

Fernando Pessoa

For Hamlet is, in a different way than was once thought,

For Hamlet is, in a different way than was once thought, the essential figurement of his creator. He is a man too great for himself. Such was Shakespeare, such was Leonardo da Vinci. These men had too much soul for accomplishment. It is not the tragedy of inexpression, but the larger tragedy of too much capacity for expression and too much to express even for that capacity. No man reveals himself because he cannot; but men like Shakespeare and Leonardo do not reveal themselves because they can. They are prefigurements of some greater thing than man and are frustrate on the frontier. They are failures, not because they could have done better, but because they have done better. They have surpassed themselves and lost.

The lesser geniuses are haunted by their genius, and they are mediums who must be imperfect; but these are perfect mediums (. . .).

To write good prose a man must be a poet because a man must be a poet to write well at all.

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: 201.