

Fernando Pessoa

The basis of acting is misrepresentation.

The basis of acting is misrepresentation. The art of the actor consists in employing the author's drama in showing his acting ability upon it. The piece is like a bar where on the actor shows his gymnastic abilities. He is only limited by the necessary conditions of a bar: he can do only a limited number of things with it, but those he can do in a thousand individual ways.

Acting, again, has all the attraction of forgery. We all love a forger. It is a very human and a quite instinctive sentiment. We all adore trickery and counterfeit. Acting unites and intensifies, through the material and vital character of its manifestations, all the low instincts of the artistic instinct — the riddle-instinct, the trapeze-instinct, the prostitute-instinct. It is popular and appreciated for these reasons, or, rather, for this reason.

The artist's thirst for glory is made flesh in the actor's thirst for applause. All appearance before people is low. All assemblies are crowds, and if not sweaty in body, at least sweaty in emotions.

All coarse minds adore speech. To be wordy is itself vulgar. The only thing that renders wordiness interesting is profanity and obscenity, for these things are "in character" therewith. Wordiness without dirty words and coarse phrases is feminine and therefore vulgar.

9-3-1914

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: 114.