

Fernando Pessoa

Grow old, as God himself... "Paradise Lost"... They tend to age...

Grow old, as God himself... "Paradise Lost"... They tend to age... To ensure immortality it is better to keep out of Paradise.

We read epics for the fable, or for the treatment of it, or for the verse.

Epics fundamentally dealing with religion can attain a full splendour only when that religion ceases to be of importance (loses its own importance). We delight in Athene because we are (perhaps precipitately) convinced that she did not exist. "Paradise Lost" is different. No one believes in Adam and Eve, but there are matters of controversy about the Trinity.

Dante has stood greatness better, for in the Protestant countries he is mere fable, and in the Catholic countries there is no religion.

These stunt diers succeed in making death comic and courage disgusting. It needs all our traditional use of respect to pity fools, and vain fools at that. Their end unites (?) suicide without pathos and tragedy without dignity.

It is idle, though perhaps interesting, to discuss what Columbus was, historically; sociologically, he is Portuguese.

Shaw is aware of mankind only as a problem. Chesterton is safer because he knows mankind to be a fact.

The astonishing fact — the only real fact — that things exist, that anything exists, that being is, is the soul of the breath of all the arts. That particular part of romanticism, which it fell to Coleridge best to form, has been called the Renascence of Wonder. But all genius (every idea of genius) is a renascence of wonder. In the soul, to accept is to lose.

A hope in a final — but not too final — justice, the "Gods writes straight on crooked lines" of the Portuguese proverb... .

...unless by a practical development of Einstein it be possible to relay our talk into the past. But there is a linguistic brake to that: the ancients are spared more than our mere noise. When Caesar begins to have heard Mussolini, he will be no wiser than he now yet has been.

End: The Gods will not tell us, nor will Fate. The Gods are dead and Fate is dumb.

s. d.

“Erostratus”. in Páginas de Estética e de Teoria Literárias. Fernando Pessoa. (Textos estabelecidos e prefaciados por Georg Rudolf Lind e Jacinto do Prado Coelho.) Lisboa: Ática, 1966: 225.