman his drink.

WAITER: What gentleman, sir?

POET: The one you see before you. The great Luis de Camões.

WAITER: The one whose statue's at the end of the street?

POET: Exactly.

WAITER: Well, sir, he's been a perching place for pigeons as long as I or anybody else can remember. All he wants is a bucket of cold water over his head to wash off the muck they left there. He doesn't want brandy, and, if you'll excuse me saying so, sir, neither do you. (He turns to serve other customers)

CAM: (in a voice of thunder) Bring it!

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<sup>26</sup> In Portuguese, it would be "Sancho."

WAITER: (a little grey about the gills) Did you speak<sup>27</sup> sir?

POET: No. But you heard the order.

WAITER: (subdued) Yes, sir.

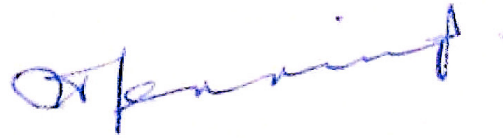
He comes back running with the brandy and sets it down nervously on the table opposite the poet. He sees the glass lifted, tilted and then set back on the table empty.

WAITER: Holy Virgin!

He runs for the door. The customers watch him in astonishment. Somebody says "Earthquake!" and in a second they are all running for the door.) Camões and the Poet are left sitting alone.)

CAM: We can now resume the pleasant conversation we were having before we were so rudely interrupted.

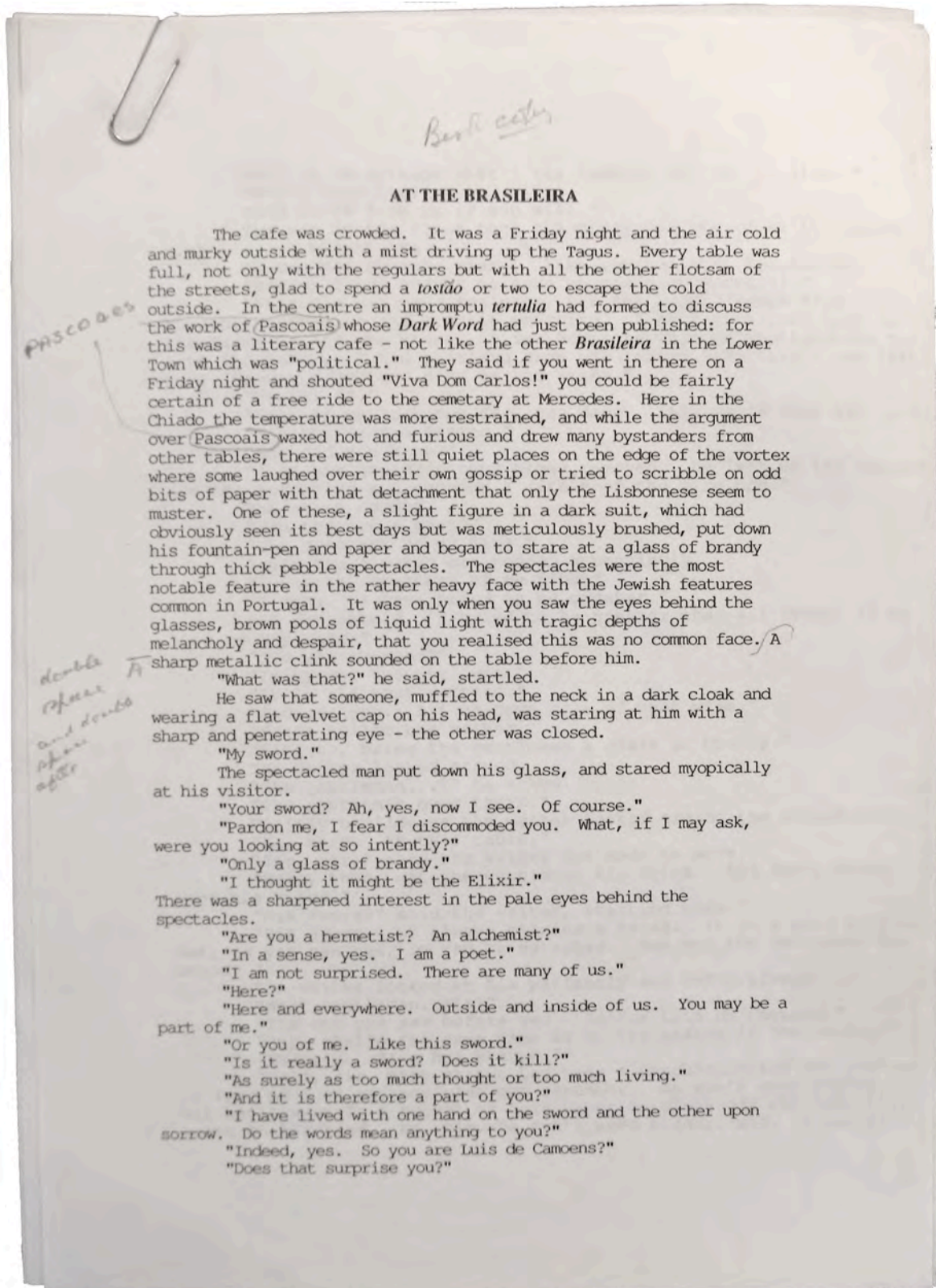
POET: For my part, I should like nothing better.



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<sup>27</sup> "speaks" in the document, a typo.

IV. Unpublished. Five pieces of paper (typed on one side), with a short story titled "At the Brasileira," by Hubert Jennings (this is the second of four different versions of the same story). Except for page two, all others contain handwritten notes. Found inside the folder "Stories—S1" which Jennings created for some of his papers. Datable to 1968 or later.



"No, it is perhaps what I was looking for in the glass."  
 "May I look too?"  
 "And drink from it if you will."  
 The man in the cloak took the glass and stared at it fixedly with his one bright eye.  
 "I can see someone there. Like you but more beautiful."  
 "Brandy lends beauty to some unpromising material."  
 "This man has your features, but the beauty comes from thought, suffering and a great yearning. I have seen that look in the faces of men who stared at far horizons when we ventured too far into the East.. I had a friend once who looked like this - and like you. He was a Jew and died at the stake."  
 "We all do."  
 "Yes, if we look too far, too deep. This man's name was ..."  
 "Sancho. Sancho Pessoa."  
 "How did you know?"  
 "I am his grandson many times removed. He left me the thought and the suffering and perhaps a little of the fire too."  
 The other nodded.  
 "You too are a poet?"  
 "The greatest of my time."  
 Again the cloaked man nodded approvingly.  
 "I was the greatest of my time."  
 "I know. I have tried to be greater."  
 "So you should. I tried to be greater than all others in my time or any time."  
 "Did you succeed?"  
 "In my own thought, yes."  
 "It is all that matters."  
 "Indeed, yes. Let us have more of that wine."  
 Pessoa called the waiter.  
 "Alberto, bring the gentleman a glass of brandy."  
 The waiter looked around.  
 "The gentleman...?" he asked.  
 "The gentleman over there."  
 Plainly bewildered the waiter looked around the crowded room.  
 "No, here. At this table."  
 "Yes, sir," said the waiter but made no move.  
 "Well, then, get the gentleman his drink. And don't knock over his sword."  
 "His sword?" said the waiter, starting back."  
 "His sword. He always carries a sword. It is a part of him. But, as you can see, it can be detached. Now get the gentleman his brandy."  
 The waiter looked at him patiently and reflectively.  
 "What gentleman, sir?"  
 "The one you see before you. Senhor Luis de Camoens."  
 "Why, that's the same name as on the statue in the street!"  
 "Exactly. It's his statue."  
 "Well, sir, that statue has been a perching place for pigeons as long as I or anybody else can remember. He won't need brandy. All he'll want is a bucket of cold water to clean off the mess they leave on his head. No, sir, he don't need brandy, and, if you'll

excuse me saying so, sir, neither do you."

He was turning away to serve the other customers, when he heard in a voice of thunder:

"Bring it!"

The waiter, a little grey about the gills, looked back.

"Did you call, sir?"

"No, but you heard the order."

The waiter left hurriedly for the bar.

He came running back with a full glass which he set down on the table before the poets, of which he was only permitted to see one. He watched the glass being slowly lifted up, tilted back and then set down on the table top empty.

"Holy Virgin!" he yelled and ran full tilt for the door.

There was a sudden silence as the guests watched him. Then someone, remembering the tremor that had shaken the city a day or two before, said enquiringly, "Earthquake?" In a second, the word was taken up all round the room, "Earthquake! Terremoto!" And they too fled for the street, knocking over tables and chairs and one another in their haste.

"And now," said Camoens, "I suggest that we return to the pleasant conversation from which we were so rudely interrupted."

"For my part," said Pessoa, "I would ask for nothing better."

"Earthquakes, I see, may have their uses," the elder poet observed.

"They terrify me," admitted the other.

"They do us all, and this fair town has had plenty. But, surely, ever since Ulysses founded it, none was more illusory - unless it was that lying old swashbuckler himself!"

"It makes little difference to me and those like me, the fear is the same. But you are a soldier and valorous, you feel no fear."

"Not so, my friend. On the contrary, on the field of battle we are terrified."

"Terrified?"

"Terrified. For we know that unless we strike hard and strike first, the other terrified poltroon in front of us will do so and that will be the end of the matter for us."

"We meet on more even terms, then. But is it not true that the Unreal can be as terrifying as the Real?"

"More so for men of wit and imagination."

"And so we drift between the two, like a feather in a changing wind?"

"Or a ship lost at sea."

"Yes, you must have known that too."

"I was shipwrecked twice in the East, but the worst was a storm off the Cape..."

"Of Storms and Good Hope?"

"There was very little of the latter when we battered our way round it in the ship Sao Bento. It blew as it had not blown since Bartolomeu Dias first fought his way round it sixty-seven years before..."

"Was he real? Was your Adamastor real?"

"He was as real as terror and imagination could make anything. The sea poured over us in white floods of fury, took us in its mouth

How real is life? How real is hate that  
poisons life? and this was Hate itself, made visible  
to our eyes: as we shook with terror  
while the sky poured over us etc

and shook us like a dog with a rat. And all the while I saw him taking shape, the lightning became his eyes, the black thunder-clouds his wings and the wind his piercing scream; and all the time the great rocks on our lee bared their teeth to receive us. Yes, call him - or it - what you like, it was reality."

He drew himself up and pulled his cloak over his face as though to shut out the scene.

"I must go," he muttered through the folds. His voice had grown suddenly tired.

Pessoa caught him by the sleeve.

"No, tell me first what happened!"

"We...we faced him down, the helmsman and I..."

"Yes?"

others  
"Drove him off. I was, like the other, clinging to what bits of rope I could find and calling on the Virgin and the saints, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw the helmsman fighting the wheel, white with terror and with trembling hands... Somehow I made my way back to him across the plunging, streaming deck. Together we held on... and screamed back at the thing..."

"And then?"

"It went. It drew back... began to squeak and gibber like a bat ... and fled. No more. *Nada mais*. I must go..."

When Pessoa looked up again, he saw he had been writing on the pad he always carried with him and that a crowd had gathered round the table, watching him. One of them took up the paper and began to read - he saw that it was his young friend, Almada de Negreiros...

show  
does it  
make sense  
before  
of time

The monster who lives at the end of the world  
Rose up in the dark of the night to fly;  
Three times around the ship he swirled  
And thrice was heard his screaming cry:  
"Who is this that dares to come and brave  
The dreadful vaults of my secret cave?"  
And the man at the helm trembling said:  
"The King Lord John the Second!"

What sails invade my feeding ground,  
What keels are these I see and hear?"  
Three times he whirled the ship around  
And thrice with gross and filthy leer,  
Yelped out with a terrifying sound:  
"Who dares what I alone may dare,  
Who live where no other is found  
And from the sea pour fathomless fear?"  
The man at the helm trembled and said:  
"The King Lord John the Second!"

Hubert

Thrice the wheel from his grip was shaken  
Thrice by his grasping hands retaken,  
Then after trembling three times more he cried:  
"Here at the helm I am more than I.  
I am a People seeking from you the wide  
Domain of land and sea, and though trembling I feel

Fear of the Monster and the darkening sky,  
Still the will holds me fast to the wheel  
Of the King Lord John the Second!"

Shaw ← Pessoa heard the murmurs of applause from the crowd: "Ah,  
Fernando!" and "Fernando indeed!"  
Then he saw Alberto the waiter, step forward, the white napkin  
on his arm:  
"Another drink, Sir?" he said.

AT THE BRASILEIRA<sup>28</sup>

The cafe was crowded. It was a Friday night and the air cold and murky outside with a mist driving up the Tagus. Every table was full, not only with the regulars but with all the other flotsam of the streets, glad to spend a *tostão* or two to escape the cold outside. In the centre an impromptu *tertulia* had formed to discuss the work of Pascoais[←Pascoaes] whose *Dark Word*<sup>29</sup> had just been published: for this was a literary cafe—not like the other *Brasileira* in the Lower Town which was “political.” They said if you went in there on a Friday night and shouted “Viva Dom Carlos<sup>30</sup>!” you could be fairly certain of a free ride to the cemetery at Mercedes. Here in the Chiado the temperature was more restrained, and while the argument over Pascoais[←Pascoaes] waxed hot and furious and drew many bystanders from other tables, there were still quiet places on the edge of the vortex where some laughed over their own gossip or tried to scribble on odd bits of paper with that detachment that only the Lisbonnese seem to muster. One of these, a slight figure in a dark suit, which had obviously seen its best days but was meticulously brushed, put down his fountain-pen and paper and began to stare at a glass of brandy through thick pebble spectacles. The spectacles were the most notable feature in the rather heavy face with the Jewish features common in Portugal. It was only when you saw the eyes behind the glasses, brown pools of liquid light with tragic depths of melancholy and despair, that you realised this was no common face. A sharp metallic clink sounded on the table before him.

“What was that?” he said, startled.

He saw that someone, muffled to the neck in a dark cloak and wearing a flat velvet cap on his head, was staring at him with a sharp and penetrating eye—the other was closed.

“My sword.”

The spectacled man put down his glass, and stared myopically at his visitor.

“Your sword? Ah, yes, now I see. Of course.”

“Pardon me, I fear I discommoded you. What, if I may ask, were you looking at so intently?”

“Only a glass of brandy.”

“I thought it might be the Elixir.”

There was a sharpened interest in the pale eyes behind the spectacles.

“Are you a hermetist? An alchemist?”

“In a sense, yes. I am a poet.”

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<sup>28</sup> Above the title, one reads “best copy” handwritten in pencil.

<sup>29</sup> *Verbo Escuro* is the original Portuguese title of Pascoes’s book, published in 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Carlos I, king of Portugal, crowned in 1889 and assassinated in 1908.



"I am not surprised. There are many of us."

"Here?"

"Here and everywhere. Outside and inside of us. You may be a part of me."

"Or you me. Like this sword."

"Is it really a sword? Does it kill?"

"As surely as too much thought or too much living."

"And it is therefore a part of you?"

"I have lived with one hand on the sword and the other upon sorrow. Do the words mean anything to you?"

"Indeed, yes. So you are Luis de Camoens?"

"Does that surprise you?"

[2] "No, it is perhaps what I was looking for in the glass."

"May I look too?"

"And drink from it if you will."

The man in the cloak took the glass and stared at it fixedly with his one bright eye.

"I can see someone there. Like you but more beautiful."

"Brandy lends beauty to some unpromising material."

"This man has your features, but the beauty comes from thought, suffering and a great yearning. I have seen that look in the faces of men who stared at far horizons when we ventured too far into the East... I had a friend once who looked like this—and like you. He was a Jew and died at the stake."

"We all do."

"Yes, if we look too far, too deep. This man's name was..."

"Sancho. Sancho Pessoa."

"How did you know?"

"I am his grandson many times removed. He left me the thought and the suffering and perhaps a little of the fire too."

The other nodded.

"You too are a poet?"

"The greatest of my time."

Again the cloaked man nodded approvingly.

"I was the greatest of my time."

"I know. I have tried to be greater."

"So you should. I tried to be greater than all others in my time or any time."

"Did you succeed?"

"In my own thought, yes."

"It is all that matters."

"Indeed, yes. Let us have more of that wine."

Pessoa called the waiter.

"Alberto, bring the gentleman a glass of brandy."

The waiter looked around.

"The gentleman...?" he asked.

"The gentleman over there."

Plainly bewildered[,] the waiter looked around the crowded room.

"No, here. At this table."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter but made no move.

"Well, then, get the gentleman his drink. And don't knock over his sword."

"His sword?" said the waiter, starting back.

"His sword. He always carries a sword. It is a part of him. But, as you can see, it can be detached. Now get the gentleman his brandy."

The waiter looked at him patiently and reflectively.

"What gentleman, sir?"

"The one you see before you. Senhor Luis de Camoens."

"Why, that's the same name as on the statue in the street!"

"Exactly. It's his statue."

"Well, sir, that statue has been a perching place for pigeons as long as I or anybody else can remember. He won't need brandy. All he'll want is a bucket of cold water to clean off the mess they leave on his head. No, sir, he don't need brandy, and, if you'll [3] excuse me saying so, sir, neither do you."

He was turning to serve the other customers, when he heard in a voice of thunder:

"Bring it!"

The waiter, a little grey about the gills, looked back.

"Did you call, sir?"

"No, but you heard the order."

The waiter left hurriedly for the bar.

He came running back with a full glass which he set down on [t]he table before the poets, of which he was only permitted to see one. He watched the glass being slowly lifted up, tilted back and then set down on the table top empty.

"Holy Virgin!" he yelled and ran full tilt for the door. There was a sudden silence as the guests watched him. Then someone, remembering the tremor that had shaken the city a day or two days before, said enquiringly, "Earthquake?" In a second, the word was taken up all round the room, "Earthquake! Terremoto!" And they too fled for the street, knocking over tables and chairs and one another in their haste.

"And now," said Camoens, "I suggest that we return to the pleasant conversation from which we were so rudely interrupted."

"For my part," said Pessoa, "I would ask for nothing better."

"Earthquakes, I see, may have their uses," the elder poet observed.

"They terrify me," admitted the other.

"They do us all, and this fair town has had plenty. But, surely, ever since Ulysses founded it, none was more illusory—unless it was that lying old swashbuckler himself!"

"It makes little difference to me and to those like me, the fear is the same. But you are a soldier and valorous, you feel no fear."

"Not so,[←Not so,] my friend. On the contrary, on the field of battle we are terrified."

"Terrified?"

"Terrified. For we know that unless we strike hard and strike first, the other terrified poltroon in front of us[→you] will do so and that will be the end of the matter for us[→you]."

"We meet in more even terms, then. But is it not true that the Unreal can be as terrifying as the Real?"

"More so for men of wit and imagination."

"And so we drift between the two, like a feather in a changing wind?"

"Or a ship lost at sea."

"Yes, you must have known that too."

"I was shipwrecked twice in the East, but the worst was a storm off the Cape..."

"Of Storms and Good Hope?"

"There was very little of the latter when we battered our way round it in the ship São<sup>31</sup> Bento. It blew as it had not blown since Bartolomeu Dias first fought his way round it sixty-seven years before..."

"Was he real? Was your Adamastor real?"

<"He was as real as a terror and imagination could make anything. The sea poured over us in white floods of fury, took us in its mouth" [↓ How real is life? How real is hate that poisons life? And this was Hate itself, made visible to our eyes as we shook with terror.]

[,]while the sea poured over us \*etc [↓ The sea poured over] [4] and shook us like a dog with a rat. And all the while I saw him taking shape, the lightning became his eyes, the black thunder-clouds his wings and the wind his piercing scream; and all the time the great rocks on our lee bared their teeth to receive us. Yes, call him—or it—what you like, it was reality."

He drew himself up and pulled his cloak over his face as though to shut out the scene.

"I must go," he muttered through the folds. His voice had grown suddenly tried.

Pessoa caught him by the sleeve.

"No, tell me what happened!"

---

<sup>31</sup> "Sao" in the document, lacking a tilde.

"We... we faced him down, the helmsman and I ..."

"Yes?"

"Drove him off. I was, like the other [←others], clinging to what bit of rope I could find and calling on the Virgin and the saints, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw the helmsman fighting the wheel, white with terror and with trembling hands... Somehow I made my way back to him across the plunging, streaming deck. Together we held on... and screamed back at the thing..."

"And then?"

"It went. It drew back... began to squeak and gibber like a bat...<sup>32</sup> and fled. No more. *Nada mais*. I must go..."

When Pessoa looked up again, he saw he had been writing in the pad he always carried with him and that a crowd had gathered round the table, watching him. One of them took up the paper and began to read—he saw that it was his young friend, Almada Negreiros<sup>33</sup>...

The monster who lives at the end of the world  
 Rose up in the dark of the night to fly;  
 Three times around the ship he swirled  
 And thrice was heard his screaming cry:  
 "Who is this that dares to come and brave  
 The dreadful vaults of my secret cave?"  
 And the man at the helm trembling said:  
 "The King Lord John the Second!"

"What sails invade my feeding ground,  
 What keels are these I see and hear?"  
 Three times he whirled the ship around  
 And thrice with gross and filthy leer,  
 Yelped out with a terrifying sound:  
 "Who dares what I alone may dare,  
 Who live where no other is found  
 And from the sea pour fathomless fear?"  
 The man at the helm trembled and said:  
 "The King Lord John the Second!"

Thrice the wheel from his grip was shaken  
 Thrice by his grasping hands retaken,  
 Then after trembling three times more he cried:  
 "Here at the helm I am more than I.  
 I am a People seeking from you the wide  
 Domain of land and sea, and though trembling I feel

---

<sup>32</sup> There is a note on the left margin of the document: "Space / dots to indicate lapse of time."

<sup>33</sup> "Almada de Negreiros" in the document.

[5] Fear of the Monster and the darkening sky,  
Still the wheel holds me fast to the wheel  
Of the King Lord John the Second"

Pessoa heard the murmurs of applause from the crowd: "Ah, Fernando!"  
and "Fernando indeed!"

Then he saw Alberto the waiter, step forward, the white napkin on his arm:  
"Another drink, Sir? he said.

V. Unpublished. Eight pieces of paper (typed on one side), with a short story titled "At the Brasileira," signed by Hubert Jennings (this is the third of four different versions of the same story); although this document was found loose, there was an almost identical copy (only with different spacing) found inside the folder "Stories—S1" which Jennings created for some of his papers. Datable to 1968 or later.

#### AT THE BRASILEIRA

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"My sword."

The spectacled man put down his glass, and stared myopically at his visitor.

"Your sword? Ah, yes, now I see. Of course."

"Pardon me, I fear I discommoded you. What, if I may ask, were you looking at so intently?"

"Only a glass of brandy."

"I thought it might be the Elixir."

There was a sharpened interest in the pale eyes behind the spectacles.

"Are you a hermetist? An alchemist?"

"In a sense, yes. I am a poet."

"I am not surprised. There are many of us."

"Here?"

"Here and everywhere. Outside and inside of us. You may be a part of me."

"Or you of me. Like this sword."

"Is it really a sword? Does it kill?"

"As surely as too much thought or too much living."

"And it is therefore a part of you?"

"I have lived with one hand on the sword and the other upon sorrow. Do the words mean anything to you?"

"Indeed, yes. So you are Luis de Camoens?"

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"No, it is perhaps what I was looking for in the glass."

"May I look too?"

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The man in the cloak took the glass and stared at it fixedly with his one bright eye.

"I can see someone there. Like you but more beautiful."

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"We all do."

"Yes, if we look too far, too deep. This man's name was ..."

"Sancho. Sancho Pessoa."

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"I am his grandson many times removed. He left me the thought and the suffering and perhaps a little of the fire too."

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"Exactly. It's his statue."

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"Terrified?"

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"Or a ship lost at sea."

"Yes, you must have known that too."

"I was shipwrecked twice in the East, but the worst was a storm off the Cape..."

"Of Storms and Good Hope?"

"There was very little of the latter when we battered our way round it in the ship *São Bento*. It blew as it had not blown since Bartolomeu Dias first fought his way round it sixty-seven years before..."

"Was he real? Was your Adamastor real?"

"How true is life? How real is Hate that poisons life? This was Hate itself and we were terrified. The sea poured over us in white floods of fury, took us in its mouth and shook us like a dog with a rat. And all the while I saw him taking shape, the lightning

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*Hubert Jennings*

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“There was very little of the latter when we battered our way round it in the ship *São Bento*. It blew as it had not blown since Bartolomeu<sup>34</sup> Dias first fought his way round it sixty-seven years before...”

“Was he real? Was your Adamastor real?”

“How true is life? How real is Hate that poisons life? This was hate itself and we were terrified. The sea poured over us in white floods of fury, took us in its mouth and shook us like a dog with a rat. And all the while I saw him taking shape, the lightning [7] became his eyes, the black thunder-clouds his wings and the wind his piercing scream; and all the time the great rocks on our lee bared their teeth to receive us. Yes, call him—or it—what you like, it was reality.”

He drew himself up and pulled his cloak over his face as though to shut out the scene.

“I must go,” he muttered through the folds. His voice had grown suddenly tired.

Pessoa caught him by the sleeve.

“No, tell me what happened!”

“We... we faced him down, the helmsman and I...”

“Yes?”

“Drove him off. I was, like the others, clinging to what bit of rope I could find and calling on the Virgin and the saints, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw the helmsman fighting the wheel, white with terror and with trembling

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<sup>34</sup> “Bartólomeu,” stressed in the document.

hands... Somehow I made my way back to him across the plunging, streaming deck. Together we held on... and screamed back at the thing..."

"And then?"

"It went. It drew back... began to squeak and gibber like a bat... and fled.

.....  
No more. *Nada mais*. I must go..."

When Pessoa looked up again, he saw he had been writing on the pad he always carried with him and that a crowd had gathered round [8] the table, watching him. One of them took up the paper and began to read—he saw that it was his young friend, Almada Negreiros<sup>35</sup>...

*The monster who lives at the end of the world  
Rose up in the dark of the night to fly;  
Three times around the ship he swirled  
And thrice was heard his screaming cry:  
"Who is this that dares to come and brave  
The dreadful vaults of my secret cave?"  
And the man at the helm trembling said:  
"The King Lord John the Second!"*

*"What sails invade my feeding ground,  
What keels are these I see and hear?"  
Three times he whirled the ship around  
And thrice with gross and filthy leer,  
Yelped out with a terrifying sound:  
"Who dares what I alone may dare,  
Who live where no other is found  
And from the sea pour fathomless fear?"  
The man at the helm trembled and said:  
"The King Lord John the Second!"*

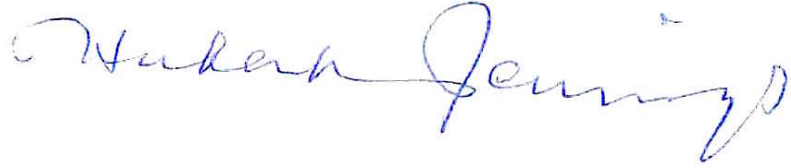
*Thrice the wheel from his grip was shaken  
Thrice by his grasping hands retaken,  
Then after trembling three times more he cried:  
"Here at the helm I am more than I.  
I am a People seeking from you the wide  
Domain of land and sea, and though trembling I feel  
Fear of the Monster and the darkening sky,  
Still the wheel holds me fast to the wheel  
Of the King Lord John the Second"*

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<sup>35</sup> "Almada de Negreiros" in the document.

Pessoa heard the murmurs of applause from the crowd: "Ah, Fernando!" and "Fernando indeed!"

Then he saw Alberto the waiter, step forward, the white napkin on his arm: "Another drink, Sir? he said.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hubert Jennings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

VI. Facsimiles of the cover and of six pages of the short story "At the Brasileira" published in Contrast #66, in 1988 (this is the fourth of four different versions of the same story); note this is the copy of Contrast #66 found in the Jennings library, and was annotated by Hubert Jennings himself, who made corrections and amendments to the published text.



INCLUDES NEW WORK BY LIONEL ABRAHAMS,  
GUS FERGUSON, GUY BUTLER, KELWYN SOLE,  
CHRIS ZITHULELE MANN AND MANY OTHERS:  
REVIEWS OF ALAN PATON (RICHARD RIVE),  
DOUGLAS REID SKINNER (PETER STRAUSS),  
INGRID DE KOK (ANNE LEVY SARZIN) AND  
SHEILA ROBERTS (EVE HUNTER).

## HUBERT JENNINGS

### At the *Basileira*

The café was crowded. It was a Friday night and the air cold and murky outside with a mist driving up the Tagus. Every table was full, not only with the regulars but with all the other flotsam of the streets, glad to spend a *tostão* or two to escape the cold outside. In the centre an impromptu *tertulia* had formed to discuss the work of Pascoais whose *Dark Word* had just been published: for this was a literary café — not like the other *Brasileira* in the Lower Town which was 'political'. They said if you went in there on a Friday night and shouted 'Viva Dom Carlos,' you could be fairly certain of a free ride to the cemetery at Mercedes. Here in the Chiado the temperature was more restrained, and while the argument over Pascoais waxed hot and furious and drew many bystanders from other tables, there were still quiet places on the edge of the vortex where some laughed over their own gossip or tried to scribble on odd bits of paper with that detachment that only the Lisbonnese seem able to muster. One of these, a slight figure in a dark suit, which had obviously seen its best days but was meticulously brushed, put down his fountain-pen and paper and began to stare with curious intensity at a glass of brandy through thick pebble spectacles. The spectacles were the most notable feature in the rather heavy face with the Jewish features common enough in Portugal. It was only when you saw the eyes behind the glasses, brown pools of liquid light with tragic depths of melancholy and despair, that you realised this was no common face. A sharp metallic clink sounded on the table before him.

'What was that?' he said, startled.

He saw that someone, muffled to the neck in a dark cloak and wearing a flat velvet cap on his head, was staring at him with a sharp and penetrating eye — the other was closed.

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'My sword.'

The spectacled man put down his glass, and stared myopically at his visitor.

'Your sword? Ah, yes, now I see. Of course.'

'Pardon me, I fear I discommoded you. What, if I may ask, were you looking at so intently?'

'Only a glass of brandy.'

'I thought it might be the Elixir.'

There was a sharpened interest in the pale eyes behind the spectacles.

'Are you a hermetist? An alchemist?'

'In a sense, yes,' replied the other, 'I am a poet.'

'I am not surprised. There are many of us.'

'Here?'

'Here and everywhere. Outside and inside of us. You may be a part of me.'

'Or you of me. Like this sword.'

'Is it really a sword? Does it kill?'

'As surely as too much thought or too much living.'

'And it is therefore a part of you?'

'I have lived with one hand on the sword and the other upon sorrow. Do the words mean anything to you?'

'Indeed, yes. So you are Luis de Camões?' *Camões*

'Does that surprise you?'

'No, it is perhaps what I was looking for in the glass.'

'May I look too?'

'And drink from it if you will.'

The man in the cloak took the glass and stared at it fixedly with his one bright eye.

'I can see someone there. Like you but more beautiful.'

'Brandy lends beauty to some unpromising material.'

'This man has your features, but the beauty comes from thought, suffering and a great yearning. I have seen that look on the faces of men who stared at far horizons when we ventured too far into the East. I had a friend once who looked like this — and like you. He was a Jew and died at the stake.'

'We all do.'

'Yes, if we look too far, too deep. This man's name was . . .'

*SANCHO*

'Samson. Samson Pessoa.'

'How did you know?'

## AT THE BRASILEIRA — 59

'I am his grandson many times removed. He left me the thought and the suffering and perhaps a little of the fire too.'

The other nodded.

'You too are a poet?'

'The greatest of my time.'

Again the cloaked man nodded approvingly.

'I was the greatest of my time.'

'I know. I have tried to be greater.'

'So you should. I tried to be greater than all others in my time or any time.'

'Did you succeed?'

'In my own thought, yes.'

'It is all that matters.'

'Indeed, yes. Let us have more of that wine.'

Pessoa called the waiter.

'Alberto, bring the gentleman a glass of brandy.'

The waiter looked around.

'The gentleman . . .?' he asked.

'The gentleman over there.'

Plainly bewildered the waiter looked around the crowded room.

'No, here. at this table . . .'

'Yes, sir,' said the waiter but made no move.

'Well, then, get the gentleman his drink. And don't knock over his sword.'

'His sword?' said the waiter, starting back.

'His sword. He always carries a sword. It is part of him.

But, as you can see, it can be detached. Now get the gentleman his brandy.'

The waiter looked at him patiently and reflectively.

'What gentleman, sir?'

'The one you see before you. Senhor Luis de Camões.'

'Why, that's the same name as on the statue in the street!'

'Exactly. It's his statue.'

'Well, sir, that statue has been a perching place for pigeons as long as I or anybody else can remember. He won't need brandy. All he'll want is a bucket of cold water to clean off the mess they leave on his head. No, sir, he don't need brandy, and, if you'll excuse me saying so, sir, neither do you.'

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'He was turning away to serve the other customers, when he heard in a voice of thunder:

'Bring it!'

The waiter, a little grey about the gills, looked back.

'Did you call, sir?'

'No, but you heard the order.'

The waiter left hurriedly for the bar.

He came running back with a full glass which he set down before the two poets, of whom he was only permitted to see one. He watched the glass being slowly lifted up, tilted back and then set down on the table top empty.

'Holy Virgin!' he yelled and ran full tilt for the door. There was a sudden silence as the guests watched him. Then someone, remembering the tremor that had shaken the city a day or two before, said enquiringly, 'Earthquake?' In a second, the word was taken up all round the room, 'Earthquake! *Terremoto!*' And they too fled for the street, knocking over tables and chairs and one another in their haste.

'And now,' said Camões, 'I suggest that we return to the pleasant conversation from which we were so rudely interrupted.'

'For my part,' said Pessoa, 'I ask for nothing better.'

'Earthquakes, I see, may have their uses,' the elder poet observed.

'They terrify me,' admitted the other.

'They do us all, and this fair town has had plenty. But, surely, never since Ulysses founded it was one more illusory – unless it was that lying old swashbuckler himself!'

'It makes little difference to me and those like me, the fear is the same. But you are a soldier and valorous, you feel no fear.'

'Not so, my friend. On the contrary, on the field of battle we are terrified . . .'

'Terrified?'

'Terrified. For we know that unless we strike hard and strike first, the other terrified poltroon in front of us will do so and that will be the end of the matter for us.'

'We meet on more even terms then. But is it not true that the Unreal can be as terrifying as the Real?'

'More so, for men of wit and imagination.'



( AT THE BRASILEIRA — 61

'And so we drift between the two, like a feather in a changing wind?'

'Or a ship lost at sea.'

'Yes, you must have known that too.'

'I was shipwrecked twice in the East, but the worst was a storm off the Cape . . .'

'Of Storms and Good Hope?'

'There was very little of the latter when we battered our way round it in the ship *São Bento*. It blew as it had not blown since Bartólemeu Dias first fought his way round it sixty-seven years before . . .'

'Was he real? Was your Adamastor real?'

'He was as real as terror and imagination could make anything. The sea poured over us in white floods of fury, took us in its mouth and shook us like a dog with a rat. And all the while I saw him taking shape, the lightning became his eyes, the black thunder-clouds his wings and the wind his piercing scream; and all the time the great rocks on our lee bared their teeth to receive us. Yes call him — or it — what you like, it was reality.'

He drew himself up and pulled his cloak over his face as though to shut out the scene.

'I must go,' he muttered through the folds. His voice had grown suddenly tired.

Pessoa caught him by the sleeve.

'No, tell me first what happened!'

*oh* ~~We~~ We faced him down, the helmsman and I . . .'

'Yes?'

'Drove him off. I was like the others clinging to what bits of rope I could find and calling on the Virgin and the saints, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw the helmsman fighting the wheel, white with terror and with trembling hands . . . Somehow I made my way to him across the plunging, streaming deck. Together we held on . . . and screamed back at the thing . . .'

'And then?'

'It went. It drew back . . . began to squeak and gibber like a bat . . . and fled. No more, *Nada mais*. I must go . . .'

When Pessoa looked up again, he saw he had been writing on the pad he always carried with him and that a crowd had gathered round the table, watching him. One of

## 62 — HUBERT JENNINGS

them took up the paper and began to read — he saw it was his young friend, Almada de Negreiros . . .

The monster who lives at the end of the world  
Rose up in the dark of the night to fly;  
Three times around the ship he swirled  
And thrice was heard his screaming cry:  
'Who is this that dares to come and brave  
The dreadful vaults of my secret cave?'  
And the man at the helm trembling said:  
'The King Lord John the Second!'

'What sails invade my feeding ground,  
What keels are these I see and hear?'  
Three times he whirled the ship around  
And thrice with gross and filthy leer,  
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'Who dares what I alone may dare,  
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Thrice the wheel from his grip was shaken  
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Then after trembling three times more he cried:  
'Here at the helm I am more than I.  
I am a People seeking from you the wide  
Domain of land and sea, and though trembling I feel  
Fear of the Monster and the darkening sky,  
Still the will holds me fast to the wheel  
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Pessoa heard the murmurs of applause from the crowd:  
'Ah, Fernando!' and 'Fernando indeed!'

Then he saw Alberto the waiter, step forward, the white  
napkin on his arm:

'Another drink, Sir?' he said.