

# Film Fragments

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**PESSOA, Fernando (2011). *Argumentos para Filmes*. Edição, introdução e tradução de Patrício Ferrari e Cláudia J. Fischer. Posfácio de Fernando Guerreiro. Lisboa: Ática.**

The publication in 2007 of a small book edited by Patrick Quillier with the title *Courts métrages* and attributed to Fernando Pessoa (Paris: Chandeigne), should have caused some commotion. In it Quillier brought to light four little fragments of film scripts written by Pessoa that should signal that the critical emphasis on Pessoa solely as a great wordsmith with a dislike for the visual arts could not be maintained. Joana Matos Frias, in her otherwise excellent entry on “Cinema” in the *Dicionário de Fernando Pessoa e do Modernismo Português* (Lisboa: Caminho, 2008), best reflects that attitude when she does not hesitate to say that, in spite of a few known texts where Pessoa, in his various guises, mentions cinema, “Pessoa nunca se interessou pelo cinema” (124). Granted, the texts published by Quillier are fragmentary and no one would say that they constitute a great intervention on cinema on the part of Pessoa. Still, the interest was not just a passing one and in the recently published *Argumentos para Filmes*, edited by Patrício Ferrari and Cláudia J. Fischer, one can see that, besides writing those brief fragmentary scripts, Pessoa also collected newspaper and magazine pieces on film, and that he sketched plans for his own film company a number of times. As such, *Argumentos para Filmes* provides a solid argument for a rethinking of Pessoa’s engagement with cinema and with the visual arts in general. In his edition Quillier had included a brief preface where he already highlights the importance of those script fragments in terms of the way they both problematize questions of identity in relation to social class and essay a form of cinema that, either by privileging confined and close spaces, or rapidly moving from scene to scene, could be said to have elements of surrealism. In their own introduction to *Argumentos para Filmes* Ferrari and Fischer also call attention to the importance of space in those fragments and explain how they have searched Pessoa’s archives so as to include in this edition all the materials that could be found relating specifically to cinema. The book is an important contribution to anyone engaged with Pessoa and Modernism studies not only by making those texts easily accessible but also by including detailed notations about them and a number of *fac-simile* reproductions that, their small size notwithstanding, are very welcome.

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Fernando Guerreiro's essay that comes at the end of the book is also especially welcome as a first move to interpret the fragments in their historical context and theoretical interest. The tension between holding on to the former view of Pessoa as uninterested in cinema and the necessary revision occasioned by the publication of these materials is still visible in his essay. And one could argue that at least half of the essay is still devoted to refer to the beginning of cinema in Portugal and the relationship (or lack of it) that Portuguese intellectuals held to it, with António Ferro being the one most vocal on the qualities of the new art form. Yet, Guerreiro's contribution is a very clear and finely balanced essay that both provides the necessary contextualization and, without falling into a misplaced eulogy of Pessoa, subtly recalls some key aspects the fragments and other texts by Pessoa relating to cinema that ask for a problematization in theoretical terms, be it in reference to the concept of the aura or the simulacrum. Like other volumes previously published in this new series of Ática's *Obras de Fernando Pessoa*, this is a significant contribution to Pessoa studies that is also very appealing from a graphic perspective, emulating the look of the old publications but having a very clear and legible print. Today's technology, enabling the inclusion of high quality scanned images of the originals certainly contributes to the value of the book as a whole, but ultimately it is the careful and detailed research of the editors in the archives, whether personal ones or at the Casa Pessoa and at the Biblioteca Nacional, that make it possible for a broad public to have easy access to these documents. This book brings to the fore important questions concerning Pessoa's aesthetics and will be certainly very welcome by scholars and students alike.