

Fernando Pessoa

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I cannot think badly of the man who wrote the “Ode to a Nightingale”, nor of him who, in that “to the Grecian Urn”, expresses so human an idea as the heart-rending untimeliness of beauty. We all have felt that tearful sensation. Mothers, how many of ye, in looking at your bright children and at their heavenly fairness, have not wished such small, lovely forms could be preserved for ever and unchanged. Lover, when looking upon the form of thy mistress hast thou not felt thy heart oppressed because such beauty should one day be no more, nay, should grow old and, may hap, unbeautiful. Have we not all wished the immortality of someone that we know, have we all not felt that same pain at feeling that none are immortal. The statue of roman Venus hath looked, century after century, upon us in its nude beauty, hath charmed generations by its form and liveth now to charm others. But where art thou whom she looked upon? Some faces, fair, perhaps, as her face; some forms, beauteous, perhaps, as her form, where are they now, animated as they were by the fire that she has not? Apollo Belvedere still stands, but what of the millions of fair youths and maidens that have looked upon him? Their fairness went dwindled to old age, rotted in horrible death, and the uninspired image stands beautiful for ever and ever before us. If we had but each of us an Aurora who would not be content to be a Tithonus, though thin-rocked, [. . .] and feeble.

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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: 331.