



RUA DE SÃO BENTO, 17

L I S B O A

The Return to Lisbon

On August 20th of 1905, at the age of seventeen (after about ten years in Durban, city of the English colony of Natal), Pessoa embarked alone on the Herzog bound for Lisbon, to attend the Superior Course of Letters, in the variant for the diplomatic career, which he studied for almost two years before deciding to quit.

The course operated on the premises of the Royal Academy of Sciences, on Rua da Academia das Ciências, 19.

In the 1st year, he attended the courses of French, Roman Philology, Geography, English and Universal History. In the 2nd year, he added Philosophy to the 5 disciplines already mentioned. It was to this last course that he became most dedicated.

He did not make any progress in terms of credits, having failed the exams in the first year due to illness (having surpassed the legal period for submitting a medical certificate) and the second due to an academic strike aimed at challenging the measures taken by the Prime-Minister João Franco (decades later his half-brother João Maria will say that Fernando Pessoa would be one of the main instigators, although there are doubts about this type of behavior, since Pessoa was a polemicist, but mainly through his writing). During the time he attended the Course and after leaving the University, he was spending long hours in the National Library (localized before in the San Francisco Convent, Largo da Academia das Belas Artes/ former Largo da Biblioteca Pública), studying Greek and German philosophy (Aristotle and Kant), religions of the world, psychology and the theory of evolution of the species of Charles Darwin (there are two editions in his private library: English and French). He also read a great variety of works of western literature, especially in the French language, of which some authors stand out, such as: Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, Maurice Rollinat, among others. He also dedicated his time to the reading of Portuguese authors, namely, Guerra Junqueiro, Antero de Quental, Gomes Leal, António Nobre and Almeida Garrett. It should be noted that the Portuguese readings filled a gap that existed due to his English education. In addition to his readings, he continued to write poetry, fiction, philosophical and sociological texts, as well as a literary criticism.

As soon as he returned to Lisbon, he started to live with Aunt Anica, his mother's sister, who had been widowed in 1904, and the cousins Mário and Maria, at Rua de S. Bento, 98, 2º Esq (Maria José de Lancastre, in her work: Fernando Pessoa: a photobiography, indicates Rua de S. Bento, n.º 19, 2º Esq).

Ana Luísa Pinheiro Nogueira (Anica), maternal aunt, godmother and great friend of Fernando Pessoa, was born on March 19th in 1860. She married João Nogueira de Freitas (1865-1904), an agronomist, and had two children - Mário Nogueira de Freitas, born on the Island of Terceira (Azores), on February 24th in 1891 and Maria Nogueira de Freitas, born on April 2nd in 1893.

In November of 1914, Aunt Anica left for Switzerland with her daughter Maria and her son-in-law Raul Soares da Costa, a naval engineer. They will then live in Italy, returning to Lisbon around 1924. Aunt Anica dies on March 25th in 1940 (she was buried in the Prazeres cemetery in Lisbon).

Between October of 1906 and May of 1907, Pessoa lived with his stepfather, mother and siblings, when they came to spend a vacation in Lisbon on Calçada da Estrela, n.º 100 - 1º (a building demolished in the 1940s of the twentieth century).

This phase of Pessoa's life revealed a process of learning the Portuguese language, but also a readaptation to Lisbon, his hometown.