

Alexander Search

## A QUESTION

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«Tell me», one day to a poet said  
    A deep, brutal man,  
«If you had to choose between seeing dead  
Your wife whom you do love so well  
And the loss complete, irreparable,  
    Of your verses all, instead —  
Which loss would you rather feel?»

The poet glanced with sudden woe  
And deep distress at him who so  
Broke with a question ill-foreseen  
His inner silence half-serene,  
And he did not answer; and the other  
Smiled, as elder to younger brother:  
The tortured glance of startled sense  
And sudden self-knowledge intense  
And newness of self-consciousness  
Was bitter, as ev'n he could guess.  
More than a smile were violence.

10-1-1908

**Poesia Inglesa.** Fernando Pessoa. (Organização e tradução de Luísa Freire. Prefácio de Teresa Rita Lopes.) Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1995: 162.

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