

Episode 10. **Down there in café Arcada ***

Location: **Martinho da Arcada / Baixa**

Cafe

Sofia: You should now be in Martinho da Arcada. This cafe opened in the late 18th century. It was once known as the "Snow House". It was one of the few places in Lisbon selling ice, preserved from the snow that fell in the mountains. Artists, military men and politicians used to gather here. Ask to see the table where Fernando Pessoa used to sit. There are photographs on the walls that recall these times. Pessoa wasn't just a writer he was a man of limitless interests.

[00:00:53.29]

António Mega Ferreira: The archive shows us absolutely extraordinary documents. The man was interested in shop-window decoration, in the results of English football games, probably because of the betting system. And this omnivorous curiosity of Fernando Pessoa was converging with something else, a graphomania absolutely unstoppable, anything he thought he had to write down.

Pencil writing

José Barreto: How did he write? He has thousands of things written in pencil. He always had pencil stubs in his pockets. If he had a pencil he would split it in 3 and then sharpen it on both sides. He always carried 2, 3, 4 pencils in his pockets.

Sharpening a pencil

José Barreto: That was how Fernando Pessoa used to write. A friend offered him a pen, a very good one, a decent pen and he accepted it, but after two or three days, he gave it away, because it tickled his fingertips.

Old typewriter

Sofia: He also typed. He would spend the night at the offices organising work and his writings. In fact, he liked having the keys to the office, so he could work whenever he felt like it. Many of his ideas were for new projects. Some came to fruition, others remained on the page. But none of them had any commercial success.

Cafe

António Mega Ferreira: He had no talent whatsoever for business. He spent his entire life wanting to do business. He was indeed an extraordinary mental entrepreneur, with very little entrepreneurial ability, so to speak.

Pencil writing

Sofia: At one point he wanted to set up a company called *Cosmopolis*.

António Mega Ferreira: The *Cosmopolis* documents are an extraordinary thing, because it's a list, if I'm not mistaken, of over 80 business ideas. I bet he wrote that list on the same day. And the most diverse inventions too, the typewriter reels are known, which pre-figure the ball of the electric typewriter, which was something that only appeared much later, the mining concessions business. He did reports on the mining concessions business, got crazy about it. There is no sign he earned any money with it.

Cafe

Sofia: In 1921 he registered the company *Olisipo: Agents, Organizers and Publishers*.

Footsteps on wooden floor

Pedro Sepúlveda: The idea was to make an intermediary company, so it would deal with all sorts of businesses, including promoting tourism in Portugal and Lisbon. But it didn't last and ended up only publishing 4 books.

Knocking on door

Sofia: These 4 books were the final versions of Pessoa's own *English Poems*, *A Invenção do Dia Claro* by Almada Negreiros, *Sodoma Divinizada* by Raul Leal and the second edition of *Canções* by António Botto. The books by Botto and Leal were seized by the authorities. They were seen as immoral and scandalous.

Cafe

[00:04:24.16]

António Mega Ferreira: We all know that scandal sells and *Canções* by António Botto and in particular *Sodoma Divinizada* by Raul Leal must have sold quite well. The scandal itself was something Fernando Pessoa wanted. He felt that these were the books he wanted to publish at *Olisipo*, although *Olisipo*'s editorial plan was mind-boggling.

Sofia: By 1924 *Olisipo* had finished. But Pessoa was still full of projects. He created *Athena Magazine*, which only published five issues. In it Pessoa published for the first time Alberto Caeiro and Ricardo Reis, as well as the last poems of Mário de Sá-Carneiro. The main aim of the magazine was to publish Pessoa's work.

António Mega Ferreira: It was published in small doses and started building a poetic corpus, an absolutely unusual poetic corpus. And that's why, in 1927, the writers of *Presença* magazine salute him as the master.

Sofia: In 1934 a large sum of money would come to him, but not through business. In the next episode we will learn how this happened. Now you can go to Terreiro do Paço. Feel free to walk around there.

Credits:

Voices:

António Mega Ferreira, José Barreto, Pedro Sepúlveda and Sofia Saldanha

Bibliography:

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