

Fernando Pessoa

### **This value of the element of foreignness,**

This value of the element of foreignness, so clear in the provincial case of Burns, is evident on higher levels. Much of the glory of Homer, deserved as it is, is due to people who cannot read Greek. His prestige is in part that of a God, because like a God he is both great and half-known. "How dull Milton is!" said an enthusiast once to me. "How different from Homer and Virgil!" I exclaimed. And he agreed at once. Yet Milton is no less dull than Homer — except as in so far as we are inevitably keener critics of the more difficult English tensyllable verse than of the easier and more distant Greek hexameter — and he is certainly less dull than Virgil, the monotony of whose verbal care is unalloyed by thought, such as the theology of Milton, which, even where it is dull, is nevertheless metaphysics. The mental vacuity of the great epic poets is sometimes epic in itself.

Some, indeed, escape into lusciousness and pageant, like Spencer, whose "Faerie Queene", however, no one ever read.

(Wilde's "A gentleman never looks out of the window" is not very funny, but it is quite useful as a definition of a gentleman).

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: 215.