

Fernando Pessoa

IMPERMANENCE — First comes the choice of authors.

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First comes the choice of authors. Gradually, the lesser ones, the derivate ones, will fall back, and the outstanding personalities come to the fore. The works of these, then, shall be themselves sifted, and the natural choice, which took place among authors, shall come to happen to the poems of each author who has survived. An anthology shall be born for each nation — an over-rich, yet no longer a questionable anthology. A final sifting will narrow this to the permanent best.

Thus will the gradual sentence of the ages be passed, and fame narrow down from author to anthology, and from the larger anthology to the smaller one.

For a mind that looks, beyond the externals of the present, to that immortal substance of Beauty which keeps herself shut from what passes, and whose secret is only told to ears closed to the sounds of life and of fame — to a mind like this the unborn trail of the process is simple to foresee. It were [?] a harder, to some great [?] extent a useless, though [...] an uninteresting task, to determine, by colour [?] of critical likelihood, which of the authors, past or present, of our civilisation can hope for the forum of the gods (ultimate men).

Yet if we have ever present those principles which are the embalmers of written beauty, the donors of perennity, and the statuaries of immortal fame, we shall be sure of some books, of some poems, though some others will make us hesitate.

It does not take a very long consideration to perceive the immortality of Vigny's *Moïse*, *La Colère de Janson*, *La Mort du Loup*, nor of Keats' Odes to a *Nightingale*, to a *Grecian Urn*, to *Autumn*, to *Melancholy*. These poems are as fine as *Lycidas* and shall live when *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* shall have gone to human limbo to which all immature beauty is consigned.

The "haunting melody" poets will, of course, die altogether. A "haunting melody" is too ghostly to outlive a short succession of presents.

The principle of representativeness will save a few works which the principle of perfection cannot of itself let pass. The whole line of boisterous English

humour, a unique [?] and obsessing [?] thing, will probably survive only in *Pickwick Papers*, which [is] all that Dickens can send in for acceptance to the Gods.

s. d.

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