

## Fragments of the Future: Pessoa's *Orpheu* and the *Athenaeum*

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ABSTRACT: Fernando Pessoa understood literary work as a project always to be realized, as a fragment of a pursued but never achieved totality. His publications in the journal *Orpheu*, together with his numerous earlier editorial projects, reveal a particular understanding of the fragment that can be applied to his work as a whole. It links to the concept of the fragment as developed by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, particularly in the versions published in the *Athenaeum*, the founding journal of German romanticism, which Pessoa knew through a French edition of Novalis's fragments. This essay analyzes commonalities and differences in the concept of the fragment in these works, distinguishing Pessoa's by showing how the fragment in his writing is not an aesthetic program but the result of a failure.

KEYWORDS: Fernando Pessoa, *Orpheu*, German Romanticism, Fragment, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, *Athenaeum*.

RESUMO: Fernando Pessoa entendeu a obra literária como projeto sempre por realizar, enquanto fragmento de uma totalidade almejada mas nunca alcançada. As publicações de Fernando Pessoa na revista *Orpheu*, assim como os inúmeros projetos editoriais que as precedem, revelam um entendimento particular do fragmento, que pode ser aplicado à obra pessoana enquanto todo. Este entendimento relaciona-se com o conceito de fragmento desenvolvido por Friedrich Schlegel e Novalis, particularmente nas versões publicadas no *Athenaeum*, a revista fundadora do Romantismo Alemão, que Pessoa conhecia através de uma edição francesa dos fragmentos de Novalis. Este ensaio procura analisar traços comuns e diferenças do conceito de fragmento nestas obras, distinguindo a conceção pessoana através da demonstração de que o fragmento em Pessoa não é um programa estético mas o resultado de uma falha.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Fernando Pessoa, *Orpheu*, Romantismo Alemão, Fragmento, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, *Athenaeum*.

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# A t h e n a e u m.

— ~~WAS~~ ~~OF~~ ~~THE~~ ~~CLASSICAL~~  
Eine Zeitschrift

von

August Wilhelm Schlegel

und

Friedrich Schlegel.

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Ersten Bandes Erstes Stück.

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Berlin, 1798.

bey Friedrich Vieweg dem Älteren.

Figure 1. Cover page of the first volume of the *Athenaeum*, Berlin, 1798.  
Collection of the University of California.

It has become almost a habit among Pessoa's critics to regard him as an author of fragments, as a writer who was incapable of completing or finalizing a work. His incapacity has been associated with an aesthetic program that regards the fragment as a necessary end. This essay, however, analyzes a seldom-noticed link between the concept of the fragment as seen in the writings of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis in the *Athenaeum* and in Pessoa's work in the journal *Orpheu*. By analyzing the position and meaning of Pessoa's publications in *Orpheu* within the context of his work as a whole, we see that he shares with Schlegel and Novalis the idea of a temporal dynamic of the literary work, perceived in terms of a project that is always to be realized. Much like the German romantics, he recognizes the impossibility of achieving a totality of meaning. Yet, unlike them, he doesn't conceive of the fragment as an aesthetic program, designed to achieve a purpose, but as the result of a failure or as the expression of an unfortunate lack of correspondence between an ideal and its realization.

### **The *Athenaeum* and the Concept of the Fragment**

The *Athenaeum* was a literary journal published in Berlin between 1798 and 1800. Edited by the brothers August Wilhelm Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel, it is considered the founding publication of German romanticism, gathering contributions from the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and others of their generation. According to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, in their study *L'Absolu littéraire* [*The Literary Absolute*], they comprised the first avant-garde group in history, and the journal was the birthplace of modern literature (17).<sup>1</sup> To justify this characterization, they point out the writers' use of the fragment as a way to question a full access to truth or totality of meaning (57–80). The volumes of the *Athenaeum* are filled with various genres, not only fragments but also philosophical and critical essays, poems, dialogues, and reviews. I focus here on the gathered fragments, particularly the ones by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, and on the implied concept of the fragment.

The first number of the journal includes a well-known collection of fragments by Novalis, entitled *Blütenstaub* [*Grains of Pollen*]. The second presents a collection of anonymously published fragments, the majority later attributed to Friedrich Schlegel. Novalis's first fragment reads as follows: "Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte, und finden immer nur Dinge." ["We seek the absolute everywhere and only ever find things"] (*Fragmente und Studien* 5; *Philosophical Writings* 23).<sup>2</sup> Immediately we are aware of the philosophical background of the romantics' aesthetic program.

When seeking for the absolute, our only possible access is through individual elements that bear a relation to a whole that we cannot fully reach. This is a decisive element of the romantics' ideas about the fragment and fragmentary writing. The fragment under study here is very close to an aphorism: a brief individual piece showing a certain unity and expressing a general truth without being exhaustive about the subject (Susini-Anastopoulos, 14–22). The fragment thus questions the possibility of access to a totality of meaning. It also has an essayistic character that demands further development and often treats a variety of objects simultaneously.

According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (61), the *Athenaeum* did not offer an exact definition of the fragment, probably because such a boundary would contradict the principles of the undertaking. Therefore, to comprehend the concept, we must analyze the practice of writing in fragments. Nevertheless, different images are linked to the idea. One is Novalis's "literary seedings," which he conceived in the context of his considerations on the art of writing books yet to be invented:

Die Kunst Bücher zu schreiben ist noch nicht erfunden. Sie ist aber auf dem Punkt erfunden zu werden. Fragmente dieser Art sind literarische Sämereien. Es mag freilich manches taube Körnchen darunter sein – indes wenn nur einiges aufgeht. [The art of writing books has not yet been invented. But it is on the point of being invented. Fragments of this kind are literary seedings. Many among them may indeed be sterile—still if only some grow.] (*Fragmente und Studien* 31; *Philosophical Writings* 42)

"Literary seedings" implies that writing in fragments has the aim of revealing, as Novalis puts it, "das Unbedingte"—the absolute or the unconditional (*Fragmente und Studien* 5). Contrary to a postmodern aesthetic of the fragment, which in some cases denies any relation to a whole, a truth, or a totality of meaning, the fragment here is a tool, a way of achieving at least a partial sense of this whole.

In his monograph *La genèse du romantisme allemand*, Roger Ayrault points out this key component of the romantics' notion of fragment, which "se détache de l'incessante activité de l'esprit comme de l'absolu et, isolé, demeure fidèle à son origine" (136) [comes out of the unceasing spiritual activity, as out of the absolute and, isolated, remains faithful to its origin]. This idea is associated with a fragment by Friedrich Schlegel. He comes close to creating a definition of the fragment but writes in prescriptive terms, stating how it should or must be and using an image; this time the famous metaphor of the hedgehog: "Ein Fragment muss gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert

und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel” [“A fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog”] (“*Athenaeums*”—*Fragmente* 99; Friedrich Schlegel’s “*Lucinde*” 189, trans. amended). The fragment is seen here as isolated from the surrounding world and in itself complete. The image of a hedgehog, however, indicates that the fragment has a presence within the framework of its surroundings, bearing, in terms of an individual and autonomous work, a relation to the whole. It is therefore a complete work, which relates to an absolute, total work, bearing the full meaning, yet to be conceived but never to be fully apprehended.<sup>3</sup>

Another fragment by Schlegel links the fragment with a *project*, defined here as a fragment of or from the future. The German concept “*Fragmente aus der Zukunft*” integrates both meanings. According to this notion, projects have, as fragments, a progressive dimension:

Ein Projekt ist der subjektive Keim eines werdenden Objekts. Ein vollkommenes Projekt müsste zugleich ganz subjektiv, und ganz objektiv, ein unteilbares und lebendiges Individuum sein. [...] Der Sinn für Projekte, die man *Fragmente aus der Zukunft* nennen könnte, ist von dem Sinn für *Fragmente aus der Vergangenheit* nur durch die Richtung verschieden, die bei ihm progressiv, bei jenem aber regressiv ist. Das Wesentliche ist die Fähigkeit, Gegenstände unmittelbar zugleich zu idealisieren, und zu realisieren, zu ergänzen, und teilweise in sich auszuführen. Da nun transzendental eben das ist, was auf die Verbindung oder Trennung des Idealen und des Realen Bezug hat; so könnte man wohl sagen, der Sinn für *Fragmente* und *Projekte* sei der transzendente Bestandteil des historischen Geistes. [A project is the subjective germ of a developing object. A perfect project should be at once completely subjective and completely objective, should be an indivisible and living individual. [...] The sense for projects – which one might call fragments of the future – is distinguishable from the feeling for fragments of the past only by its direction: progressive in the former, regressive in the latter. What is essential is to be able to idealize and realize objects immediately and simultaneously: to complete them and in part carry them out within oneself. Since transzendental is precisely whatever relates to the joining or separating of the ideal and the real, one might very well say that the sense for fragments and projects is the transcendental element of the historical spirit. [“*Athenaeums*”—*Fragmente* 78; Friedrich Schlegel’s “*Lucinde*” 164, trans. amended]

Projects are fragments of the future, as they relate to something that should take place in the future, and also fragments from the future, as they originate in an anticipated meaning of future achievements. Described in dialectical terms, a project is seen as an “indivisible and living individual” (such as the fragment understood as a “hedgehog”) and “at once completely subjective and completely objective”; it is therefore a subjective creation, including also an objective element, as it refers to a specific object. Through projects, one has the ability to idealize and realize things simultaneously, as projects are not seen as empty ideas or mere unfulfilled projections but bear in themselves a certain substance by connecting the ideal and the real. In this connection, Schlegel conceives of the “transcendental element of the historical spirit,” described in Hegelian terms.

### **Pessoa as Reader of Schlegel and Novalis**

Before discussing how these ideas relate to Pessoa’s work, it is important to point out to what extent Pessoa knew them, and what kind of access he could have had to the fragments of *Athenaeum* and especially to the works by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. Nevertheless, I will point out further on that Pessoa’s ideas regarding the fragment can be traced back to some of the notions underlying the fragments published in the *Athenaeum*, regardless of his factual knowledge of them.

We cannot be sure how well Pessoa knew the work of Schlegel, but we know he was an attentive reader of Novalis’s fragments, including the ones published in the *Athenaeum*. A French edition of a collection of these fragments, together with the prose work “Die Lehrlinge zu Sais” [“The Novices of Sais”], edited and translated by Maurice Maeterlinck and published in 1914, is preserved in Pessoa’s private library, profusely underlined and annotated (CFP 8-388).<sup>4</sup> His library also includes a monograph on Novalis by the French critic Henri Lichtenberger, in an edition dated 1912 (CFP 9-45). This is an extensive study of Novalis’s work, including biographical information, chapters on his philosophical and religious doctrine, and writings on his poetry and poetics. Some passages are underlined, particularly those in chapters concerning his philosophical and religious ideas. One underlined passage concerns the Gospels, quoting Novalis’s statement that they were only “l’ébauche d’Evangiles futurs et supérieurs” (170) [drafts of future and superior Gospels]. This idea clearly relates to the image of fragments as “literary seedings,” with apparently established works regarded here as unfinished fragments and possible sources for future developments.

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nité n'est pas achevée, aux yeux de Novalis et de ses amis romantiques : elle est « en voie de croissance ». Les Evangiles sont « l'ébauche d'Evangiles futurs et supérieurs ». Tout vrai livre est une Bible s'il est inspiré par l'esprit de sainteté. L'ambition de Novalis, lorsqu'il jette sur le papier ses

Figure 2. Underlined passage in *Novalis*, by Henri Lichtenberger, Paris, 1912. CFP 8-169, p. 170.

Another extensive monograph preserved in the library, John George Robertson's *The Literature of Germany* (1913), travels through every period of German literature, including romanticism (CFP 8-470). Pessoa underlined some passages related to historical and geographical facts and to judgments of the work of various authors. Through this kind of reading, he reflected on the meaning and importance of German romanticism, as he does in a passage attributed to the fictional author António Mora, referring to the Schlegel brothers and Novalis:

Com o romantismo alemão, propriamente dito, o dos Schlegel, de Tieck e de Novalis, entra com a literatura germânica uma decadência, referindo-nos, por comparação, à precedente literatura de Schiller e de Goethe, se bem que o primeiro pecasse na sua utilização do que admirava no paganismo. (*O Regresso dos Deuses* 145) [With German romanticism, properly speaking, that of Schegel, Tieck, and Novalis, a certain decadence comes to define German literature, if we refer, by comparison, to the precedent literature of Schiller and Goethe, although the first one sinned in his use of what he admired in paganism.]

Considering German romanticism as a whole, and specifically mentioning the Schlegel brothers, Ludwig Tieck and Novalis, Pessoa sees it as a period of decadence in German literature, in comparison to the previous one, represented by Schiller and Goethe.<sup>5</sup> This reaction should be considered within the context of his more general censure of romanticism, as opposed to classicism, a recurrent motif in Pessoa's aesthetic writings. This censure has to do mainly with

what he considers to be the romantics' inability to properly construct literary work.<sup>6</sup> Pessoa often mentions the metaphor of the Aristotelian tradition of the poem as an animal, an image for the literary work as an organized whole, the different parts forming an organic totality. Some of these references mention romanticism as the period in which the failure of this aim was particularly evident. In a discussion of the principles of sensationism, his proposal for a new aesthetic movement, Pessoa writes, in a letter to a unidentified English publisher: "I call these three principles 1) that of Sensation, 2) that of Suggestion, 3) that of Construction. This last, the great principle of the Greeks—whose great philosopher did indeed hold the poem to be "an animal"—has had very careless handling at modern hands. Romanticism has indisciplined the capacity of constructing which, at least, low classicism had. Shakespeare, with his fatal incapacity to visualise organised wholes, has been a fatal influence in this respect." (*Correspondência* 235).

The evidence left in the Maeterlinck edition of Novalis's writings shows that Pessoa was particularly interested in the fragments by the young German poet. In fact, the only section of the volume underlined and annotated is the one gathering the fragments, and a very significant number of them are underlined. Pessoa underlined and annotated several concerning the philosophy of nature and the senses, aesthetics, literature, and Greek mythology. Novalis considers poetry to be an art form capable of integrating everything, and Pessoa's interest in Novalis's idea of poetry is made clear by several underlined passages. They include "il est très compréhensible que tout finisse par devenir poésie" (180) and "la poésie est le réel absolu" ([poetry is the absolute real], followed by Pessoa's annotation "Nota Bene" [Note Well], 185). This interest in the possibilities of poetry is of extreme importance to Pessoa's work, which aims to integrate everything in his literary creation and treats literature as the major and absolute work.<sup>7</sup> Another commonality between Pessoa and Novalis is their reflection on the subtle and vanishing limits between dream and reality, a recurring topic of *The Book of Disquiet* and throughout all of their poetical works. In the Maeterlinck edition, Pessoa underlines the fragment by Novalis stating that we are close to waking up when we dream that we dream ("Nous sommes près du réveil quand nous rêvons que nous rêvons" [77]) and quotes it in the last sentence of his 1928 article on Portuguese provincialism, "O Provincianismo Português" (*Crítica* 371-73).



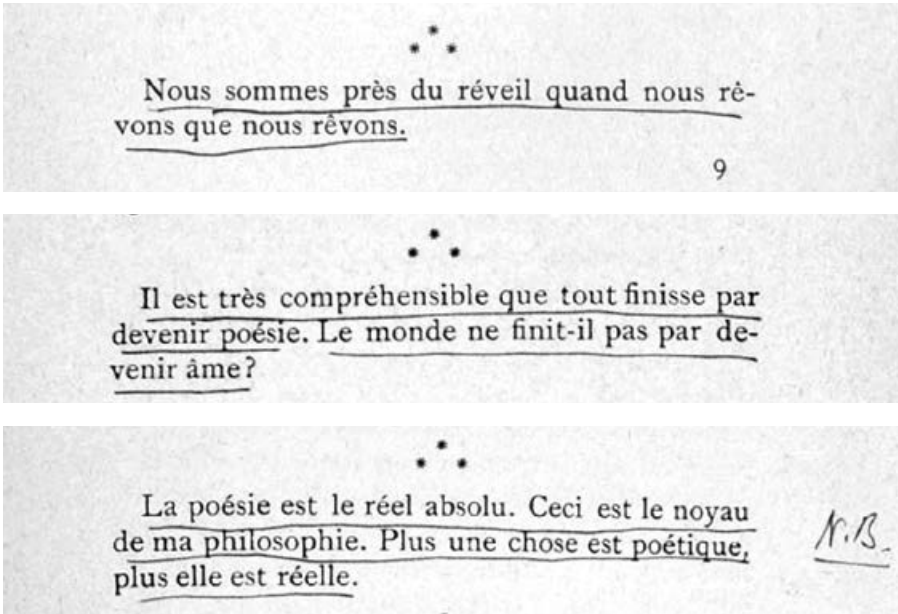


Figure 3. Fragments by Novalis, edited and translated by Maurice Maeterlinck, underlined by Fernando Pessoa. (*Les disciples à Sais et Les fragments*. Paris & Brussels: Paul Lacomblez, 1914; CFP 8-388, pp. 77, 180, 185).

Although explicit considerations on the question of the fragment in itself are not among the underlined passages, it is also clear that this question is not at the center of Novalis' considerations. As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (61) point out, it is through the reading of the fragments, concerning several different topics, and not by a theoretical explanation of its principles that we get a sense of the function and the central motives of the fragment in the *Athenaeum* and especially in the works by Schlegel and Novalis. I would propose that this is also the fundamental sense of the fragment which interests Pessoa, who barely uses the word or reflects explicitly upon the question of fragmentarity.

Further evidence of Pessoa's interest in Novalis' work include a list of poetical works, referring to the name "Novalis" (kept in his Archive at the Portuguese National Library with the signature BNP 48-114<sup>1</sup>) and an editorial project (BNP 12<sup>1</sup>-79<sup>1</sup>; [http://www.pessoadigital.pt/pt/doc/BNP\\_E3\\_12-1-79r](http://www.pessoadigital.pt/pt/doc/BNP_E3_12-1-79r), where Pessoa considers the publication of a Portuguese translation of "The Novices of Sais" and a collection of the fragments, probably taking as source the edition by Maeterlinck, as the similarity of the title and references suggests. The list of works can be

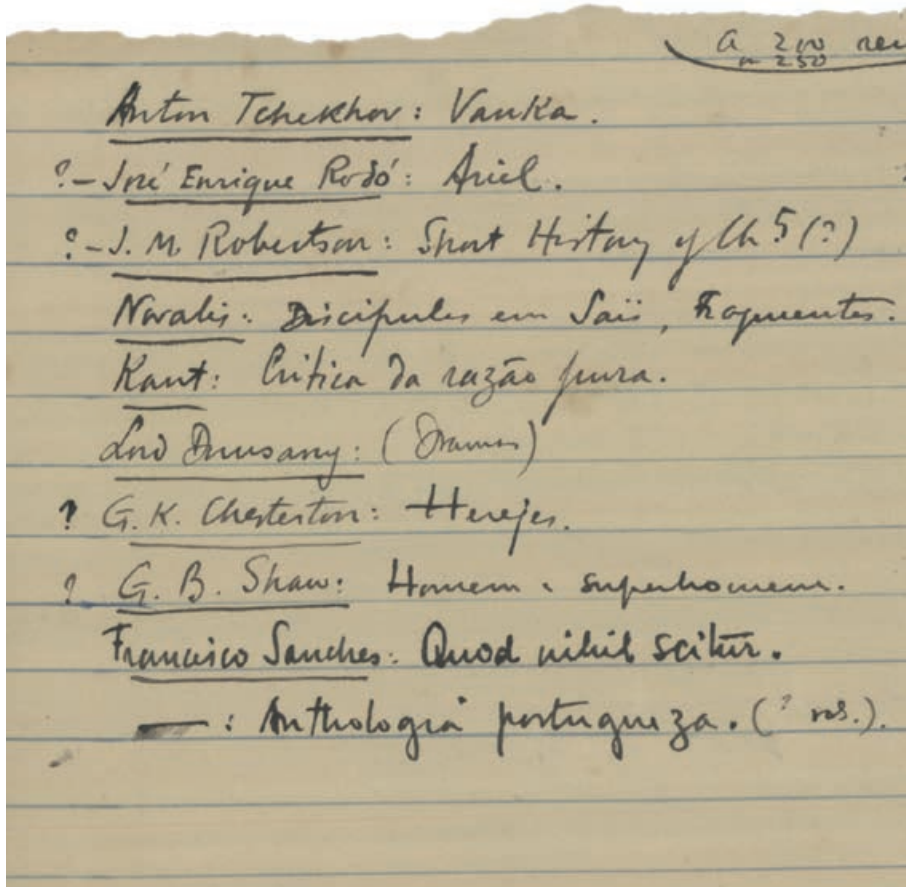


Figure 4. Pessoa's project of a Portuguese translation of Novalis, elaborated around 1918. BNP 121-79r; [http://www.pessoadigital.pt/pt/doc/BNP\\_E3\\_12-1-79r](http://www.pessoadigital.pt/pt/doc/BNP_E3_12-1-79r).

dated around 1907 or 1908, and the editorial project was elaborated around 1918, as suggested, in both cases, by the references to titles of works Pessoa was reading or working on in these periods.

### Pessoa's *Orpheu* as Fragment and Project

There is evidence that Pessoa, even before his 1915 publications in *Orpheu*, was interested in Novalis's fragments and in German romanticism in general, although Schlegel and Novalis are not usually cited by critics as among the main references of his work. Certainly, Pessoa, Novalis, and Schlegel share some ideas regarding the position of the fragment within their literary work, although

Pessoa does not refer to fragments explicitly or make them a central theoretical topic. Nonetheless, several critics regard him as an author of fragments, both in a material and hermeneutic sense, and associate them with his aesthetic program, which would understand the fragment as a necessary end or as the expression of the impossibility of reaching and expressing a totality (e.g. Santos, Pizarro, and Medeiros). Thus, it remains surprising that Pessoa persistently supports an organic ideal of the literary work, frequently citing the Aristotelian metaphor of the poem as an animal in which the different parts are gathered in an organic whole. There is a notable contrast between this idea of an organic whole and the fragmentary reality of his texts, especially in his archival documents, a disparity that critics have seen as a clash between two different dimensions.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, when he was preparing a text for publication, and we know how careful and selective he was in what concerns the publication of his work, he would remove from the text any material signs of incompleteness. Yet while Pessoa's works in *Orpheu* bear no material signs of fragmentarity, they project the sense of an undefined potential totality that goes beyond what has been materialized. Every work by Pessoa emits the idea of a whole that exceeds the written texts, and this is something he shares with the German romantics.

This kind of fragmentarity, which is neither material nor part of a program, is particularly visible in Pessoa's editorial planning, as expressed in notes, commentaries, correspondence, and lists of potential collections of his work. These lists have not only an editorial but also a systemic function, presenting plans of the different parts of the work and establishing relations between them (see Sepúlveda and Uribe). While they are often more elaborate than the actual publications, they give relational meaning to otherwise loose texts. For instance, if we look at the *Orpheu* works in the context of the editorial lists and projects surrounding their publication, we can see that Pessoa left out several of the original elements he had planned to include. What he did choose to publish also gives new meaning to later plans and projects. Before the *Orpheu* pieces came out, he had been considering the publication of a journal to be called *Europa*. The project is mentioned in the correspondence between Pessoa and the poet Mário de Sá-Carneiro, and related plans and notes appear in Pessoa's Archive (*Sensacionismo* 29–37). One of the ideas linked to *Europa* and to texts excluded from *Orpheu* is the publication of a collection of works that would give expression to a new literary and artistic movement he called *intersectionism*, together with a manifesto explaining its principles. He projected this idea in one of his editorial plans for

17/88

EUROPA.

Revista órgão do Interseccionismo.

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No. 1.

O Interseccionismo - Ultimatum da escola literaria definitiva..... - F. Pessoa.

Além-Deus (Poemas interseccionistas)..... - F. Pessoa.

Ressurreição (novela interseccionista)..... - M. de Sá-Carneiro.

Paysagem de alma (Poema interseccionista)..... -A.P.Guisado.

Loucura da Floresta (Pagina in interseccionista)..... - Côrtes Rodrigues.

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Suplemento ao Nº 1.

L'Intersectionisme - F. Pessoa.

Poèmes intersectionnistes - F. Pessoa,  
M. de Sá-Carneiro,  
Alex. Search.

Comme le ferait... - F. Pessoa.

Intersectionism. - F. Pessoa.

Intersectionnist Poems - F. Pessoa,  
Alex. Search.

As it would have been done by..... - F. Pessoa.

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No. 2.

Sobre o Interseccionismo (A sua historia, os seus criticos) - F. Pessoa.

Eu sem Mim (poema interseccionista) -Coelho Pacheco.

EU-proprio o Outro -M. de Sá-Carneiro.  
-Carvalho Mourão.  
- Antonio Ferro.

Figure 5. Pessoa's editorial plan for *Europa* as an "organ of the Intersectionism," elaborated in 1914 or 1915. BNP 48G-32r; *Sensacionismo* 36-37.

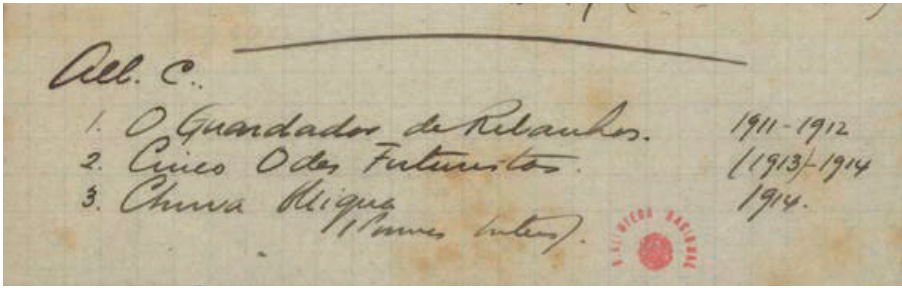


Figure 6. Project for publications in the name of Alberto Caeiro, established in 1914. BNP 48-27; [http://www.pessoadigital.pt/pt/doc/BNP\\_E3\\_48-27r](http://www.pessoadigital.pt/pt/doc/BNP_E3_48-27r).

the journal and described it in letters to his friend Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues, who was also a collaborator on *Orpheu* (*Correspondência* 126–27, 132, 140–41).

However, in a letter to Côrtes-Rodrigues, dated January 1915, Pessoa wrote that he had decided to abandon the idea of publishing a collection of works on intersectionism, together with the manifesto, calling the project a *blague* (*Correspondência* 140). That same year, in *Orpheu*, he published the poem “Chuva Oblíqua” (“Slanting Rain”), defining it in the journal as *intersectionist* but not including any further reference to this movement.

In 1914, as we know from several of Pessoa’s editorial projects and his correspondence (Sepúlveda, “*Orpheu em lugar de Caeiro*” 93–95), he had planned to publish a collection of poems by his heteronym Alberto Caeiro, a key figure in his poetry, considered by Pessoa to be the master of his whole poetic creation. One of these projects conceives the publication not only of “*O Guardador de Rebanhos*” (“The Keeper of Sheep”), the main collection of Caeiro’s poems, but also of “*Cinco Odes Futuristas*” (“Five Futurist Odes”) and “*Chuva Oblíqua*” (“Slanting Rain”), all attributed to Caeiro as author. In *Orpheu*, however, the futurist odes (under another heading) are attributed to the fictional poet Álvaro de Campos and “*Chuva Oblíqua*” appears under the name of Fernando Pessoa. The first publication of Alberto Caeiro’s poems did not occur until 1925, in the journal *Athena*.

Although they are usually seen as representative of Pessoa’s work, the pieces in *Orpheu* neglect at least two crucial elements that were important in his planning. The first is the implementation of a new literary movement, which would require the publication of a programmatic text or at least a specific description. The second is the poetry of Caeiro. It is only in 1916 that he publishes a programmatic text, entitled “*O Movimento Sensacionista*” (“The Sensationist

87A-5

Orpheu  
órgão do Movimento Sensacionista

1. O Sensacionismo - F. Pessoa
2. Nota sobre "Orpheu" - nota da redacção - enviada  
 pelo Comité Redaccional.
- † (3. Esthetica R. Quart. Universari. -)
4. Tema (ou poemas) A M. A. Da's Camarin.
5. Scene A Ode - J. A. - upis.
6. Duas caricaturas - P. e X. e Y.
7. Anticipois - F. Pessoa.
8. Nota A deos sensacionistas em  
 saluam, et - (intelligit in  
 hunc sensum). (ante a p. 1?)
- = 9. [1: Manifesto - Almirante]
10. A Ca' p. e en ap. (m. l. t. s.)

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pag 1 = 1, 4, 5 (c)  
 2 = 5 (f), 2, 10, 6.  
 3 = 9.  
 4 = 7  
 5 = 8

Figure 7 Editorial plan for the third issue of *Orpheu*, elaborated in 1916 or 1917. BNP 87A-5; *Sensacionismo* 83.

Movement”), which presents *Orpheu* as the decisive “organ” of a new literary and artistic movement, now named sensationism (*Crítica* 127–32). An extensive plan for the third issue of *Orpheu*, never published, reiterates this declaration.

These examples demonstrate how Pessoa constantly shifted among conceptual and organizational possibilities. His editorial projects play a key role in projecting a totality that exceeds his actual writings and publications. From these projects, his correspondence, and his notes, we see that the published work remains part of a larger project, always unfinished. In *Orpheu* Pessoa publishes works that can only be adequately understood if related to aspects that remain to be later described, such as the position of Alberto Caeiro as the master of Pessoa and Campos, or the sense of a new literary movement they represent, only later defined as Sensationism. Texts such as his “Notas para a recordação do meu Mestre Caeiro” (“Notes for the Memory of my Master Caeiro”), published partially in 1931 (*Prosa* 89–139) and his letter to the critic Adolfo Casais Monteiro on the genesis of his heteronyms, written in January 1935 (*Cartas* 251–60), are further examples of systemic formulations that give already-published works a broader meaning.

That meaning is, however, never definitive, as Pessoa underlines in several descriptions of his published work. For instance, in “Tábua Bibliográfica” (“Bibliographic Board”), published in 1928, he states, “Nenhum destes textos é definitivo. Do ponto de vista estético, o autor prefere, pois, considerar estas obras como apenas aproximadamente existentes [None of these texts is definitive. From an aesthetic point of view the author prefers, therefore, to consider these works as only approximately existent]” (*Cartas* 74). In a biographical note written in 1935, a few months before his death, he considers his publications as a whole: “Há que rever tudo isso e talvez que repudiar muito [All this must be reviewed and there may be a lot which must be dismissed]” (*Sebastianismo* 143). Throughout his life, he constantly reviewed and corrected, changing titles and authorship, never accepting a definitive sense of and position for each work within a conceived whole.

### **Pessoa’s and Schlegel’s Fragments of the Future**

Pessoa rarely uses the word *fragment*. When he does, it is in terms of a regret, a complaint, or a lament at not being able to establish the organic whole that he sees desirable for any literary work. This is the case in a passage about *The Book of Disquiet* in a letter to Côrtes-Rodrigues, dated November 1914: “O meu estado de espírito obriga-me agora a trabalhar bastante, sem querer, no Livro do

Desassossego. Mas tudo fragmentos, fragmentos, fragmentos [My state of mind forces me now to work a lot, without wanting to, in *The Book of Disquiet*. But it's all fragments, fragments, fragments]" (*Correspondência* 132).

The Pessoa text that comes closer to a possible theory of the fragment is the article "O Homem de Porlock" ("The Man from Porlock"), published in the newspaper *Fradique* on February 15, 1934 (*Crítica* 490–92). In it he presents an interpretation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's description of composing the poem "Kubla Khan."<sup>9</sup> According to Coleridge, an unexpected visit from a man from Porlock disrupted his creativity, and the poem was never finished. Pessoa sees this as a description of the universal experience of poetic writing:

Tudo quanto verdadeiramente pensamos ou sentimos, tudo quanto verdadeiramente somos, sofre (quando o vamos exprimir, ainda que só para nós mesmos) a interrupção fatal daquele visitante que também somos, daquela pessoa externa que cada um de nós tem em si, mais real na vida do que nós próprios – a soma viva do que aprendemos, do que julgamos que somos, e do que desejamos ser. [All we truly think or feel, all we truly are, suffers (when we are about to express it, even if only to ourselves) the fatal interruption of that visitor who we also are, of that external person every one of us has inside him, more real in life than ourselves—the living sum of what we learn, what we think we are, and what we desire to be.] (*Crítica* 491–92)

This interruption of the visitor is seen as part of every act of expression, as the visitor is defined as "that external person every one of us has inside him". This visitor is also identified as projection and desire ("the living sum of what we learn, what we think we are, and what we desire to be"), as opposed to the reality of "all we truly are," before this "fatal interruption". That is why writing is always "impessoal" (impersonal). As Pessoa notes, "o que de todos nós, artistas grandes ou pequenos, verdadeiramente sobrevive,—são fragmentos do que não sabemos que seja; mas que seria, se houvesse sido, a mesma expressão da nossa alma [what from all of us, big or small artists, truly remains—are fragments of what we don't know; but which could be, if it had been, the real expression of our soul]" (492).

The article points out the necessarily impersonal and fragmentary dimension in every form of poetic creation. This is precisely the sense of the fragment present in Pessoa's publications and editorial projects: the undefined future of a meaning that may be gradually and partially unveiled but always remains to be fully achieved. Fragmentarity is, in this sense, not deliberate but the failure to



have full access to “the real expression of our soul.” As Pessoa concludes, “do que poderia ter sido, fica só o que é,—do poema, ou dos *opera omnia*, só o princípio e o fim de qualquer coisa perdida—*disjecta membra* que, como disse Carlyle, é o que fica de qualquer poeta, ou de qualquer homem [of what could have been, only what it is remains—of the poem, or the *opera omnia*, just the beginning and the end of any lost thing—*disjecta membra*, which, as Carlyle said, is what remains from any poet, or any man]” (492).

Unlike the romantics, Pessoa does not propose to understand the fragment as a literary genre used to achieve a certain access to reality, truth, or meaning. He sees it as an unfortunate, if necessary, step toward the ideal of an organic, unfragmented whole. That ideal can never exist, and so we find, for instance, in *The Book of Disquiet*, many thoughts on the impossibility of fully corresponding to the ideal, on the necessary imperfection of any work of art. As Pessoa states in the context of a discussion on the organic character of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, “Não há método de obter a Perfeição excepto ser Deus.... A única obra grande e perfeita é aquela que nunca se sonhe realizar” [“The only method for achieving Perfection is to be God.... The only great and perfect works are the ones we never dream of realizing”] (*Livro do Desasocego* 80; *The Book of Disquiet* 434).

Fragmentarity in Pessoa’s work is therefore not an aesthetic program with a specific purpose but the result of a failure, a lack of achievement. The poet traces this notion to the romantics, writing, “Achievement is death, because it is the end. The romantics are self-survivals, perpetual incarnations of their own selves.” (*Heróstrato* 153). Like Schlegel and Novalis, he understood the impossibility of fully achieving truth and a totality of meaning. This is the first element connecting any of these works, the second one being the acceptance of a necessary temporal dynamic of the literary work, understood as “seedings,” in the image of Novalis, or projects, in a sense partially shared by Pessoa and Schlegel. Analyzing the fragmentarity in Pessoa with reference to German romanticism, Carla Gago (232-234) points out how Pessoa shared with the romantics the idea of a totality in preparation and the acknowledgement of the impossibility of its achievement. Like Carla Gago, Irene Ramalho Santos and Paulo de Medeiros see a strong relation between the romantics and Pessoa’s work. Focusing on Pessoa’s heteronymic project as a whole, Santos notes that “the image of the hedgehog as *fragmentary* completeness in [Schlegel’s] Fragment 206 anticipates heteronymic Pessoa,” the image of the fragment being one of “a momentary bristling wholeness that precisely as such risks nothingness” (17). Medeiros focuses on the question in his study of

the fragments in *The Book of Disquiet*, in which “Pessoa/Soares dá-nos um texto aparentemente fechado em si e ‘completo,’ que poderia ser publicado como uma narrativa breve [Pessoa/Soares gives us a text apparently closed in itself and ‘complete,’ that could be published as a brief narrative].” Thus, the text demonstrates, in an exemplary manner, “aquilo que Schlegel denominou como um fragmento absoluto na imagem do ouriço-cacheiro” [what Schlegel referred to as an absolute fragment in the image of the hedgehog]” (88).

Both Santos and Medeiros remind us that at least some parts of Pessoa’s work appear to be in themselves closed and complete, bearing no signs of incompleteness within the text, in both a material and a hermeneutic sense. Nevertheless, these apparently complete pieces, such as some texts in *The Book of Disquiet* and in his heteronymic productions, particularly those published during his lifetime, can only be adequately understood if related to a greater whole. This sense of a greater whole, a totality of meaning, was persistently present in Pessoa’s mind, as he constantly considered how the different texts, as parts of a set of works, might relate to each other and how they gain their meaning only through this relation. As Medeiros recognizes, “o fragmento impõe-se também como fragmento, como texto em aberto que chama a si outros fragmentos, outros textos” [the fragment imposes itself also as fragment, as open text appealing to other fragments, other texts]” (89). Pessoa not only established these relations between different texts as parts of the work but also persistently projected a global sense of this work which would bear no signs of fragmentarity. This constant projection is particularly achieved through his descriptions of heteronymy, of his published works and the ones yet to be published, especially in the mentioned editorial projects. It is this projection of an organic totality that forces us to see Pessoa’s work at the same time as fragmentary and as dependent upon a designed unity. The quoted analyses above leave out the mentioned temporal dynamic of the work, expressed in a precise sense of the work as a project, as a common trait between Pessoa and the fragments of the German romantics. These analyses also leave out the absence of a deliberate aesthetic program based on the fragment, in the case of Pessoa, as the main difference separating them.

Schlegel conceived of projects as “Fragmente aus der Zukunft” (“*Athenaeums*”-*Fragmente* 78) [“fragments of or from the future”]; in Pessoa’s case these projects refer to complete works, of the future in the sense that they allude to future achievements and from the future as their substance depends upon these achievements. In Pessoa’s messianic projection of his work there is no room for the fragment as

a pursued entity, but the projected work is *fragmentary* in the sense that it still does not fully correspond, and never will, to the ideal of an organic totality.

Pessoa's editorial projects usually express a perfectly designed whole, never to be fully realized and remaining in this sense always fragmentary. Both these ideas of the project, in Schlegel and Pessoa, share a temporal dimension, projecting in the future an object still to be developed. Both see in their projects a full substance and reality (Schlegel: "an indivisible and living individual"), attributing to the work a progressive sense. They both establish a connection between a reality of the work and a metaphysical dimension. For Schlegel, this dimension is the "transcendental element of the historical spirit"; for Pessoa it is this perfectly designed whole, which due to the unfortunate condition of every writer, was never to be achieved.

#### NOTES

1. This *Atheneum* is not the English literary journal by the same name published in London between 1828 and 1921 and featuring works by writers such as T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf. Pessoa published his poem "Meantime" in the English journal in 1920 (<http://www.pessoadigital.pt>).

2. Where the source of a translation is not indicated, I am responsible for it.

3. According to Blanchot (526), the fragment of the German romantics bears in itself a meaning that goes beyond totality but does not exclude the idea of a totality of meaning. Blumenberg (256) points out a double function of the romantics' fragment: reference to a lost totality and the expectation of achieving an infinite and unlimited perfection. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (63) note how the separation and isolation of the fragment in this conception recovers a sense of completion, of being self-sufficient.

4. This signature refers to the catalogue of Pessoa's Personal Library, preserved and digitized by the *Casa Fernando Pessoa*, available for consultation and download in <http://bibliotecaparticular.casafernandopessoa.pt/>. I will refer to further volumes of this library using the respective signatures.

5. Critical literature on Pessoa and German literature focuses mainly on his readings of Goethe and Schiller (e.g., Fischer), leaving aside the importance of Schlegel and Novalis. (Exceptions are Santos, Gago, Medeiros, and Feijó.) Pessoa read German authors, including the romantics, mainly in French translations and via commentaries by French and British critics (Fisher, 55).

6. See Pessoa 166–67 and the considerations of Patrício 154–60.

7. See namely his considerations in the preface entitled *Aspects; Livro do Desasocego* 446–451.

8. This clash between the material fragmentarity of Pessoa's writings and an aesthetic idea of the work as an organic totality has been pointed out by, among others, Martins,

Gusmão, Eiras, Patrício, Sepúlveda, *Os livros de Fernando Pessoa*, and Feijó. Martins, Eiras, and Gusmão argue that there is a strong hermeneutical side to Pessoa's fragmentarity, even if it is not based on an explicit program. Feijó (150–54) sees in the absence of a program the evidence of a contingency of the fragmentarity in Pessoa's writings, contrary to the "aesthetic of the fragment" proposed by the German romantics, but also recognizes the poet's consciousness of a lack of achievement. Patrício (163–81) underlines his conscience of the impossibility of achieving a totality of meaning, by constantly adjourning the completion of the work.

9. On Pessoa's reading of Coleridge, especially concerning the poetic writing process, see Castro. On his dialogue with Keat's aesthetic concepts, see Monteiro, Feijó, and Castro.

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