

Fernando Pessoa

### **If anyone wishes clearly to understand what is meant...**

If anyone wishes clearly to understand what is meant by the pressure of a known name, he need but figure to himself the following hypothesis. Let him suppose a book of poems, published to-day, by an unknown poet. Let that book be composed of great poems of great poets. Let it be submitted, in the course of reviewing, to a competent critic who, by some odd chance, might happen to be ignorant of every poem there printed, even though acquainted with every poet represented. Does anyone suppose that the competent critic, even if he had it in his power to write, say, the leading article in "The Times Literary Supplement" (no less would be deserved by such a book), would write anything more than a short notice, in 6-point type, in the bibliographical part of that paper? And the poet would be lucky if he got a notice in the text-pages.

The pressure of a known name does not mean that the critic will think a poem good or bad in function of a known name. But he will give careful attention, word by word and phrase by phrase, to the poem of a reputed poet; he will do nothing of the sort by the absolute stranger. If anyone will take the trouble, as I once did, either to pass off as the work of an unknown poet, or of his own self (this was what I did), the poem of a celebrated poet; or if he will pass off some unknown lines as a celebrated poet, he will discover this very easily. In both cases and for opposite reasons the lines must be good or the test will not be just (...).

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: 196.