

## Episode 9. **Mouth of Hell**

Location: **Rua Augusta / Baixa**

*Street sounds*

**Sofia:** You should now walk down Rua Augusta towards Terreiro do Paço. In 1929 Fernando Pessoa is reading the first volume of the *Confessions of Aleister Crowley*. Crowley was a notorious British magician and occultist.

[00:00:29.09]

**Steffen Dix:** He knew several famous figures. He was in contact with Aldous Huxley, with Albert Einstein. He prepared an exhibition in Berlin with some great German modernists, so Crowley was a very international figure. He lived between Berlin, London and Paris and travelled around the world, while Pessoa never left downtown Lisbon. And in this sense there couldn't be a greater contrast than Crowley and Pessoa.

*Aleister Crowley voice recording*

**Aleister Crowley:** *In the Years of the Primal Course, in the dawn of terrestrial birth, Man mastered the mammoth and horse, and Man was the Lord of the Earth.*

**Sofia:** The press dubbed Crowley "the wickedest man in the world". He identified himself as the "Antichrist" and he called himself "The Beast 666". On December 4th, 1929 Fernando Pessoa wrote to Crowley's publisher, *Mandrake Press*. It was to correct a mistake in the magician's astrological chart.

*Street sounds*

**Steffen Dix:** And he asked if the publisher could tell Crowley and the publisher did so. Then Crowley got in touch, maybe he found some interest in Pessoa and he was fairly quick to state that he was coming to Portugal.

**Sofia:** This started a correspondence that led to a meeting between Pessoa and Crowley on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1930, in Lisbon.

**Steffen Dix:** At that time, Crowley was going through great personal troubles, he was getting a divorce, he had financial problems and he had met in Berlin a young German

artist, Hanni Jaeger. He wanted to run away with Hanni Jaeger, somewhere far away from his personal problems.

[00:02:33.19]

**Sofia:** *Mandrake Press* was also going through financial trouble and they were looking for a funder.

**Steffen Dix:** It is curious that they thought that Pessoa would be a person capable of investing some money and Pessoa himself showed a certain innocence, he was really considering the possibility of publishing some Portuguese authors in England and he thought of course of himself. There was a project, it is a pity that it didn't work out, a book of poetry written by Pessoa, with an afterword or preface by Aleister Crowley.

*Street music*

**Sofia:** Imagine this street in 1930. It was not a pedestrian street. Fernando Pessoa worked here. Rua Augusta buzzed with commerce. It was always like that. Previously wool and silk merchants had traded here.

**Steffen Dix:** When they were strolling around Lisbon, this very urban, cosmopolitan couple in this small provincial town, where most women were wearing black, with skirts down to the ground, the Portuguese perhaps thought Crowley and Hanni Jaeger were very exotic and Crowley and Jaeger thought the Portuguese very exotic too. Crowley and Hanni Jaeger spent only one night in Lisbon and then went straight to Cascais or Estoril. The most important thing for Crowley was the beach and the sun.

[00:04:31.11]

*Waves*

**Sofia:** Pessoa paid them a visit. And a poem remains from that time which is considered Fernando Pessoa's most erotic poem.

Fernando Pessoa:

*She entices like a boat,*

*Or like an orange, so sweet.*

*When, my God, will I sail?*

*When, O hunger, will I eat?*

*Sex moan; waves*

**Steffen Dix:** Maybe Pessoa witnessed a session of sexual magic between the two, I don't know, this is speculation. But certainly Pessoa had a certain fascination for Hanni Jaeger.

**Luís Miguel Rosa Dias:** In the meantime, Aleister Crowley had an overly active fantasy, they were doing something sexual, and were probably too loud or something. They were staying at Hotel Paris in Estoril, which still exists. And the manager evicted the couple from the hotel.

*Waves*

**Sofia:** Or maybe the reason for the eviction was simply because Crowley and Hanni did not have enough money to pay for the hotel bill.

**Luís Miguel Rosa Dias:** The girl was very distressed, she went to the American embassy and spoke to the ambassador, and he arranged for her to return to Berlin. Aleister

Crowley got very worried, because he couldn't find her and so he made a huge fuss about it.

[00:06:11.28]

**Sofia:** And that was when, with the help of Fernando Pessoa, he staged his own death in Boca do Inferno. Supposedly a suicide note was found under a cigarette case, allegedly written by Crowley.

**Aleister Crowley:**

*L.G.P.*

*Year 14, Sun in Libra*

*I cannot live without you. The other "Mouth of Hell" will catch me - it won't be as hot as yours.*

*Hisos*

*Tu LiYu. \**

**Sofia:** And the case went public.

**Luís Miguel Rosa Dias:** The thing then came out in great headlines in the *Século Ilustrado* and later in the French magazine *Detective*. It was Fernando Pessoa who wrote the articles.

### *Street sounds*

**Jerónimo Pizarro:** Fernando Pessoa was writing detective novels at the time, and Crowley inspired him to start a new detective novel about the suicide of Aleister Crowley in Boca do Inferno, *The Mouth of Hell*.

**Sofia:** Maybe this detective story could have made Pessoa internationally famous. But as with many of Pessoa's ideas, it was never completed.

### *Street music*

**Jerónimo Pizarro:** Besides his involvement in this detective novel, Crowley probably did play a part in increasing Fernando Pessoa's interest in hermeticism, occultism and initiation at a time when he was already very interested in it, and truth be told there are many texts on the occult by Fernando Pessoa after the encounter with Aleister Crowley. And perhaps the most important thing about that meeting was not Crowley himself, but

what Crowley represented in the Western world as one of the most emblematic figures in the revival of occult traditions.

**Sofia:** The relationship between the two ended in 1931. Crowley kept writing to Pessoa for a few months, but at a certain point, Pessoa stopped replying. Let's make our way to Café Martinho da Arcada, in Terreiro do Paço.

**Credits:**

Voices: Steffen Dix, Aleister Crowley, Luís Miguel Nogueira Rosa Dias, Jerónimo Pizarro, José Filipe Costa and Sofia Saldanha.

**Bibliography:**

The Pentagram. Aleister Crowley:

<https://archive.org/details/ThePentagramByAleisterCrowley>

Pessoa, Fernando, "Her very being surprises.", *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe: Selected Poems*, Edited and Translated by Richard Zenith. London, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 310.

O Mistério da Boca do Inferno - O encontro entre o Poeta Fernando Pessoa e o Mago Aleister Crowley. Victor Belém. Lisboa. Casa Fernando Pessoa, 1995. - .Excerto da reportagem de Augusto Ferreira Gomes. in O Notícias Ilustrado . Lisboa: 5-10-1930.

\* Free translation by Eugénia Brito