



# DANIEL FARIA

(Portugal, 1971-1999)

[Friday 1 October 2004]

**Daniel Faria was born in 1971 and died young, in 1999, at the Benedictine Monastery of Singeverga near Oporto. He graduated in Theology from the Universidade Católica and then took a degree in Portuguese Studies at the Universidade do Porto. When still a student he won prizes for his poetry, but he considered *Explanation of Trees and of Other Animals* (1998) to be his first mature work.**

The poet's project and concerns are well expressed in the poem from his inaugural book that begins "I walk a little above the ground/ In that place where birds/ Are usually hit". The poet, without leaving earth, aspires to the spiritual, the sublime, heaven. Or he wishes to bring heaven down to earth, to interpret his (and all) earthly experience in more-than-material terms. He hovers between, in the place of utter vulnerability, somewhat like a Christ figure ("I pour blood into my words"), like a sacrificial victim ("I squeeze my heart out for what descends on me/ And drinks"), or like a prophet ("A passer-by one invisible step above earth"). He does not quite know what the message is, but he believes in grace.

Very unlike other Portuguese poets who emerged in the 1990s, Daniel Faria is not interested in the everyday world for its own sake. Or, to put it more accurately, the everyday world is for him full of symbolic significance. He is a romantic visionary, a mystic in the tradition of St. John of the Cross, Hölderlin, Rilke and – in Portugal – Teixeira de Pascoaes and Herberto Helder. His 'explanation' is a metaphysical exploration, but his poetry does not soar with the confidence of Rilke. He has less certainty, his hope is more fragile, and in this sense he resembles other poets of his generation. Poetry is his vehicle for searching, with verses that are like paths cutting through the silence, the mystery.

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## POEMS

**A FREE-FALLING BIRD EVEN  
I KNOW THAT THE MAN WASHED HIS HAIR AS IF IT WERE LONG  
I LOVE YOU IN THE HEAVY TRAFFIC  
I SEEK THE PATH OF A MAN WHO RESTS IN YOU  
I WALK A LITTLE ABOVE THE GROUND  
IT HAPPENED THAT THINGS GOT DESTROYED WITH NO SURVIVING TRACE OF HIM  
MEN WHO ARE LIKE PLACES IN THE WRONG PLACE  
THERE ARE MANY METRES BETWEEN AN ANIMAL THAT FLIES**

### **A free-falling bird even**

A free-falling bird even  
When equal in size to the stone  
That falls from the wall will never  
Attain the same colouring as the moss  
And all the less so in the month  
When its feathers change

To have some idea think  
Of how a man loses the age  
Of when he searched out nests

Keep in mind: man falls down. The bird  
Migrates so that the seasons won't change

It is by that rotation that the wall  
Can be circled without anyone building it. The  
circle  
Of that flight is the stone of age

To have some idea think  
Of swallowing it

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Um pássaro em queda mesmo  
Quando é proporcional à pedra  
Que tomba do muro nunca  
Alcança a mesma coloração do musgo  
– Já nem sequer falo do tempo  
Em que mudam a pena

Para fazeres ideia pensa  
Como perde um homem a idade  
De encontrar os ninhos

Retém na memória: o homem cai. Desloca-se  
O pássaro para que as estações não mudem

É dessa rotação que o muro  
Pode cercar-se sem ninguém o construir. O  
cerco  
Do voo é a pedra da idade

Para fazeres uma ideia pensa  
Em engoli-la

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From: *Poesia*

Publisher: Quasi, Vila Nova de Famalicão

### **I know that the man washed his hair as if it were long**

I know that the man washed his hair as if it were long  
Because he had a woman on his mind  
I know that he washed it as if counting the strands

I know that he dried it with that woman's light  
With his very clear eyes fixed on the centre  
Of love, in the powerful transaction  
Of love

I know that he cut his hair to look for her  
I know that the woman gradually lost her cut-up clothes

It was a man visualised in the heart of the woman who washed  
His hair in her blood

In the running water

It was a man leaning like the fisherman on the banks to listen  
And the woman sang so that the man could breathe

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### **I love you in the heavy traffic**

I love you in the heavy traffic  
With all the pollution in my blood.  
I lay bare my desire  
The place that breathes only in your mouth  
O word that I love like the speech  
Of my mother, of my friend, of the poem  
I have in mind.  
With my head full of ideas I visit the silence  
Of your lips.  
Mould me with the vault of your mouth  
For I suspect that I can hear you  
In the firmament.

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Sei que o homem lavava os cabelos como se fossem longos  
Porque tinha uma mulher no pensamento  
Sei que os lavava como se os contasse

Sei que os enxugava com a luz da mulher  
Com os seus olhos muito claros voltados para o centro  
Do amor, na operação poderosa  
Do amor

Sei que cortava os cabelos para procurá-la  
Sei que a mulher ia perdendo os vestidos cortados

Era um homem imaginado no coração da mulher que lavava  
O cabelo no seu sangue

Na água corrente

Era um homem inclinado como o pescador nas margens para ouvir  
E a mulher cantava para o homem respirar

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Amo-te no intenso tráfego  
Com toda a poluição no sangue.  
Exponho-te a vontade  
O lugar que só respira na tua boca  
Ó verbo que amo como a pronúncia  
Da mãe, do amigo, do poema  
Em pensamento.  
Com todas as ideias da minha cabeça ponho-me no silêncio  
Dos teus lábios.  
Molda-me a partir do céu da tua boca  
Porque pressinto que posso ouvir-te  
No firmamento.

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### **I seek the path of a man who rests in you**

I seek the path of a man who rests in you  
The way a man strays from his heart to journey  
onward  
The way he leaves everything and adds to his  
inheritance

I seek to know symbols, the milestones  
Of daytime, how to read  
Smoke signals and the flight patterns of pigeons  
– and all  
Things that reach us from the distance

I seek to learn how to keep my feet within your  
Roads  
The way a man removes his shoes when he  
must cross  
Himself like a stream  
And I long for your word bursting once more  
With stars

So that I can cut them out and place them in the  
silence  
Alive  
In my mouth and in my hands  
On fire

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Procuro o trânsito de um homem que repousa  
em ti  
Como se desvia um homem do seu coração para  
seguir viagem  
Como deixa ficar tudo e acrescenta à sua  
herança

Procuro conhecer os símbolos, os marcos  
miliares  
Diurnos, como se lêem  
Sinais de fumo e o ângulo dos pombos – e todas  
as coisas  
Que nos chegam da distância

Procuro saber como se fecham os pés dentro  
dos teus  
Percurso  
Como se põe descalço um homem que necessita  
De atravessar-se  
E desejo outra vez desdobrada a tua palavra  
cheia  
De estrelas

Para que as recorte, para que as ponha no  
silêncio  
Vivas  
Na minha boca e nas minhas mãos  
Em chamas

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Publisher: Quasi, Vila Nova de Famalicão

### **I walk a little above the ground**

I walk a little above the ground  
In that place where birds  
Are usually hit.  
A little above the birds  
In the place where they usually lean forward  
To take flight

I fear dead weight  
Because it is a scattered nest

I am slightly above what dies  
On that slope where the word is like bread

### **Ando um pouco acima do chão**

Nesse lugar onde costumam ser atingidos  
Os pássaros  
Um pouco acima dos pássaros  
No lugar onde costumam inclinar-se  
Para o voo

Tenho medo do peso morto  
Porque é um ninho desfeito

Estou ligeiramente acima do que morre  
Nessa encosta onde a palavra é como pão  
Um pouco na palma da mão que divide

A little in the palm of the hand that breaks it  
And like the silence that attends my writing I do  
not separate

I walk lightly above what I say  
And I pour blood into my words  
I walk a little above the poem's transfusion

I walk humbly through the word's outskirts  
A passer-by one invisible step above earth  
In that place of trees with fruit and trees  
Engulfed by fire  
I'm a little inside what burns  
Slowly dwindling and feeling thirsty  
Because I walk above power to satiate whoever  
lives  
And I squeeze my heart out for what descends  
on me

And drinks

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E não separo como o silêncio em meio do que  
escrevo

Ando ligeiro acima do que digo  
E verto o sangue para dentro das palavras  
Ando um pouco acima da transfusão do poema

Ando humildemente nos arredores do verbo  
Passageiro num degrau invisível sobre a terra  
Nesse lugar das árvores com fruto e das árvores  
No meio de incêndios  
Estou um pouco no interior do que arde  
Apagando-me devagar e tendo sede  
Porque ando acima da força a saciar quem vive  
E esmago o coração para o que desce sobre  
mim

E bebe

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### **It happened that things got destroyed with no surviving trace of him**

It happened that things got destroyed with no  
surviving trace of him  
And it was late.  
Alone didn't use to mean having no one near  
And what hurt him didn't have the cysts of a  
disease  
Just the placid space of things left behind.  
It happened that nothing was done without  
His heart.  
It happened that he would spend all night  
opening his eyes  
So as not to be interrupted  
Stretching out his hand so as to be alive  
And knowing that not even he would get close  
to himself  
For he had diligently worked at being absent.

Acontecera que as coisas se destruíssem sem  
que nelas sobrevivesse  
E era tarde.  
Sozinho em tempos não fora a falta de ninguém  
E o que doía não tinha o quisto da doença  
Só o espaço sereno das coisas que se deixam.  
Acontecera que nada se fizera fora  
Do coração.  
Acontecera que passara a noite a abrir os olhos  
Para não se interromper  
A estender a mão para estar vivo  
E certo de que nem ele próprio se abeiraria de si  
mesmo  
Pois ocupara-se rigorosamente de ausentar-se.  
Mesmo se caminhara muito devagar  
Sem outro meio para esperar que o visitassem.  
Ele que é agora o que nunca repousou  
O que nunca encontrará o sítio do sossego

Even if he walked very slowly  
Which was his only way of hoping to be visited.  
He who is now the man who never rested  
Who will never find the place of peace  
Unless there is equilibrium in vertigo  
A steady light in the midst of the whirlwind.

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A não ser que haja o equilíbrio na vertigem  
Uma luz parada no meio da voragem.

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### **Men who are like places in the wrong place**

Men who are like places in the wrong place  
Men who are like plundered houses  
Like locations not on maps  
Like stones not on the ground  
Like orphaned children  
Men without a time zone  
Agitated men with no compass to rest on

Men who are like violated borders  
Like barricaded roads  
Men who are drawn to choked pathways  
Men spattered by all destinies  
Laid off from their lives

Men who are like the negation of strategies  
Like the hiding-places of smugglers  
Incarcerated men opening themselves with  
knives

Men who are like irreparable damage  
Men who are barely living survivors  
Men who are like places wrenched  
Out of place

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Homens que são como lugares mal situados  
Homens que são como casas saqueadas  
Que são como sítios fora dos mapas  
Como pedras fora do chão  
Como crianças órfãs  
Homens sem fuso horário  
Homens agitados sem bússola onde repousem

Homens que são como fronteiras invadidas  
Que são como caminhos barricados  
Homens que querem passar pelos atalhos  
sufocados  
Homens sulfatados por todos os destinos  
Desempregados das suas vidas

Homens que são como a negação das estratégias  
Que são como os esconderijos dos  
contrabandistas  
Homens encarcerados abrindo-se com facas

Homens que são como danos irreparáveis  
Homens que são sobreviventes vivos  
Homens que são como sítios desviados  
Do lugar

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## **There are many metres between an animal that flies**

There are many metres between an animal that flies  
And the ladder I'm descending to go sit on the ground  
But all I need is a square of peace and quiet  
To have absolute distance

The window I definitively lean out of is beyond what can be seen  
It's not an apparition  
Nor can it be reached without falling forward

Only where the landscape ends do I stand like a parachutist coming down  
Suspended like the saints in a mystical rapture  
Risen like an angel on its wings  
And I feel lofty like a star. A cloud  
In the form of a man  
Levitating

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Há muitos metros entre um animal que voa  
E a escada que desço para me sentar no chão  
Mas basta-me um quadrado de sossego  
Para a distância absoluta

Está para além do que se vê a janela onde me debruço definitivo  
Não é uma aparição  
Nem se pode alcançar sem se ir em frente caindo

Só no fim da paisagem estou de pé como um para-quedista que desce  
Suspenso como os santos num arroubo místico  
Erguido como um anjo em suas asas  
E sinto-me ser alto como um astro. Nuvem  
Como se fosse um homem  
Que levita

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