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+ANTINOUS+: A POEM

BY

FERNANDO PESSOA

LISBON

1918

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+ANTINOUS+

It rained outside right into Hadrian's soul.

The boy lay dead
On the low couch, on whose denuded whole,
To Hadrian's eyes, that at their seeing bled,
The shadowy light of Death's eclipse was shed.

The boy lay dead and the day seemed a night
Outside. The rain fell like a sick affright
Of Nature at her work in killing him.
Through the mind's galleries of their past delight
The very light of memory was dim.

O hands that clasped erewhile Hadrian's warm hands,
That now found them but cold!
O hair bound erstwhile with the pressing bands!
O eyes too diffidently bold!
O bare female male-body like
A god that dawns into humanity!
O lips whose opening redness erst could strike
Lust's seats with a soiled art's variety!
O fingers skilled in things not to be named!
O tongue which, counter-tongued, the throbbled brows flamed!
O glory of a wrong lust pillowed on
Raged conciousness's spilled suspension!
These things are things that now must be no more.
The rain is silent, and the Emperor
Sinks by the couch. His grief is like a rage,
For the gods take away the life they give
And spoil the beauty they made live.
He weeps and knows that every future age
Is staring at him out of the to-be.
His love is on a universal stage.
A thousand unborn eyes weep with his misery.

Antinous is dead, is dead forever,
Is dead forever and the loves lament.
Venus herself, that was Adonis' lover,
Seeing him again, having lived, dead again,
Lends her great skyey grief now to be blent
With Hadrian's pain.

Now is Apollo sad because the stealer
Of his white body is forever cold.
In vain shall kisses on that nippled point
Covering his heart-beats' silent place implore
His life again to ope his eyes and feel her
Presence along his veins this fortress hold
Of love. Now no caressing hands anoint

With growing joy that body's lusting lore.

The rain falls, and he lies like one who hath
Forgotten all the gestures of his love
And lies awake waiting their hot return.
But all his vices' art is now with Death:
He lies with her, whose sex cannot him move,
Whose hand, were't not cold, still ne'er his could burn.
Lilies were on his cheeks and roses too.
His eyes were sad in joy sometimes. He said
Oft in his close abandonments, that woo
Love to be more love than love can be, «Kiss
My eyelids till my closed eyes seem to guess
The kiss they feel laid in my heart's breast-bed.»

O Hadrian, what shall now thy cold life be?
What boots it to be emperor over all?
His absence o'er thy visible empery
Throws a dim pall.
Now are thy nights widowed of love and kisses,
Now are thy days robbed of the night's awaiting,
Now are thy lips purposeless and thy blisses
No longer of the size of thy life, mating
Thy empire with thy love's bold tenderesses.

Now are thy doors closed upon beauty and joy.
Throw ashes on thy head!
Lo, lift thine eyes and see the lovely boy!
Naked he lies upon that memoried bed;
By thine own hand he lies uncovered.
There was he wont thy dangling sense to cloy,
And uncloy with more cloying, and annoy
With newer uncloying till thy senses bled.

His hand and mouth knew gamuts musical
Of vices thy worn spine was hurt to follow.
Sometimes it seemed to thee that all was hollow
In sense in each new straining of sucked lust.
Then still new crimes of fancy would he call
To thy shaken flesh, and thou wouldst tremble and fall
Back on thy cushions with thy mind's sense hushed.

«Beautiful was my love, yet melancholy.
He had that art, of love's arts most unholy,
Of being lithely sad among lust's rages.
Now the Nile gave him up, the eternal Nile.
Under his wet locks Death's blue paleness wages
Now war upon our pity with sad smile».

Even as he thinks, the lust that is no more
Than a memory of lust revives and takes
His senses by the hand, and his flesh quakes
Till all becomes again what 'twas before.
The dead body on the bed gets up and lives
Along his every nerve ripped up and twanged,
And a love-o'er-wise and invisible hand
At every body-entrance to his lust
Utters caresses which flit off, yet just
Remain enough to bleed his last nerve's strand,
O sweet and cruel Parthian fugitives!

He rises, mad, and looks upon his lover,
That now can love nothing but what none know.
Then his cold lips run all the body over—
His lips that scarce remember their warmth, now
So blent with feeling the death they behold;

And so ice-senseless are his lips that, lo!,
He scarce tastes death from the dead body's cold,
But it seems both are dead or living both
And love is still the Presence and the Mover.
Then his lips cease on the other lips' cold sloth.

But there the wanting breath reminds his lips
That between him and his boy-love the mist
That comes out of the gods has crept. The tips
Of his fingers, still idly tickling, list
To some flesh-response to their purple mood.
But their love-orison is not understood.
The god is dead whose cult was to be kissed!

He lifts his hand up to where heaven should be
And cries on the mute gods to know his pain.
Lo, list!, o divine watchers of our glee
And sorrow!, list!, he will yield up his reign.
He will live in the deserts and be parched
On the hot sands, he will be beggar and slave;
But give again the boy to be arm-reached!
Forego that space ye meant to be his grave!

Take all the female beauties of the earth!
Take all afar and rend them if ye will!
But, by sweet Ganymede, that Jove found worth
And above Hebe did elect to fill
His cup at his high festivals, and spill
His fairer vice wherefrom comes newer birth—,
The clod of female embraces resolve
To dust, o father of the gods!, but spare
This boy and his white body and golden hair.
Maybe thy newer Ganymede thou meanst
That he should be, and out of jealous care
From Hadrian's arms to thine his beauty steal'st.

He was a kitten playing with lust, playing
With his own and with Hadrian's, sometimes one
And sometimes two, now splitting, now one grown,
Now leaving lust, now lust's high lusts delaying,
Now eyeing lust not wide, but from askance
Jumping round on lust's half-unexpectance;
Then softly gripping, then with fury holding,
Now playfully playing, now seriously, now lying
By the side of lust looking at it, now spying
Which way to take lust in his lust's withholding.

Thus did the hours slide from their tangled hands
And from their mixed limbs the moments slip.
Now were his arms dead leaves, now iron bands,
Now were his lips cups, now the things that sip,
Now were his eyes too closed, and now too open,
Now were his ways such as none thought might happen,
Now were his arts a feather and now a whip.

That love they lived as a religion
Offered to gods that do to presence bend.
Sometimes he was adorned and made to don
Half-costumes, now a posing nudity
That imitates some god's eternity
Of body statue-known to craving men.
Now was he Venus, risen from the seas;
And now was he Apollo, white and golden;
Now as Jove sate he in mock-judgment over
The presence at his feet of his slaved lover;
Now was he an acted rite, by one beholden,

In ever-repositioned mysteries.

Now he is something anyone can be.
O white negation of the thing it is!
O golden-haired moon-cold loveliness!
Too cold! too cold! and love as cold as he.
Love wanders through the memories of his vice
As through a labyrinth, in sad madness glad,
And now calls on his name and bids him rise,
And now is smiling at his imaged coming
That is i'th'heart like faces in the gloaming—
Mere shining shadows of the forms they had.

The rain again like a vague pain arose
And put the sense of wetness in the air.
Suddenly did the Emperor suppose
He saw this room and all in it from far.
He saw the couch, the boy and his own frame
Cast down against the couch, and he became
A clearer presence to himself, and said
These words unuttered, save to his soul's dread:

«I shall build thee a statue that will be
To the astonished future evidence
Of my love and thy beauty and the sense
That beauty giveth of infinity,
Though death with subtle uncovering hands remove
The apparel of life and empire from our love,
Yet its nude statue-soul of lust made spirit
All future times, whether they will't or not,
Shall, like a curse-seeming god's boon earth-brought,
Inevitably inherit.

«Ay, this thy statue shall I build, and set
Upon the pinnacle of being-thine. Let Time
By its subtle dim crime
Eat it from life, or with men's violence fret
To pieces out of unity and presence.
Ay, let that be! Our love shall stand so great
In thy statue of us, like a god's fate,
Our love's incarnate and discarnate essence,
That, like a trumpet reaching over seas
And going from continent to continent,
Our love shall speak its joy and woe, death-blent,
Over infinities and eternities!

«The memory of our love shall bridge the ages.
It shall loom white out of the past and be
Eternal, like a Grecian victory,
In every heart the future shall give rages
Of not being our love's contemporary.

«Yet oh that this were needed not, and thou
Wert the red flower perfuming my life,
The garland on the brows of my delight,
The living flame on altars of my soul!
Would all this were a thing thou mightest now
Smile at from under thy death-mocking lids
And wonder that I should so put a strife
Twixt me and gods for thy lost presence bright;
Were there nought in this but my empty dole
And thy awakening smile half to condole
With what my dreaming pain to hope forbids».

Thus went he, like a lover who is waiting,
From place to place in his dim doubting mind.

Now was his hope a great bulk of will fating
Its wish to being, now felt he he was blind
In some point of his seen wish undefined.

When love meets death we know not what to feel.
When death foils love we know not what to know.
Now did his doubt hope, now did his hope doubt.
Now what his wish dreamed the dream's sense did flout
And to a sullen emptiness congeal.
Then again the gods fanned love's darkening glow.

«Thy death has given me a newer lust—
A flesh-lust raging for eternity.
On my imperial will I put my trust
That the high gods, that made me emperor be,
Will not annul from a more real life
My wish that thou shouldst live for e'er and stand
A fleshly presence on their better land,
More beautiful and as beautiful, for there
No things impossible our wishes mar
Nor pain our hearts with change and time and strife.

«Love, love, my love! thou art already a god.
This thought of mine, which I a wish believe,
Is no wish, but a sight, to me allowed
By the great gods, that love love and can give
To mortal hearts, under the shape of wishes—
Of wishes strong, having imperial reaches—
A vision of the real things beyond
Our life-imprisoned life, our sense-bound sense.
Ay, what I will thee to be thou art now
Already. Already on Olympic ground
Thou walkest and art perfect, yet art thou,
For thou needst no excess of thee to don
To perfect be, being perfection.

«My heart is singing like a morning bird.
A great hope from the gods comes down to me
And bids my heart to subtler sense be stirred
And think not that strange evil of thee
That to think thee mortal would be.

«My love, my love! My god-love! Let me kiss
On thy cold lips thy hot lips now immortal,
Greeting thee at Death's portal's happiness,
For to the gods Death's portal is Life's portal.

«Thus is the memory of thee a god
Already, already a statue made of me—
Of that part of me that, like a great sea,
Girds in me a great red empire more broad
Than all the lands and peoples that are in
My power's reach. Thus art thou myself made
In that great stretch Olympic that betrays
The true-wholed gods present in river and glade
And hours eternal in its different days.

«So strong my love is that it is thyself,
Thy body as it was ere death was it,
Towering above the silence infinite
That girds round life and its unduring pelf.
Even as thou wert in life, thy corporal shade
Is in the presence of the gods. My love
Permits not that its carnal being fade
Or one whit false to fleshly presence prove.
Creeds may arise and pass, and passions change,

Other ways may be born out of Time's dream,
But this our love, made but thy body, 'll range
On deathless meads from happy stream to stream.

«Were there no Olympus for thee, my love
Would make thee one, where thou sole god mightst prove,
And I thy sole adorer, glad to be
Thy sole adorer through infinity.
That were a divine universe enough
For love and me and what to me thou art.
To have thee is a thing made of gods' stuff
And to look on thee eternity's best part.

«O love, my love! Awake with my strong will
Of loving to Olympus and be there
The latest god, whose honey-coloured hair
Takes divine eyes! As thou wert on earth, still
In heaven bodifully be and roam,
A prisoner of that happiness of home,
With elder gods, while I on earth do make
A statue for thy deathlessness' seen sake.

«That deathless statue of thee I shall build
Will be no stone thing, but my great regret
By which our love's eternity is willed.
My sorrow shall make thee its god, and set
Thy naked presence on the parapet
That looks over the seas of future times.
Some shall say all our love was vice and crimes.
Others against our names, as stones, shall whet
The knife of their glad hate of beauty, and make
Our name a pillory, a scaffold and a stake
Whereon to burn our brothers yet unborn.
Yet shall our presence, like eternal morn,
Ever return at Beauty's hour, and shine
Out of the East of Love, and be the shrine
Of future gods that nothing human scorn.

«My love for thee is part of what thou wert
And shall be part of what thy statue will be.
Our double presence unified in thee
Shall make to beat many a future heart.
Ay, were't a statue to be broken and missed,
Yet its stone-perfect memory
Would, still more perfect, on Time's shoulders borne,
Overlook the great Morn
From an eternal East.

«Thy statue is of thyself and of me.
Our dual presence has its unity
In that perfection of body, which my love,
In loving it, did out of mortal life
Raise into godness, set above the strife
Of times and changing passions far above.

«The end of days, when Jove is born again,
And Ganymede again pour at his feast,
Shall see our dual soul from death released
And recreated unto love, joy, pain,
Life—all the beauty and the vice and lust,
All the diviner side of flesh, flesh-staged.
And, if our very memory wore to dust,
By the giant race of the end of ages must
Our dual presence once again be raised.»

It rained still. But slow-treading night came in

Closing the weary eyelids of each sense.
The very consciousness of self and soul
Grew, like a landscape through dim raining, dim.
The Emperor lay still, so still that now
He half forgot where now he lay, or whence
The sorrow that was still salt on his lips.
All had been something very far, a scroll
Rolled up. The things he felt were like the rim
That haloes round the moon when the night weeps.

His head was bowed into his arms, and they
On the low couch, foreign to his sense, lay.
His closed eyes seemed open to him and seeing
The naked floor, dark, cold, sad and unmeaning.
His hurting breath was all his sense could know.
Out of the falling darkness the wind rose
And fell. A voice swooned in the courts below.
And the Emperor slept.

The gods came now
And bore something away, no sense knows how,
On unseen arms of power and repose.

LISBON, 1915.

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