

Episode 12. **Eat your chocolates, little girl, Eat your chocolates!**

Location: **Casa Fernando Pessoa / Campo de Ourique**

Tram

Sofia: In the 1920s and 1930s Campo de Ourique was a district some distance away from the city centre. It was where the lower middle class lived. Today at number 16 of Rua Coelho da Rocha is the Casa Fernando Pessoa. It opened in 1993.

Door opening

Sofia: Back in 1920 Pessoa's family had returned from South Africa. He rented a flat on the first floor of this building and moved here, with his mother. She died shortly afterwards. His two brothers soon left to study in England and his sister Teca married and had children.

Footsteps on wooden floor

[00:00:52.21]

Manuela Nogueira: I knew uncle Fernando from the moment I opened my eyes. He was an extraordinarily cheerful person, always in a good mood. He was nothing like the image we have of him today. He enjoyed playing with children, but not educating them. And then he wrote some very naughty verses, which is what children like. My mother would say, "O Fernando for goodness sake". But he insisted and now I've got some of them here. If you want I can read some of them for you. At the time the appearance of a monster at the Loch Ness, in Scotland, was all over the news. *There is a Loch Ness monster, who is pretending to appear. It appears that he is pretending that nothing there appears. The Loch Ness monster is that one and is this one. It is that one because it's near this one, that's why he has a thick neck and he swims completely naked without showing his bottom.* These jokes were recorded, some of them by an older, much older cousin. And he passed them on to me, because at the time I didn't write well enough, and also I didn't know he was a genius, so I didn't keep anything.

Luís Miguel Rosa Dias: He played with us. He played more with my sister than with me. She pretended she was shaving him, and he would go along with it very seriously, and then would give her a penny and she would cross the street and go to the shop opposite to buy chocolate or sweets.

Children playing

Manuela Nogueira: He adored children, adored them. If he saw me at the window, at Rua Coelho da Rocha, he would pretend to stumble against a street lamp, and then would apologise to the street lamp, taking off his hat. Or he would drop a coin on the pavement. At that time you would see a lot of children on the street, the grocers, the children that worked in the grocery stores, They would come around looking for the lost coin, all around him and I used to laugh and laugh, because I knew he was joking around.

[00:03:16.25]

Luís Miguel Rosa Dias: Then he would approach a street lamp and stand there in an Ibis position.

Manuela Nogueira: Then when he came into the building he would pretend to fall down the stairs, making a lot of noise. And my mother used to say, "Fernando, they'll think you're crazy." "Ah, that's what I want them to think", he'd say. My mother was younger than him, but she played the mother figure.

Footsteps on wooden floor

Luís Miguel Rosa Dias: My mother thought her brother wasn't practical. He was always writing and writing. And then she worried, because she thought he was not eating properly, he was always late. He would drink coffee and had nothing to eat.

Manuela Nogueira: But he used to have lunch with us very often. And he used to give me presents almost every week. He gave me so many presents. I'd get to the dining room and would see that my napkin was rather thick. There was something underneath it. I remember a few things. One thing I loved was a white doll's pram, with a red hood with a little baby sleeping inside, covered with some cloth. I would get so excited. I'd go crazy, I'd approach him and hug him and kiss him. It made me very happy, because it was a present. The serious part of Fernando Pessoa is his writing, his imagination. I know that my father had great admiration for him, he recognised him as a very intelligent man. He helped him even in certain initiatives that Fernando took. Sometimes he would read us a poem after dinner and my mum used to tell him "It's a pity, Fernando, that you are not well known as a writer".

Footsteps on wooden floor; seagulls

Manuela Nogueira: We had a corridor, the house isn't like that now, but we had a corridor in an L shape. You would come in, turn right and the corridor was right there.

And on the other side there was a bathroom. And I remember seeing him in that corridor, hands behind his back, which was his position, in a white shirt, without a coat, with his dark grey trousers, walking in that corridor, pacing up and down forever. He was probably thinking ... he must have been creating. I had the feeling that I couldn't interrupt him, it was strange. I kept that feeling my entire life.

Library

Sofia: Pessoa's library is in this house. His library reveals a man that is interested in everything.

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Antonio Cardello: He was reading everything, pretty much everything. This seems to be too much of a simplification, but it really isn't.

Jerónimo Pizarro: And I think one of the great fascinations with Fernando Pessoa is that not only were there many of him, but he was also clearly the Portuguese author most interested in the widest variety of subjects.

Sofia: He was interested in all subjects and writers. But we find no diversity in gender. Most of the books he owned were written by men. But this is very much a reflection of the time.

José Barreto: He thought that the common people, children and women, he'd put everything in the same box, had no right to liberties, had no right to freedom of speech, as the intellectuals should have, such as men. An intellectual woman for him was a rare case. He agreed that there were such cases, but that they were uncommon. And in several writings he also argued that this was a kind of sexual inversion, that is, they were masculinised women.

Sofia: Not all of the books are here, because he also used to sell them. Most of them are in English. Pessoa used to go to Livraria Inglesa or ordered books by mail. He also used to write notes in the books and through those notes we can learn more about his writing.

[00:08:27.09]

Antonio Cardiello: Many of the books were read several times. We have the underlining of texts, we have the reading notes, we have the marginalia. For example, in the library

we have two editions of poems by Walt Whitman. In one of those editions, we have a passage in which Walt Whitman is explaining who he is, that expression where he says *I am large, I contain multitudes*, and this expression ends up arousing Fernando Pessoa's interest. We know that, because he writes a note in pencil, in English, *explication for Caieiro*. And so the books themselves are small boxes, and when we were there opening those boxes, we discovered other boxes inside the boxes, so it is, once again, a sort of game played by Pessoa. We didn't know what we were going to discover, we discovered unexpected things, again with the feeling that Fernando Pessoa was behind it all.

Sofia: The books have been scanned and are available online. Esotericism is the subject of some of those books. In the next episode we will talk about esotericism and Fernando Pessoa. You can listen to it while you walk to Prazeres Cemetery.

Credits:

Voices: Manuela Nogueira, Luís Miguel Nogueira Rosa Dias, Antonio Cardiello, Jerónimo Pizarro, José Barreto and Sofia Saldanha.

Bibliography:

Fernando Pessoa & CO.: "The Tobacco Shop", Selected Poems: Edited and translated from the Portuguese by Richard Zenith. New York: Grove Press, 1998;