Building on the wonderful Fernando Pessoa & Co.: Selected Poems, acclaimed by Booklist as a beautiful one-volume course in the soul of the twentieth century, preeminent translator Richard Zenith now delivers a superbly edited andtranslated selection from the prose work of a truly unique figure of early modernism. Though known primarily as a poet, Fernando Pessoa wrote prose widely, in several languages and in every genre -- fiction, drama, letters, and essays. Drawing from the huge body of work that Pessoa left behind, Richard Zenith has produced a volume that is full of delights. Pessoa and his many literary alter egos, or heteronyms, experiment with the Surrealists automatic writing and invent the movement Sensationism (whose adherents were all heteronyms). There are appreciations of Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde, and Joyce, critical essays in which one heteronym derides the work of another, and a love letter by Pessoas only known female heteronym. There is a selection from Pessoas best-known work, The Book of Disquiet, retranslated from newly discovered materials. Like Fernando Pessoa & Co., Selected Prose is an important monument to one of the greatest exponents of modernism, a forgotten but crucial part of the literary canon.

My Personal Review:
This book is full of genius and madness, which are nearly indistinguishable from one another. Like Kafka, Pessoa stands above his peers for his profound sense of humanity. He is also as singular as Kafka. Pessoa is a mystery, and his notes and letters further illustrate this. I am sorry that he died before the world would honor him as one of the Twentieth Century's greatest writers. However, Pessoa was well aware of his genius and the admiration of the world would have done nothing to convince him of his worth. He was already convinced!

Pessoa published little during his lifetime, but it was because he never submitted much of his work for publication. Apparently, the Portugese
publishers still haven't published all of his works, either, and that is a shame.

One thing that stands out about this book is that Pessoa does not engage in any of the posturing that one might find in the works of other writers convinced of their genius. One senses that Pessoa considers his genius not in boast, but as if it were as unavoidable as his own face. It is fact to him; he cannot change it. His is a sad genius, not a violent genius. But do not pity him; he knew what he was doing. Pessoa was a man who knew what it meant to be a writer (that is, a perpetual other, an individual who can describe the world because he stands apart from it).

Pessoa is a wonder. Buy this book. I only wish it were the "Collected Prose" of Pessoa rather than the "Selected Prose." One more note, if you are interested in Portuguese literature you must read Anotnio Lobo Antunes, also published by Grove Press. A few of his works have been also translated by Richard Zenith (to whom I am grateful for his translations). If you like madness, madness in the Faulknerian sense, then you will love Lobo Antunes.

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The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa by Richard Zenith - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!