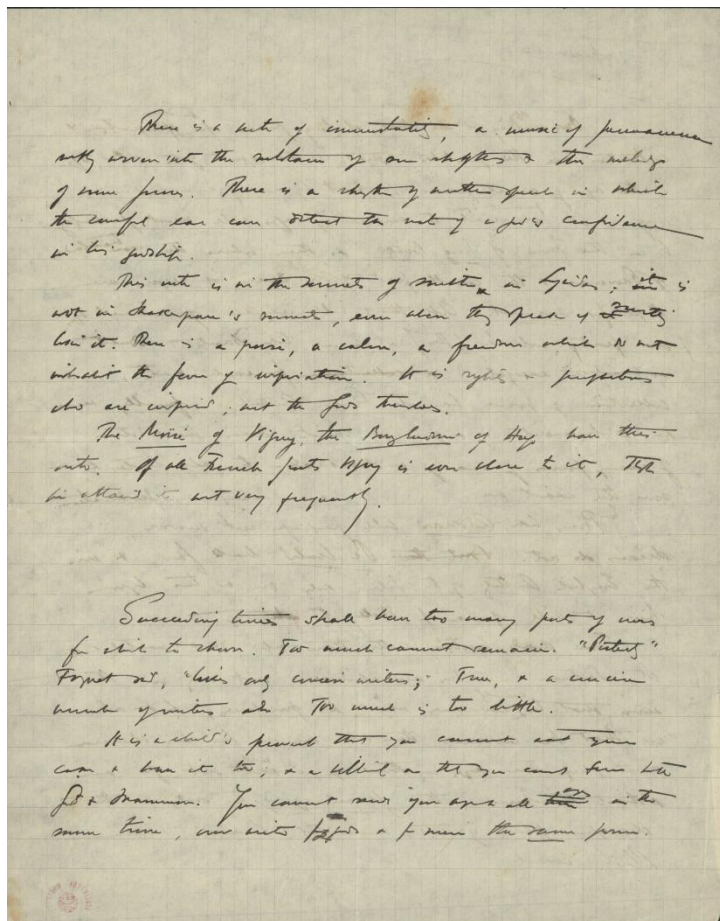


Impermanence

Our century /age\ is not that of long poems, for the sense of proportion and construction are the qualities that we have not got. Our age is the age of small poems, of short lyrics, of sonnets and of songs. Our survival /permanent legacy\ to succeeding ages will most probably be in the form of Song-Books, as those where the ~~etc~~ troubadours of Provence and the courtly poets of King Denis' ~~of~~ reign /Portugal\ are kept for |survival|. All that will remain of several ages of our poetry will be (the great names like Dante or Milton ~~not referred~~ excepted) a collection, for each nation, a collection of poems like the Greek Anthology, finally more an embodiment of a general spirit than the addition of many poems of many individuals - to all intents, save the exact one {...}, an anonymous publication.

Even poems like Adonais will perhaps not survive, because dreams do not. ~~Because the~~ Prometheus Unbound shall fade, and in the English Anthology of the future only one or two lyrics from it will speak of Shelley to eternity.

Time deals hastily with those who deal hastily with it. Saturn eats his own children, not only in the sense that he himself consumes what he produces, but also in that he consumes those who are so far his children as to keep their eyes on their age and who ~~write~~ work not for an abstract timelessness, the |Jovian age| of the soul, or the changeless place of that immortal Beauty whom Plato loved.



There is a note of immortality, a music of permanence subtly woven into the substance of some rhythms and the melody of some poems. There is a rhythm of another speech in which the careful ear can detect the note of a god's confidence in his godship.

This note is in the sonnets of Milton, in Lycidas; ~~no~~ it is not in Shakespeare's Sonnets, even when they speak of ~~it~~ something like it. There is a poise, a calm, a freedom which do not inhabit the fever of inspiration. It is sibyls and prophetesses who are inspired; not the Gods themselves.

The Moïse of Vigny, the Booz Endormi of Hugo have this note. Of all French poets Vigny is ever close to it, though he attained it not very frequently.

Succeeding times shall have too many poets of ours from which to choose. Too much cannot remain. "Posterity", Faguet said, "likes only concise writers;" true, and a concise number of writers also. Too much is too little.

It is a child's proverb that you cannot eat your cake and have it too; and a biblical one that you cannot serve both God and Mammon. You cannot serve your age and all ~~times~~ ages in the same time, nor write for gods and for men the same poem.

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