

Episode 7. **Sometimes I think I'll never leave the Rua dos Douradores**

Location: **Rua dos Douradores / Baixa**

Street sounds; church bell

Bernardo Soares: *Sometimes I think I'll never leave the Rua dos Douradores. And having written this, it seems to me eternity.*

[00:00:39.26]

Sofia: *The Book of Disquiet* is a kind of diary. It's written by the imaginary author Bernardo Soares.

Richard Zenith: *The Book of Disquiet* mainly contains the thoughts and feelings of Fernando Pessoa. And that's why he says that Bernardo Soares was a semi-heteronym, because he wasn't completely separate, he was like a semi-Pessoa, very similar to him.

Forest; wind; echoes

Richard Zenith: Pessoa began writing *The Book of Disquiet* in 1913, without really knowing what it would become, so he began writing passages that were sometimes like visions, medieval scenes, with virgin ladies, symbolic, non-existent.

Jerónimo Pizarro: And I'm pretty sure that *The Book of Disquiet* in its first phase, which is a more decadent phase, is very close to the language of Mário de Sá-Carneiro.

Sofia: The book was written in two phases. A first phase between 1913 and 1920. The first excerpt *In the Forest of Estrangements* was published in 1913 in the magazine *Águia*.

Jerónimo Pizarro: *The Forest of Estrangement* didn't have a fictitious character as its author. *The Forest of Estrangement* is signed by Fernando Pessoa. It's a forest lost in time and space.

Forest; wind; echoes

[00:02:36.23]

Richard Zenith: Then in 1914 Vicente Guedes became the protagonist. And Vicente Guedes, according to some excerpts was also a bookkeeper's assistant who worked in downtown Lisbon.

Jerónimo Pizarro: The book was interrupted for a long time, 10 years or so. And when it reappears in 1929 it was already another book. It was another book because we no longer have those unidentified forests. The alienation, the self-absorption and Fernando Pessoa's isolation are relative. In 1929 something appears that wasn't there before: and that was Lisbon

Street sounds; fado music playing on the street

Richard Zenith: And in this second phase that he wrote intensely until 1934, he brings Bernardo Soares into the book, as a protagonist.

Cat meowing; street sounds

[00:04:10.23]

Jerónimo Pizarro: The book of the late 1920s is a book in which we come to know Rua dos Douradores, which became famous, where there is downtown Lisbon, where the trams appear, where there are cats, where we meet Senhor Moreira, and the head of the office. Very specific things that clearly were not there before. And this second book is no longer a book inspired by Sá-Carneiro. It still has expressionist parts in it, but we notice that Pessoa has moved away from the first Modernism and his literary style has changed, the same way in which Cesário Verde responded to the Romantic tendencies.

Airplane passing overhead

Pablo Javier Pérez López: It is a deeply philosophical book and it has to do with the geographical soul of the city and the soul of the inhabitant of the city of Lisbon. Also the great subject of *The Book of Disquiet* is the journey in time, but also the journey through being. He travels through his own essence.

Street sounds

Sofia: In his lifetime Pessoa only published 12 excerpts from *The Book of Disquiet*. Everything else was packed in a trunk with over 30,000 papers. The compilation of the

texts was first published in 1982. Pessoa left some ideas about how to organise the book, but he never made up his mind. So in each new edition the order of the texts changes.

Pedro Sepúlveda: The editor has to make a series of decisions, such as, do the texts belong to the book or not, what is the order of the texts, if the author is Bernardo Soares or Fernando Pessoa or Vicente Guedes or all of them, or whether the organisation should be thematic or chronological.

[00:06:25.23]

Church bells; street sounds

Sofia: We can't know for sure if Rua dos Douradores has the same pulse of life as it did 100 years ago, but Pessoa did step on this very sidewalk in his wanderings around Lisbon and it was here, right here, that Bernardo Soares, a bookkeeper's assistant lived and worked. And even dreamed of leaving.

Bernardo Soares: *In my dream I experienced freedom, as if the South Seas had offered me marvelous islands to be discovered. It would all be repose, artistic achievement, the intellectual fulfillment of my being. But even as I was imagining this, during my miniature*

midday holiday in a café, an unpleasant thought assaulted my dream: I realized I would feel regret. Yes, I say it as if confronted by the actual circumstance: I would feel regret. Vasques my boss, Moreira the head bookkeeper, Borges the cashier, all the young men, the cheerful boy who takes letters to the post office, the boy who makes deliveries, the gentle cat – all this has become part of my life. And I wouldn't be able to leave it without crying, without feeling that – like it or not – it was a part of me which would remain with all of them, and that to separate myself from them would be a partial death.

Church bells; street sounds

Sofia: Pessoa never worked or lived in Rua dos Douradores. But he wrote business letters for many companies here in Baixa. Our next stop is one of those places. Let's make our way to Rua da Assunção.

Credits:

Voices: António Fonseca, Richard Zenith, Jerónimo Pizarro, Pablo Javier Pérez López, Pedro Sepúlveda and Sofia Saldanha.

Bibliography:

Pessoa, Fernando, *The Book of Disquiet*. Edited and translated by Richard Zenith. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001.