

Fernando Pessoa

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The overwhelming production of literature will make selection equally overwhelming, by reaction. The real abundant production of wellwritten books will make many old books seem less good than when they stood up against a background of nothing. The absolute concept of values will thus be forced to replace the relative concept.

Painting will sink. Photography has deprived it of many of its attractions. Futility of silliness has deprived it of almost all the rest. What was left has been spoiled by American collectors. A great painting means a thing which a rich American wants to buy because other people would like to buy it if they could. Thus paintings are set on a parallel, not with poems or novels, but with the first editions of certain poems and novels. The museum becomes a thing parallel, not to the library, but to the bibliophile's library. The appreciation of painting becomes, not a parallel to the appreciation of literature, but to the appreciation of editions. Art criticism falls gradually into the hands of dealers in antiques.

Architecture becomes a minor aspect of civil engineering.

Only music and literature remain.

Literature is the intellectual way of dispensing [well? with?] all the other arts. A poem, which is a musical picture of (in) ideas, makes us free, through the understanding of it, to see what we want and to hear what we want. All statues and paintings, all songs and symphonies, are tyrannous in comparison with this. In a poem, we must understand what the poet wants, but we may feel what we like.

A walk through a museum becomes, not a contribution to culture, but a stimulus to envy, like looking from our own tired feet on a rich man's automobile.

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: 224.