

**Education and the Boarding School Novel:  
Examining the Work of José Régio**

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MEMORIÆ & CLARISSIMI

ATQVE & CARISSIMI

PATRIS & OPTIMI

SACRVM

Between childhood, boyhood,  
adolescence  
& manhood (maturity) there  
should be sharp lines drawn w/  
Tests, deaths, feats, rites  
stories, songs, & judgements

James (Jim) Morrison (1988)  
*Wilderness*, London: Penguin, 22

## Abstract

This thesis is an inquiry located at the crossroads of philosophy, education and literature. Its aim is to illustrate the possible contribution of the last of these domains of study to the linking of the other two, demonstrating that a philosophical perspective enriches an educational reading of literary works.

It starts by affirming the potential benefits of studying novels in educational research. Particular reference is made to the promise of school novel studies, when narratives of this subgenre convey autobiographical school experiences. There follows a survey of the various types of novel centred on adolescence: the Youth novel, the *Bildungsroman*, the *Künstlerroman*, the *Internatsgeschichte*, and Non-School and De-School novels.

Foucault's enquiry into the nature of 'special places' is an important contribution to the philosophical exploration of boarding schools as ideological constructs and historic institutions; a critical discussion of Foucault's assessment of qualitative spatialities is engaged, to challenge some of the examples he chose and to make new terminological proposals, whilst highlighting the *sort of power relations* that are at the core of these spatialities and reinforcing the centrality of the power question found in the thinking of Nietzsche. The analysis of Foucault's virtual journey through special places is complemented by contributions from Leach's structuralist anthropology and Goffman's sociology.

An overview of the presence of the boarding school in literature allows for a depiction of the cultural ambience of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century novel and the masculinist

ideology then prevailing, and since these novels were both a product of their time and a reaction against it, it is made reference to why and how some criticisms of the institution were voiced, in many cases due to personal experiences of the authors.

The core argument is based on the work of Portuguese writer José Régio (1901-1969). He was a teacher-writer and, arguably, among the more philosophical of Portuguese school novel authors. Inspired by Dostoyevsky and Gide, he was to sustain a lifelong dispute with Nietzsche's oeuvre that was centred on metaphysical and cultural problems. Since both writers were educators, this debate had pedagogical implications. Nietzsche was a critic of mass education, which had lost purpose and meaning, in line with Xenophon's criticism of late classical Greek education; to him the real formation of a personality involved the *undoing* of education in order to reconnect with the most creative and authentic grounds of one's personality. Likewise, Régio, in his novel *A Drop of Blood* (1945), shows interest in the formation of the artist as the special object of education – the 'marked man' –, whose sensitivity distances him irremediably from the crowd. He adopted the radical individualism of Nietzsche not in order to be 'for' or 'against' this or that schooling model but to exemplify the perpetual clash, inherent in mankind, between the individual and the group, the artist and the non-artistic person, the young and the adult, the son and the father and the self and the world.

The thesis also discusses a number of aspects of Régio's oeuvre and his times. At the end, a canon of the *Bildungsromane* and the *Schulromane* is included.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Peter Roberts and Dr Kathleen Quinlivan, for their fundamental backing and support. Without them I would not have arrived at the conclusion of this research project.

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I wish to extend my appreciation to others outside the Academy, especially to my Mother, who also shared with me in the past some of her direct knowledge of the *presença* generation and implanted in my soul a veneration for Régio and for Portuguese literature; to the helpful assistance of José C. Santos; to Judge and writer Enéas Atanázio, from Brazil;

and to those, and they were many, who have helped me to arrive at this outcome. To all of them I want to express my sincere gratitude.

## Preface

My motivation to undertake this research grew out of a long-standing admiration for José Régio, which I inherited from my Father who was one of his companions in the *presença* venture, and from my mother as well, who was an enthusiastic reader and commenter of Régio's work. Through this work I was willing to pay homage to that great writer and to my adored parents at the same time.

I recall, during my youthful years, to laid down many times on a *chaise long* that still stands prominently in my parent's house dining room, next to a bookstand, and to be intrigued, day after day, year after year, by those two mysterious spines of Régio's *The Old House* editions, one reading *A Drop of Blood* (vol. 1) and the other *The Ordinary Monstrosities* (vol. 4). I was intrigued by those titles, their meanings and what they concealed. But it was not until adulthood that I was to make my way to the powerful texts themselves, hidden behind those magical spines that stood out from all the books in those shelves.

Then I heard many times the narrative of my mother's personal acquaintance with Régio, the way she was introduced to him by my Father in that same dining room in 1961, when the Poet was awarded the *Diário de Notícias*' prize for 'the most outstanding Portuguese writer'. My Father was a member of the jury that so rightly distinguished him and acted as his host in Lisbon. Both were coming from the public session where Régio had received the cheque from the hands of Augusto de Castro, Director of the newspaper, and Régio was already eager to leave the Portuguese capital, when my Father insisted in taking him to meet his wife. And my mother forever kept the vision of that man, his short height, his strong Portuguese Northern accent and his fiery eyes. She knew already the many stories my Father had told her about those distant and magical years in Coimbra back in



1931-33, where he had been studying the pedagogical subjects required to become a high school teacher, while at the same time he was then directing the famous Oporto based *A Águia* magazine (in which Pessoa had published his maid article); Régio, six years his elder, was already directing *presença* since 1927 and, having finished his own pedagogical subjects, was by then constantly travelling between his beloved Coimbra, where so many of his companions and friends remained, and Portalegre, where he was inaugurating his long teaching career of over 30 years. Around 1961 my Father was especially close to the other *presença* Director, Gaspar Simões, another member of the Coimbra group and the most prominent of Régio's friends, whom he was to invite to become my godfather when I was to be born.

So my personal story became, right from my birth, strongly related to that mythical Coimbra group and to the magazine *presença* they founded: by inviting Simões to godfathering his last son, my Father was surely willing to reconnect symbolically with his student years of three decades before.

As for the boarding school settings of *A Drop of Blood*, it is important to notice that, with the single exception of a guided tour around Christ College in Christchurch before the quakes, I had never in my all life entered any boarding school at all, let alone boarded. My goal was to understand the impact of the boarding experience upon Régio's complex personality, and to take his own autofictional testimony as a broad questioning of schooling; and finally to research about boyhood issues, in order to better come to terms with my own school experience, so distant from Régio's one, but so unsatisfactory as well.

I let the reader judge if this work will stand for any significant progress within the growing Régio's scholarship. But it is surely unworthy of fitting the homage deserved by those I intended to honour.

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Do you see now perhaps why we writers can be neither wise nor dignified? That we necessarily go astray, necessarily remain dissolute emotional adventurers? The magisterial poise of our style is a lie and a farce, our fame and social position are an absurdity, the public's faith in us is altogether ridiculous, the use of art to educate the nation and its youth is a reprehensible undertaking which should be forbidden by law. For how can one be fit to be an educator when one has been born with an incorrigible and natural tendency toward the abyss? We try to achieve dignity by repudiating that abyss, but whichever way we turn we are subject to its allurements.

Mann 1999, 159.

## Chapter 1: The study of school fiction for educational research

The main purpose of the present research is to examine the value of school fiction and memoirs in the study of education and, particularly, the philosophy of education.

The overall thesis question is:

*How can the study of school fiction and memoirs contribute to educational theory and practice?*

I will begin by arguing that school novels and memoirs are potentially helpful sources for educational research. Then I will proceed to discuss the historical and literary aspects of the *Bildungsroman* and the *Schulroman* that are combined into the *Künstlerroman* and this will help to understand the cultural significance of the school novel as autobiographical school memoir under the guise of fiction.

I will follow this by studying, specifically, the characterisation of different spaces in school settings as portrayed in school novels, i.e., what makes them ‘different’ and ‘special’ in relation to others, with the help of a seminal text by Michel Foucault, *On Different Spaces* (1986).

In the next part of my study I offer a pedagogical exploration of the school novel, *A Drop of Blood* (1945), written by the Portuguese author and teacher, José Régio (1901-1969).

I have translated the novel itself in abridged form; that synopsis allows for a close reading with a running commentary and considerations that becomes essential to the understanding of the Chapters following from that point on.

The final chapters include an analysis of the wider educational implications of the problems arising from Régio’s novel and the place of boarding schools in literature, which



lead to my conclusions about the author, his work and its importance in answering the research question.

*Novels as educational documents and sources*

The most pertinent fact about school novels and memoirs is that they are the product of the recollection of memories by those who were formerly schooled youngsters themselves. As such, they are unique in conveying the psychological effects of the school experience on the schooled mind, a point of view nowhere present in any other sources since statistics, administrative and official reports and other bureaucratic sources cover only the institutional aspects. Commissioned or sponsored histories of a particular school have a propaganda and self-glorification purpose. News and court cases deal exclusively with exceptional events that are perceived as unusual and outstanding. Interviews are purpose-driven by the interests and agenda of the interviewer (and the magazine in which they will be printed). Pupils' letters written on the spot to family and friends focus too much on trivia (Tunstall-Behrens 1999) and, in addition, are sometimes censored by school officials and even intercepted and confiscated – a twist central to some plots of well known novels such as Martin du Gard's *Les Thibault* (1922) or Roger Peyrefitte's *Les amitiés particulières* (1944); or are at least present, as in Pompeia's *O Ateneu* (1888). Diaries and adolescent poetry are, often, too naïve, idealistic or sugarcoated. As for other variants of the school narrative, such as short school stories and novellas, they can only capture the picturesque and picaresque of simple *faits divers*.

Contrary to these limitations, autobiographical novels and memoirs are of an appropriate length to be elaborated upon and provide room enough to delve deep into the psychological study of the characters. Even though they may embellish some details to enrich their plots, they are based in real life experiences; the big picture is, by definition,

*real* and expresses an inner and outer perception of what it actually means to be, or to have been, a pupil at school. As documents, autofiction and memoirs are irreplaceable testimonies about school life. In addition, part of the material we find in these novels consists of what falls somewhere between the unnoticeably ordinary and the clamorously extraordinary, a fairly vast selection that remains totally absent from other sources: ‘[W]e are ardent for tomorrow — even though much of life is mechanical repetition’ (Marshall 2000, 1). As Cirino (1984) explains:

I only recorded those facts that had some importance to me (...) Most of what was happening was nothing but routine, severe and inflexible – what else do you expect to find in a strict boarding school? (Cirino 1984, 19)  
All is routine and monotony (*idem*, 55).<sup>1</sup>

Such a reconstruction of day-to-day life is an important component of the realism that fiction alone can provide:

... a skillful rendition of the densely packed minutiae of (boarding school) life: evocative smells and sounds, familiar objects and everyday things, ordinary routines, ways of talking or passing time, a reservoir of shared references from religious rituals (...) Even as we know full well that we are reading a work of fiction steered by the internal pressures of form and genre, we can be nonplussed by the clarity with which a form of life is captured. Recognizing aspects of ourselves in the description of others, seeing our perceptions and behaviors echoed in a work of fiction, we become aware of our accumulated experiences as distinctive yet far from unique (Felski 2008, 39).

Most research by philosophers of education has generally ignored the copious field of world literature in general but an active exception to this silence is Peter Robert’s work on Dostoevsky (2005, 2010, 2012a), on Hesse (2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2012b) and on Camus (Roberts et al. 2013b), among the few other researchers (Roberts et al. 2013a). But even these explorations have left in the shadows the

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<sup>1</sup> - ‘Registrei apenas aqueles (acontecimentos) que tinham importância real para mim (...) As mais das vezes era tudo rotina, severa e inflexível. Que mais pode uma vida de internato rigoroso oferecer?’ (19); ‘Tudo é rotina e monotonia’ (55). All translations from Portuguese to English (or vice versa) are my own, unless noted otherwise.

intrinsically pedagogic domain of autofiction novels and short stories covering the author's school years (as well as non-fiction memoirs on the same subject), a corpus consisting of not only a selected set of canonical masterpieces but also an immense array of works that, while less acclaimed by the critics or the public, are nevertheless equally interesting for a number of readings other than strictly literary ones, namely in the hands of the educationalist.

### *The demise of the history of education*

The most obvious use of school novels is as sources for the history of education. They can be seen as chapters in that history, written from a former pupil's point of view and in a time of mindsets and practices long gone, as witnesses to the school that once was and as close insights into a world that has no place in the other historical documents brought to us. However, the history of education is a scientific field ever more abandoned by current research. History was once subverted by Christianity into a narration of salvation, and then again by bourgeois Modernity as the myth of perpetual progress,<sup>2</sup> thus dispensing and despising the long-lasting mistakes of the past, up to a point that History itself was no longer needed:

Many transmutations were needed before the Christian story could renew itself as the myth of progress. But from being a succession of cycles like the seasons, history came to be seen as a story of redemption and salvation, and in modern times salvation became identified with the increase of knowledge and power (Gray 2013, 9).

History is currently marginalized among the Humanities. There have been raised formidable obstacles to its survival: what, after all, should be taught? A global history of education was impractical. But the alternatives were not suitable: a 'national' history of

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<sup>2</sup> - On salvation narratives see also Santos (2011).

education is too localised; a ‘classical’ (ancient) history of education is too archaeological; and the ‘Western’ history of education is not in tune with a multicultural perspective.

And then, our time has innovated too much in education to even allow comparisons with other models; just as an example, in former times the families were eager to expel the adolescent, if not to study, then to a ‘pre-work’ life:

It was the convention for children in much of pre-industrial Western and Northern Europe to leave home under the age of puberty to work in another household, as either apprentices or servants (Springhall 1993, 36).

At the beginning of educational practices, it was believed that a wholesome inner growth did not require any socialising with peers in a classroom. On the contrary, learners needed an idiosyncratic, personal approach, appropriate to character, pace and taste (it is arguable that in his *A Drop of Blood* (1945), Régio hints at this, for he ascribes little, if any, positive value to the interaction his main character, Lelito, a future writer, has with his ignorant and brutal peers).

More importantly, adolescence was seen as a time to be free of any parental co-habitation or even supervision; the young ones were to be entrusted to strangers (boarding schools answered to that concern for toughening souls and strengthening character and emotional resilience); boys had the duty to depart from home and family, and to become a man by taking risks and re-adapting constantly.

Subsequently, the strong 19<sup>th</sup> century commitment, in some countries, to generalising school attendance, favoured the boarding school model, on which school novels concentrate for good literary reasons. Education abandoned the one-to-one standard and became *collective*, though it is true it retained the *immersion paradigm* of the old master-pupil system, perhaps not as ‘total education’ (see below Chapter 3, on Foucault), but somehow as the more aptly called ‘complete education’. The dedicated teaching and

tutoring paradigm survived only in some crafts and in the world of music and fine arts, and in literature, in the narratives of initiatory and philosophical novels.

With the triumph of the day school model during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education became fragmentary and superficial, part-time, and willing to sacrifice the advantages of the immersion and the boarding paradigm. It became extended in time because it needed a longer period to achieve its results and lost much of the impact resulting from departure from the family because the pupil remained in both domains, belonging fully to neither.

Today, adolescents have colonised the family that retains them. They are now at the centre of the household and the family, consuming most of its time, resources and energy. Co-education, day schools, universal and compulsory education, all of which were unimaginable just a century ago, have become the standard in most societies and, not surprisingly, the former educational paradigms are now seen as a collection of horrors and as illustration of episodes of the psychological abuse and social manipulation of the young. Maybe this explains why the history of education as an academic field is on the verge of extinction today (McCulloch 2011; Jones 2013).

Such disregard for the past perhaps explains why school novels, so long as they preserve and convey the echoes of that past, appear to some to be irremediably distant from today's concerns. Since the history of education is no longer there to contemplate school novels as relevant sources, and the sociology of education today deals with a very different type of school, it is to the fields of the philosophy of education and the psychology of education that these narratives can be important because of their *inner perspective*.

In the field of the psychology of education their importance cannot be overestimated. Since school novel writers have demonstrated what has remained in their minds decades after their school years, their recollections invite an assessment of what will really be the school's lasting imprint on the young mind.

As far as the philosophy of education is concerned, when examining educational principles and goals, researchers have a lot to find in school based literature: where else can we get their unique insights, mediated by time and maturity, on a given pupil's actual experience, both in and out of the classroom, of dealing with the school as an institution and with the outside world, and the emerging feelings and thoughts, painful experiences and emotional dilemmas?

It can be assumed that any literary work that unsettles and questions its reader is both pedagogical and philosophical (Roberts 2013, 407). In line with that approach, current researchers into the philosophy of education have favoured the exploration of the educational implications of literary works that contemplate ethical questions. To this purpose, the existentialist movement seems to have provided the most provocative set of works, by authors such as Dostoyevsky, Camus and Sartre, as pointed above (Roberts, *passim*). Some other studies have focused on the set of ethical values present in literature intended for children and young adults (Azevedo 2005; Guerrero 2008; Eder 2010; Nikolajeva 2012), a field that owes much to the equally stimulating area of the ethnography of folk tales. But the immense corpus of novels and short stories closely related to, and illustrating school practice, has been approached almost exclusively by literary scholars, often for comparative purposes.

Throughout its many developments over more than two and a half thousand years, philosophy has encompassed ethics, physics and metaphysics, economics, politics, ontology, epistemology, anthropology, psychology and, of course, aesthetics. Philosophy has itself been regarded as literature,<sup>3</sup> or belles-lettres, in China, India and the West; the

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<sup>3</sup> - By 'literature' I understand more generally the mass of non-ephemeral signs, saved (intentionally or not) through some technical device requiring a degree of workmanship; and more precisely an *open set* (Silva 1986b, 31) of texts that may be regarded as retaining artistic quality; as for 'art', I

Romantics based their theories of art and literature on the philosophical trends of their time and some modern thinkers have presented their ideas in literary form, for instance as in Nietzsche's famous poem in prose, with occasional passages in verse, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-85), loosely inspired by the then newly discovered sacred texts of the East.

Philosophy has not only enjoyed a long and rich association with literature but at the same time it has been conceived as education as well. All philosophy was once a pedagogical undertaking, with every philosopher being a master to his disciples within each 'school' of thought. At the core of the philosophical endeavour were the narrative motifs of transmission, tradition, initiation and revelation – which were also to become embedded in the core of all educational practice.

It is true that Plato expelled the artists from the Philosophical City because of their lies, but didn't his former student Aristotle, who brought literary criticism into the philosophical curriculum, notoriously accuse Plato himself of not always worshiping at the altar of Truth? After all, Plato used literary techniques and motifs, such as myths, in his dramatic dialogues. Porphyry (234-305), who among others tried to reconcile Aristotle with his famous master, engaged in the philosophical exegesis of poetry, namely of the Homeric epics, by writing an entire treatise, the *De Antro Nympharum*, to comment on a few verses of *Odyssey* 13. Among ancient and medieval thinkers, the idea that literature was essentially *educational* is clear from Porphyry's and Dante's approach to literary exegesis, theorised by the latter in his *Letter to Can Grande* (c.1317). To them, a literary work deserving of such a status had to be suitable for a *tropological* reading, which means it had to have an ethical effect on the reader; to operate something of a change, a transformation;

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assume here to be any human production that is *unique*, i.e., unrepeatable and irreproducible *qua* art, and so opposed to craftwork and skill.

and possessing an *anagogical* potential, providing access to ultimate principles, invisible and ineffable realities and metaphysical revelations. According to the Porphyrian tradition, we can further limit the concept of literature to whatever message that is powerful and meaningful to the reader and exclude from it what fails to touch its audience: literature becomes not a source of entertainment for the leisured class, but a vehicle for growth and inspiration for the aspiring souls.

### *Ambiguities of the novel*

Classical poetics assigned *pathos* to lyricism, *ethos* to drama and *logos* to the narrative, thus matching with what one feels, sees and hears. Of all the literary genres, the novel is the most ambiguous, protean, ever shifting, fluid<sup>4</sup> and experimental, resulting in ‘its contradictory, hybrid and compromising nature’ (Moretti 2000, 12) In its hegemonic rising, the novel colonized all other genres: with painting it becomes the graphic novel and comics; with science it results in science fiction; with history, in historical fiction; with autobiographies, autofiction; with pedagogy, the pedagogic novel, and so on... All the possible novel types are a fruit of that all-encompassing hybridism.

The novel was not held in high esteem in the classical periods of Antiquity, when genres were differentiated by strict conventions and the expression of the self through the lyric mode was set apart from narrative. The self was largely absent by virtue of the intermediation of heroic and non-heroic types and stereotypes, since it dealt ‘less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds...’ (Frye, 309).

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<sup>4</sup> - ‘To the contemporary reader the novel may seem one of the most resilient and mutable of literary forms’ (Parsons 2007, 2)



The novel became the hegemonic genre only with the victory of the bourgeoisie and at a moment when the individualistic approach to life was gaining momentum. Therefore, its primal ambiguity started with the contamination of the narrative genres (history, epic, tale, didactic, etc.) by the emergence of a personal outlook. Dialogue from drama became important too and finally the novel succeeded in combining the *pathos* of lyric, the *ethos* of drama and the *logos* of the narrative form altogether:

1 <sup>st</sup> person, expressing inner feelings	2 <sup>nd</sup> person dialogue, enacting a plot	3 <sup>rd</sup> person telling, sharing a story
Lyric FELT	Drama, dialogue SEEN, HEARD	Didactic, history, biography TOLD

The novel: using story telling to express emotions from the inner self and from others, with the occasional help of dialogue.

**Figure 1: The Novel as the fusion genre**

To sum up, the novel is the modern avatar of the ancient epic, in its mock-heroic and prosaic variety.<sup>5</sup> It inherits:

- 1) the *formal* ambiguity of the epic as *Genus commune uel mixtum* (in Greek *koinon* or *mikton*), that combined the narrator's self-speech (*Genus ennarratiuum*) with the speech of independent characters (*Genus actiuum uel imitatiuum*) (Silva 1986b, 348);
- 2) and its thematic ambiguity as well, having as object both the narrator's self (lyric mode) and the selves of others (dramatic mode).

Like a modern epic, the novel is a speech by oneself and by others, about oneself and about others. And more precisely it is an anti-epic, mimicking and downgrading the formerly highest literary genre among the Ancients.

<sup>5</sup> - 'Fielding's conception of the novel as a comic epic in prose seems fundamental to the tradition he did so much to establish', remarks Frye (2000, 304).

It is not by chance that this ambiguous genre, the novel, historically owed its victory to the rise of the bourgeoisie, that stood as a third part between aristocracy and the populace, being neither one nor other of the former dichotomy, in the same way as the capital it owned laid between property and the workforce detained by the other two classes.

Bourgeoisie had flourished already in the two ‘decadents’ period of Antiquity that saw the Hellenistic and the Late Roman emergence of novels, when there was a rise of a new bourgeois middle class with cultural ambitions and time for leisure, ready to produce and consume not only the ancient kind of romance stories – usually the travel misadventures of young heroes in love –, but also the socially, morally and ideologically audacious narratives by Petronius or Lucian during the Neronian and the Antoninian eras.

The novel was, and is, transgressive by nature, as a byproduct of the ‘triumph of bourgeois ambiguity’ (Moretti 2013, 177), mirroring the grey status of that intermediary class, which had neither aristocratic tastes (the lineage book, the chivalry novel, the heroic epic) nor folk, (the hagiography, the chap-book,<sup>6</sup> the fable); it was fostered by a new, emerging and hybrid audience – women and young adults –, who were, during the major part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, neither truly cultivated nor completely illiterate.

When the novel turned its attention to school, it could play with a further ambiguity; boarding. School shares some features with the home, such as a place of nurturing and sheltering, *but it is not home*, despite Maria Montessori, who liked to call it the ‘Children’s Home’ (*Casa dei Bambini*). So, boarding is an all the most ambiguous arrangement, since blurs the clear borders between school and home.

The main difference between the ancient and the modern novel lies in the changings in the characters’ state of mind. Standing for types, the protagonists of the ancient novels, either heroic or naïf, could not show an inner evolution in character and mood: however

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<sup>6</sup> - ‘Cordel’ in Portuguese.

hazardous and perilous their adventures may be, they keep an unaltered disposition and constant mood: ‘the novelistic protagonists [are] passive and emotionally static’ (Tagliabue 2012, 18). Then, by demanding that literature be the confessional outcome of an author’s own life and experiences, the Romantics reshaped the *heroic* concept of the old epic with a new dimension of *agon*: from them on, the inner psychological conflict became the chief struggle (Rowe, 1980) that would challenge a more or less autobiographical hero. Literary creation turned to emphasizing the self as one’s main source of inspiration, the final and ultimate mystery, as in the Novalis’ addition to *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (1802):

Someone arrived there – who lifted the veil of the goddess, at Sais. – But what did he see? He saw – wonder of wonders – himself (Novalis 1965, 110).

Narratives became increasingly *biographical* and linked to one’s own life, aspirations, disillusion and frustrations. In the autobiographic modes the presence of the author replaces that of the narrator: is the author that becomes traceable in the various character(s), under the guise of the protagonist, deuteragonist or supporting role.

Moving towards the replication of actual consciousness, the modern novel demands some sort of evolution in the mind of the hero and/or the other characters – and eventually this feature was to be so developed as to become the dominant, if not the only, component of the novel itself: the *stream of consciousness* as a narrative device (Humphrey 1954).

To be an author still required some *genius* for the Romantics:

...it is not enough to possess the totality and continuity of information, not enough the gift of knitting this information easily and clearly to things already known and experienced, or to inter-change peculiar-sounding words with commonly-used expressions, not enough the agility of a rich imagination to arrange the phenomena of (Life) in easily intelligible and strikingly illuminated pictures that either by the charm of composition or the riches of their contents invigorate and satisfy the senses or ravish the spirit by their profound significance. (Novalis 1903, 140).

After the Romantics the eventual desecration of the author's 'inspiration' or genius and the common status, no more sacred, bestowed upon the creative mind, triggered a shifting of focus towards ordinary life that led to the extremes of the subsequent realistic movement: to the realistic writers the disjunction of fiction vs. reality was no longer adequate: literature had to be more *lifelike* than life itself.

Undoubtedly, the novel had its heyday during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the bourgeois victory over the remnants of the aristocratic classes – the old as well as the new 'liberal' aristocracies – was complete and definitive. A new mass of readers with new tastes and increasingly more access to instruction and to printed material emerged in two groups from within that class – the already mentioned young adults and women, establishing two major thematic sets appealing to these two new publics: travel and exploration adventures to the former and romantic love adventures to the latter. And the traditional public of adult male readers began favouring also new themes and subjects now found in the 'realist' and 'naturalist' novels, i.e., focusing on social plagues and moral conflicts such as prostitution, adultery, corruption, class antagonism, crime and violence, etc.

Once popular among the Romantics, the later discredited subgenres of 'biographical novel' and 'historical novel' have been recovered by many current post-modernist writers, with an added self-consciousness of the creative process, as has been noted by Hutcheon (1988, 113).

Coincidentally, the rise of the novel went side by side with the rise of the school. Reading became universal when instruction was widespread throughout all the social classes and available to further age groups, from the very young children to late adolescence. The triumph of one bears a direct link to the triumph of the other: they were promoted by the bourgeois class, eager for social promotion through instruction and willing

to apply that incipient taste for, and grasp of, higher culture in a way that could be sometimes *light* and entertaining, other times provocative.

Inevitably, the novel, as a genre that tried to embrace all aspects of life, came to contemplate school life as well.

*The factitious and the fictitious*

For it is by reading novels, stories and myths that we come to understand the ideas that govern the world in which we live; it is fiction that gives us access to the truths kept veiled and hidden by our families, our schools, and our society; it is the art of the novel that allows us to ask who we really are (Pamuk 2005).

Literature conceived as ‘fiction’ is quite a recent development: ‘*Not until the end of the 18th century did historical writing emerge as distinctive from literary writing*’ (Gossman 1978). As Erixon asserts in the case for the Swedish school novel:

Though fictive, I argue these novels express something fundamental and true about school life and experiences. Moreover, 20th century novels help us understand changes in the Swedish school system during the previous century (Erixon 2002, 26).

‘*Though fictive*’ seems to suggest a caveat by Erixon to the use of school novels for educational research. However, eschewing previous conventions that held any autobiographical elements in a literary work to be one’s confession of incapacity to go beyond one’s own life experiences, European literature of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century took a distinctively *personal turn* and became ever more autobiographical and intimate; almost a kind of exercise in self-exposition, self-(re)construction and self-narrative. So, discussions about the reality of fiction and the fictitious nature of reality became largely ‘fictitious’ in themselves, arising as they did from a lack of perception that such boundaries were as artificial as every border:

Ultimately, the attempt to distinguish ‘autobiography’ from ‘autobiographical fiction’ may [...] be pointless... (Smith and Watson 2010, 259).

Likewise,

The binary opposition between fiction and fact is no longer relevant. (Man1986, 109); one [should] free the discourse on literature from naïve oppositions between fiction and reality which are themselves an offspring of an uncritically mimetic conception of art (Man 1986, 11).

Between the school memoir and the school fiction the limits are fluid and almost imperceptible. Imagination and recreation often blend with ‘true’ recollections of the writer’s own schooldays and contaminate each other inextricably. The writer transfers his own experiences and feelings to the narrator or to one (or more) of the leading characters. The impersonation of the author’s own experiences by these novel characters is so deep that sometimes the author later feels the need to distinguish fact from fiction and to rewrite a ‘proper’ autobiographical account where all connections between novel and facts of real life are delineated. Under any circumstances, both autobiographical fiction (‘autofiction’) and ‘straight autobiography’ can be valued as a key source in the history of pedagogical ideas and practices. In both instances the writer is freed from academic conventions that would restrain and limit what could be written in a ‘serious’ book on education, not only deciding the fates of his fictional characters at his own pleasure but also being at liberty to ‘remember’ or ‘forget’ what pleases or displeases both writer and reader in one’s school years’ remembrances.

The intimate nature of the autobiographical material is the most valuable ingredient that provides psychological depth and moving intensity to such half-fiction and half-historical works. More often than not, these texts are the result of a need to settle the account with the author’s own traumatic past and to expose the tremendous gap between the high and somewhat naïve expectations that the former young schooled person had and

the much inferior reality embodied in the educational practices of the institutions the writer attended.

If novel writers are not necessarily philosophers or educators on their own, their texts do, however, raise questions pertinent to philosophers of education and they inspire debates that can be fostered in a distinctively philosophical manner:

- a) self-narrative and its role in the (re)construction of the self;
- b) ways of self-presentation;
- c) perceptions of identity and unity of the self and how they determine the way the school experience is evaluated.

In addressing the question of the unity of the self, the *Bildung* concept has major importance in the study of autofiction, as is to be examined in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Autobiography and the school experience

### *The nature and types of autobiographical narratives*

Virtually any text has autobiographical elements be they in fictional disguise or not. Autobiography is a discourse about one's life. Reflections on our own lives, a pervasive subject, may be found in fiction, poetry, drama, essays and interviews; and, specifically, these are expected to fill the pages of those works correctly called 'autobiographies' and autofiction, memoirs and diaries. As far as letters are concerned, they are an anomalous, hybrid category, which range from containing almost nothing autobiographical, such as treatises in the form of letters, following Horace's *Epistola ad Pisones*, but addressed to an imaginary correspondent, i.e., the so-called 'false letters' to those written to a living person, which must include some autobiographical material, at least a date/location for the person who is writing, if they are to be considered letters and not simply notes. The divide lies precisely here. A text without some sort of autobiographical information, i.e., with some personal element, be it the sender's name, date/location, a greeting, signature, etc., is not recognized as being a letter. It is the presence of personal information that is the substance of the letter.

Autobiographies are the most obvious instances of autobiographical narratives and, being intended for public consumption, they are probably not as sincere or intimate as diaries or letters to close friends can be. They may place emphasis on one particular aspect of the author's life, as is the case with intellectual, spiritual, professional, political and artistic autobiographies. Usually they follow the succession of events in someone's life and



may begin even earlier than birth, with astrological charts, options of reincarnation (Silva 1986a) and even with previous lives but by definition they must finish before the author's life ends, although they may include the final sickness and dying experience as in 'pathographies'.

A special type of autobiography is one that implies the disclosure of controversial deeds or the acknowledgement of humiliations and defeats suffered by the subject, somehow invoking a sense of shame, guilt, sorrow and, perhaps, repentance. This subgenre is called 'confession' and follows the tradition of Augustine and Rousseau, derived from ecclesial self-criticism. Such is also the case of the author to be studied in the subsequent chapters, José Régio, who wrote his spiritual autobiography titling it the *Confession of a Religious Man*.

Autobiographic and autofictional narratives, too, can include some doses of confessional speech: '[a]fter Rousseau – in fact in Rousseau – the confession flows into the novel, and the mixture produces the fictional autobiography, the *Künstlerroman*, and kindred types' (Frye 2000, 307). So, 'confession' is very much present in Régio's autofiction as well, like *A Drop of Blood*, or in *The Blind Man's Bluff*. There are a number of *loci similes* between all these works and including even his poetry.

For obvious reasons, the publication of these works is generally posthumous, as in the cases of Aquilino, Júlio Dantas and many others.

To Régio, confession is always liberating:

I have been daring to say almost everything; but only indirectly, through artistic creation. Art is my own personal way of confession; of confession and likewise of liberation. (Régio 2004, 82).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> - 'Eu já quase tenho ousado dizer tudo; — mas só indiretamente, através da criação artística. A arte ainda é o meu meio de confissão mais próprio; de confissão, e de libertação'.

An autobiographical account in the form of memoir has a particular focus. It is selected and limited in content and in scope and covers a period of one's life, such as childhood or one's school years, public life, a professional activity, one's private life, a momentous event, travel, an acquaintanceship with a famous person – and, thus, does not embrace a whole life from the beginning to the present-day that has been chronologically arranged or systematic in structure.

Diaries are letters to oneself. José Régio was acutely aware of this and he added to that big 'self-letter' other letters sent and received together with his comments on them. To him, a diary was not literature in the artistic sense:

As an artist, I need to dispose, to choose, to fashion and cultivate even the most sincere feelings, sensations, emotions and thoughts. That is to say: *I resort to myself* as source of my artistic creation. A diary does not allow you to do that, it should not be that... A diary is shapeless or unaesthetic, confused, spontaneous! It is not, at least in what is regarded as its form, — a work of art (Régio 2004, 81).<sup>8</sup>

As with letters, a timestamp is paramount in diaries. They can be intimate, as much as in a letter to an old friend or to a loved person, or intended for immediate publication.

Because it is hard to keep a diary throughout a lifetime, diaries tend to be written in periods of crisis, of great expectation, of achievement, of travel ('travelogs') or when on probation, as at school and in one's college years.

### *Novels about growing up: the Youth novel, the Formative novel, the Bildungsroman*

When the subject of a novel is growing up – the metamorphosis of the young self into an adult being and containing its sufferings and achievements on the path towards emotional

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<sup>8</sup> - 'Tendo, como artista, a ordenar, a escolher, a preparar e cultivar até os sentimentos, impressões, emoções e pensamentos mais sinceros. Em suma: Tendo a *aproveitar-me* para a minha criação artística. E um diário não permite isso, não deve ser isso... Um diário é informe ou disforme, desconexo, espontâneo, sei lá! Não é, ao menos pela forma, — uma obra de arte'.

autonomy – it may be said that this is a universal topic to be found across virtually all the literatures of the world, going as far back as those mythological narratives dating from archaic cultural periods.

There is, however, a contrast between the narration of a young person's (mis)fortunes and the focus on the changes that occur inside that young person's conscience. The first type is the 'youth novel' [*Jugendroman*], generally intended for the young themselves, and the second is the 'formation novel' [*Entwicklungsroman*], which makes for more complex and demanding reading.

Formation is a concept much vaster than education, especially formal education. Ancient literature acknowledged the formation narrative; the Roman novel *Satyricon*, by Petronius Arbiter, is an exploration of the formative topic, in which lore and tales are intercut with episodes of a more realistic journey by land and sea through the ancient Mediterranean world, in order to expose a disenchanting portrait of Roman life and society through the misfortunes of Giton, a young boy travelling in the company of his mentor, Encolpius. The extant fragments of the novel appropriately start with Encolpius blaming teachers and the school for poor education, and his opponent, the sophist Agamemnon, trying to transfer the blame from teachers to parents. It seems that the wanderings of the boys with their occasional companions, their visits to diverse places, the cultural shocks they experience and the tales they hear, all provide a kind of formation alternative to schooling. It is life that makes them to grow.

This formative ancient literary tradition is at the root of the *Bildungsroman*, a sophisticated version of the previous concept, so named as a result of the influential literary studies of J. C. S. Morgenstern (1820; 1824) and which came to acquire distinctively Germanic features (even if it had forerunners outside the German world), until critics began to apply the category to virtually any culture or literary period.

The gestation of the *Bildung* had been due to the conjunction of the novel as genre and the new philosophical ideals of the Enlightenment, that had produced Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), the story of a naïve boy who strives to be less naïve, but the novella is rather a picaresque critique of the society, religion and philosophy of Voltaire's times and lacks any inner perspective. Characters are either caricatures of thinkers or collective human types. We had to wait for the post-illuminist period to enjoy works such as Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) and Goethe's two quintessential *Bildungsromane*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96) and the more utopian *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder Die Entsagenden* (1821-1829), which were extremely influential on similar 20<sup>th</sup> Century works such as Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* (1943). But the peak of the *Bildungsroman*'s literary prestige came around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when it was to flourish in Vienna as part of the tendency to inwardness and introspection that had produced Freud and had resulted in writers such as Musil, who published a classic school-novel in 1906, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, and was much later to return to the *Bildungsroman* in *The Man without Qualities* (1930-1943). However, the genealogy and canon of the *Bildungsroman* is much disputed, especially because other categories are often intermingled with the concept, thus making it lose its accuracy and usefulness. We will try to define what distinguishes the *Bildung* from other types of narrative about youth.

In a *Bildung* narrative, the main purpose is to illustrate the way in which a character grows to maturity – sometimes through errancy, repentance and self-denial. This growth is shown to be the necessary accomplishment of the protagonist's predisposition and potential. Goethe synthesised it this way, in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Kapitel 68: 'To tell you in a *single* word: to educate (*auszubilden*) myself, just like I am'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> - 'Daß ich Dir's mit *einem* Worte sage: mich selbst, ganz wie ich da bin, auszubilden...'.<sup>9</sup>

So the concept may be rendered, as did Nietzsche in the subtitle of his autobiography *Ecce Homo* (1888), as being ‘the way [in the sense of the Japanese -do] one becomes who one is’. The concepts of *tropology* (conversion) and *anagogy* (sublimation), from Dante’s *Letter to Can Grande*, suggest the *inner recognition and awareness* that is at the root of a *Bildung*’s journey: a process, a transformation, a metamorphosis, a transcreation, a transgression, operated from inside more than from outside.

In this sense, the *Bildung* has something of the long awakening about it, a slower-paced inevitably metamorphosis rather than sudden revelation. In this it is also distinguishable from the *coming-of-age abrupt event* or *peripeteia*, the turning point in a young life and mind, which is typically the subject of the folk tale and the myth.

The *Bildung* also has its contrasting narratives. The concept *contrary* to *Bildung* is *Unbildung*, which means remaining the same not evolving, growing or progressing and the *opposite* concept to *Bildung* is *Anti-Bildung*, meaning regression or going backwards. This last instance appears to be rare outside of neurological and traumatic accidents but the middle element of the triad, the *Unbildung*, rendering those situations in which growth is arrested and individuals are unable to develop to their full potential, is the most familiar concept in ‘real life’, in schooling and, consequently, in the plots of novels as well. The choice between *Bildung* and *Unbildung* depends on individual resilience and the capacity to rebuild oneself challenging mental strain and social conditioning.

More importantly, *Bildung* is an inner process that is totally person-centred, whereas the school, as a social and gregarious institution, is collective in nature and purpose. The conflict of *Bildung* vs. Education, from Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1796), ‘to educated myself’, is ubiquitous in literature.

Boes (2006) alerts us that the concept is used carelessly these days:

The term is sometimes – especially within English departments – used so broadly that seemingly any novel (and on extreme occasions even verse epics, such as *The Prelude*) might be subsumed by it. (230).

Aiming at a better definition of the *Bildung* and understanding in what ways it differs from other types of novels about youth, leads us to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), one of its pivotal theorizers.

Dilthey's first point relates to the universality of the *Bildung* experience, as opposed to the accidents of a given set of adventures. In some way everyone *must* become who one is:

There had always been novels modelled on biography which followed the schooling of their heroes from the nursery onwards. Such glimpses into the inside of the course of a life led necessarily to an account focusing on significant moments of this life in their typical forms. The most perfect example of such an account is Fielding's *Tom Jones*. But the *Bildungsroman* is distinguished from all previous biographical compositions in that it intentionally and artistically depicts that which is universally human in such a life-course (Dilthey 1985, 335).

So, the *Bildung* is not concerned with the retelling of a particular set of events. It is intrinsically philosophical but not in the allegorical sense of Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) which obtained most of its meaning from outside events. It is a process specifically observed from the inner conscience:

The *Bildungsroman* is closely associated with the new developmental psychology established by Leibniz, with the idea of a natural education in conformity with the inner development of the psyche. This had its beginnings with Rousseau's *Emile* and swept over all of Germany. The *Bildungsroman* is also associated with the ideal of humanity with which Lessing and Herder inspired their contemporaries (Dilthey 1985, 336).

There was still something outward in Wilhelm Meister's character. His artistic side is left behind after some experiments with the theatre and finally he is prepared to have an active, public life, just like Goethe, who had been a man of state. In the travel part of his story (the second book) Wilhelm goes to the Pedagogical Province, a utopia of perfect

education, so the novel may be said to turn to education policy. But Dilthey stresses that in spite of its timid Goethean beginnings, the *Bildung*'s way was definitely inwardness:

Hyperion is one of the *Bildungsromane* which reflect the interest in inner culture that Rousseau had inspired in Germany. Among the novels that have established their lasting literary value since Goethe and Jean Paul are Tieck's *Sternbald*, Novalis' *Ofterdingen*, and Hölderlin's *Hyperion*. Beginning with *Wilhelm Meister* and Hesperus (Jean Paul) they all portray a young man of their time: how he enters life in a happy state of naiveté seeking kindred souls, finds friendship and love, how he comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, how he grows to maturity through diverse life experiences, finds himself, and attains certainty about his purpose in the world. Goethe's goal was the story of a person preparing himself for an active life; the theme of the two Romantic writers [Jean Paul and Novalis] was 'the poet' (Dilthey 1985, 335).

The *Bildung* is seen as a way upwards, regulated by comprehensive, explanatory 'laws' of progression towards a stable personality:

A lawlike development is discerned in the individual's life; each of its levels has intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher level. Life's dissonances and conflicts appear as necessary transitions to be withstood by the individual on his way towards maturity and harmony. The 'greatest happiness of earth's children' is 'personality' (Goethe, *West-Ostliche Divan*, Bo& Suleika, WA, 1, 4:16 z.) as a unified and permanent form of human existence. This optimism of personal development, which illuminated even Lessing's difficult life-path, has never been expressed more joyously and confidently than in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*: an immortal radiance of enjoyment of life shines through this novel and those of the Romantics (Dilthey 1985, 336).

Dilthey points also to Hölderlin's *Hyperion* as a landmark for the concept, by an author who dwelt in the darker realms of the mind and was thereby able to contribute in a new way to the Romantic ideal of the *solitary poet* that Nietzsche would take to new heights:

*Hyperion* grew in the same soil. The first fragment stressed explicitly that the path by which a man passes from a state of simplicity to that of perfect development is essentially the same in every individual. (...) The genuine significance of this work lies precisely in the fact that the poet for the first time makes manifest the darker features buried deep in life's countenance with a power that only lived experience can provide. He attempted to interpret life in terms of itself, to become aware of the values

contained in life, both for their potential and their limits, just as Byron, Leopardi, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, who are akin to Hölderlin in essential features, did subsequently. All of this originated in this solitary man, who, far removed from the hustle and bustle of literary life, contemplated the phenomena within and around him from day to day. He was so alone that it was as if he lived in a desert or on an island remote from human society. But he was most lonely when he sought to communicate with family or friends. In embodying this interpretation of life, he developed a new form of the philosophical novel; all this achieved its greatest effect in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* (Dilthey 1985, 336-337).

In the *Bildung*, the process comes from within. The protagonists must be aware of the meaning of things that are happening to them, which are not hazardous or accidental but instead point coherently to gradual self-discovery and the finding of their place in the world. They must correct the previous, naïve and erroneous image they had of themselves alongside the different episodes by learning from them. These episodes are typically the following, according to Jacobs (1989), apud Nascimento (2000, 18):

i)	The separation from the father's house (the 'old house').
ii)	The search for a mentor (replacing the father).
iii)	The encounter with Art.
iv)	Interaction with larger society – professional, political or public experience.
v)	The revelation of the protagonist's public and cosmic place through self-awareness.

**Figure 2: *Merkmale des Bildungsroman* (characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*) according to Jürgen Jacobs**

As we will see later, Jacob's point iv) can be replaced by another kind of initiation into the world, namely sexual.



So the *Bildungsroman* reflects a new bourgeois ideology of self-centred reflection upon one's ways, replacing the former aristocratic ideals meant for the ruling group rather than individuals:

The governmental authority of the civil service and the military in the small and middle-sized German states confronted the young generation of writers as alien. But these young people were delighted and enraptured by what poets had discovered about the world of the individual and his self-development. Today's reader of Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre* (translated as *Walt and Visit, or the Twins*) or *Titan* in which everything about the contemporary German *Bildungsroman* is epitomized, will find the aura of a past world, the transfiguration of existence in the dawn of life, an infinite investment of feeling in a restricted existence, the obscure, wistful, power of ideals of German youths eager to declare war on an antiquated world in all its life forms and yet incapable of surviving such a war (Dilthey 1985, 335).

The *Bildung* belongs to that bourgeois ideology of self-accomplishment. All attempts to find a socialist,<sup>10</sup> communist, democratic or fascist *Bildung*, in a word, a social *Bildungsroman*, suggest that its existence is impossible because the *Bildung* is not about raising the awareness of a class conscience, social commitment or collective purpose:

In this way, these *Bildungsromane* gave expression to the individualism of a culture whose sphere of interest was limited to private life (Dilthey 1985, 335).

These considerations are important to a better perception of the *Bildung* as a personal quest. The individual cannot find a purpose in life in whatever religious ideals (see how Siddharta does not 'stop' at Buddhism, in Hermann Hesse's eponymous novel of 1922), or in social or political commitments: the goal in life must be found within, where it always lies *in nuce*. In this way, the *Bildungsroman* is totally at odds with the *Sozialroman* because the Realist writers (contravening the Romantics) gazed towards the outer to draw more or less caricatured portraits of human society, whilst departing from the explorations

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<sup>10</sup> - Pace Jacobs, *apud* Maas, 1999, 55, who claimed to have found the 'socialist *Bildungsroman*' in Arnold Zweig (1940) *Erziehung vor Verdun* [*Education before Verdun*] and in Johannes R. Becher (1940) *Abschied* [*Farewell*], all socialist novels are, by definition, social novels – *Sozialromane*.

of inner anxieties that the Romantics had privileged. A gradual change of mind is the essence of *Bildung*: while the *Sozialroman* is about changes in the world, the *Bildung* is about the changing of the character's own self and mindset.

There is no necessary link between the *Bildung* and schooling: 'It is interesting to note in contrast that Wilhelm Meister's formal schooling is never mentioned' (Hohendahl 2008, 202). At the core of the *Bildung* is not the vocational prospective of a given pupil to make oneself useful to society or the tuning up of a young personality through schooling according to general interests but rather the elements of conflict that persist between the aims set by society, as the institutor and promoter of schooling, and those elected for by individual free will. Even if many school novels are repositories of those instances of individual resistance and personal endurance, a *Bildung* orientation, even when present in a school novel, is, after all, a chapter in the larger 'anti-school narrative'. What the *Bildung* outlook illustrates more clearly, when the narrative happens to be set in school, is not education as such but, on the contrary, the challenge to and transgression of it, and in this resides its relevance to philosophy of education. By paying attention to the way literature depicts and conveys what could be deemed as the failure of formal educational attempts, the philosophy of education can thus focus not so much on the possibilities but better on the limits of any such attempts, effectively and durably, to fashion young minds.

Most educational liminalities are subtle and, instead of asserting them, novelists tend to suggest by half-clues the silent ways in which the inner turmoil of the adolescent may unfold. Explosions of group unrest are better found in the realistic 19<sup>th</sup> century school novel, still influenced by the *Sozialroman* – Dickens (1850), *Pompeia* (1888) and even Musil (1906) but this collective resistance is also another confrontation with the conditioning of the mind by the school.

The student centered novels usually have the protagonist reject the academic world which is responsible for their awakening, because the

discipline of the academe is viewed as ‘antagonistic to the discipline to which the artist much subject himself’ (Lyons 1960, 204).

The real struggle in a *Bildung* narrative would be not with external forces, be they society or school, but definitely with the self, with an initial stage of confusion and disorientation:

Hölderlin’s hero was a heroic person striving to change the world but finding himself in the end thrust back upon his own thought and poetry (Dilthey 1985, 335).

Thus, the *Bildung* drive of a narrative is not about the need and usefulness of formal knowledge, as imparted by schooling, but about the inner knowledge of oneself, regardless of books and masters, in an idiosyncratic and personal way, beyond established systems of thought and belief.

#### *The Bildungsroman turns autobiographical: the Künstlerroman*

It must be remarked that at the same time novels were drawing heavily from autobiography to build up their narratives, late-romantic philosophy was also following the same Rousseauian autobiographical path, as in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.

From this moment, the *Künstlerroman* was able to continue from the place the *Bildungsroman* had left the novel – it was able to become the rendering of the emergence of an artistic talent. Here was something new to add to the novel: a focus on the artistic person, on how artistic souls find their own way through the societies and times in which they live: painters and sculptors would have the origins of their art investigated. Exponents are Eduard Mörike, who wrote *Maler Nolten* (The Painter Nolten) in 1832, Gottfried Keller, who also dealt with a (frustrated) painter’s career in *Der grüner Heinrich* (1854-1855) and Thomas Mann (1947) with *Doktor Faustus*, about a musician. In French, Romain Rolland wrote (1904-1912) *Jean Christophe*, also about a musician. When the

*Künstlerroman* focuses more on the process of creation than on the artist, it may be called *poioumenon*, from the Greek ποιούμενον, ‘product’.

But in the case of the writer, the narrative about coming into being would turn autobiographical, it would be the portrait of *oneself as an artist*, displaying the beginnings of an artistic consciousness. The step towards the autobiographical *Künstlerroman* was first taken by Novalis when, in 1780, he wrote *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, a narrative where he presents autobiographical features in the guise of an historic Minnesänger – a book that Gide began translating in 1894 (Schuler 1950, 243). Novalis and others understood literature as a narrative emancipated from the pseudo-factuality of history, news, chronicles, reports, etc. and from the ‘fictionality’ of fiction, aspiring to higher truths, spiritual and artistic – or, as he sets it: ‘as more creative, the truer’.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Mann’s *Tonio Kröger* (1903) is undoubtedly one of the most famous. In English, Charles Dickens wrote *David Copperfield* (1849-1850), Thomas Carlyle *Sartor Resartus* (1833-1834) and James Joyce *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914-1916).

The *Künstlerroman* became

...particularly popular in Germany and dates from very late in the 18th c. and the beginning of the 19th c. It thus coincides with the start of the romantic revival, a period when the artist was held in high esteem, and the man of genius became an exalted figure (Cuddon 1998, 446).

When the new boarding school story emerged from Continental Europe, being the writer’s own rendering of his school years where the roots of his artistic personality could be found (following on the path that Musil had pointed to), it was something very different from the English school story. It had matured into an adult-orientated, highly sophisticated *Künstlerroman*. It stretched to the limit some traits already present in the old *Bildung* and in

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<sup>11</sup> - ‘*Je poetischer, je wahrer*’, Novalis, *Fragmente*, Kapitel 23.

the English school-story tradition. Now, romantic friendship risked being turned into crude sex and bullying and mobbing into outright sadism. It scrutinized the sources and manifestations of conflict within the family and, even when evolution and change was apparently triggered by external events, the new school novel postulated the unfolding of the main character through fast and traumatic inner growth; an intense, conflictive and inevitable process that sometimes exposed hidden dispositions.

This inner psychological tradition expanded outside German boundaries and reached French and English literature that had been, until then, concerned more with social issues (Hugo, Zola) or disposed always to see the social behind the school (Dickens) and the new psychological trend that was cultivated by writers such as Proust, Joyce and Woolf.

#### *The Schulroman and the Internatsgeschichte*

With its own features, there was another subgenre dealing with adolescence: the school novel. It did not require *Bildung*, nor autobiographic nor *Künstlerroman* elements, it was simply a chronicle of the school days of a given character. The *Schulroman* has its action and focus on the school experiences of the growing young person. Almost ever, these experiences are not in order to operate any real character changing:

The usual college novel is not a pure *Bildungsroman*... for the hero is rarely altered in any essential way by an idea or an experience (Lyons 1960, 204).

A specific instance of the *Schulroman* is the boarding school novel, also called, in German, *Internatsgeschichte*. Here, the passage from youth to adulthood is staged in a specific situation of confinement, seclusion and stricter discipline. *Internatsgeschichten* are mainly divided into four ambiances: the elite (Hughes 1857), the religious (Martin du Gard 1922 and Peyrefitte 1944), those intended for the poor, ranging from modest circumstances down to destitute – orphanages, etc. and the military variety illustrated by Robert Musil

(1880-1942) in the powerful masterwork by this Austrian writer, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906); also Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) intended to write a military boarding schoolboy novel drawing on his own experiences (Ilett 2006, 78), a project from which only *Die Turnstunde* (1902) has been left to us.

Part of the success of the priestly and military boarding schools, popular even when pupils were not destined for either career, had to do with Cirino's remark that 'The priests are not emotional' (1984, 97). The dominant idea was that experienced professionals would take care of the pupils' education in a non-emotional (or anti-emotional) way, with neutral rapport, as opposed to the amateurishness and clumsiness of incompetent families, from which the young person needed to be emotionally emancipated. With the ever-growing sentimentalist mood of society this prospect finds far less appeal today.

There are two lines of approach to the boarding experience: one is positive and apologetic, intended mostly for a young readership; the other is critical and insistent on the negative aspects of that experience, with an expected adult readership. But as young adult literature of today contains ever more explicit violence and controversial subjects, it is becoming difficult to restrict works to the different age groups of readers: it is only the degree of intensity, and not the presence/absence of these subjects, that makes novels assignable to an adult reading. Another criterion might be fewer concessions to the audience, i.e., the effort and difficulty of reading are increased in an adult novel.

Authors of adult orientated *Internatsgeschichte* generally deplore the absence of a true master/disciple relationship, the compulsory confinement, the hypocrisy, the violence and abuse of power and the overall injustice prevailing over the social and individual relationships at the school. The school's purpose in 'protecting' the young from the social plagues of the outside world (even though sometimes the intention is exactly the opposite: to protect society from their outcasts, see Chapter 3), is contradicted by the very nature of

these educational institutions as a faithful microcosm of society's worst features: redolent with abuses of power, hypocrisy and disrespect for the individual. As 'special places' living in a different time (see Chapter 3, on Foucault, below) they are based on separation from the outside world. Confinement helps to exacerbate the conflicts and contradictions of the imagined 'freer' outer life, adding some extra ones, for instance, those peculiar to the dormitory space and to night times. Resenting confinement as violence, the characters are put into an extreme situation of adolescent angst and rage, a growing *malaise* that allows the authors of school novels to resort to the *Bildung* in order to delve into the psychological abysses of the young mind:

While in the *Bildungsroman* the external events prove secondary to the hero's inner development which centers on psychology, the school novel as *Bildungsroman* focuses on 'becoming' rather than as in the adventure novel, 'testing' (Erixon 2002, 30).

When focusing on the reasons *why* the subject resists schooling and *how* character is built in opposition to educational conditioning, the school novel and school story become, like the *Bildung* itself, philosophical and of paramount interest to the philosophy of education. The outcome of schooling depends as much, if not more, on what is rejected in the process than on what has been assimilated.

As well as rejection, there is another reaction to schooling; selection. What one forgets, and forgetting does not depend on will and choice, is equally important. For instance, school novels pay little or no attention to the typical lesson in a typical classroom, including the topics that are taught there. When classrooms do appear, such as in the school chapters of Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), this is not because something is being taught there but precisely because nothing is being taught, and the class has descended into indiscipline and anarchy.

One possible explanation for this absence of learning routines from the school novel may be that they leave no imprint at all on the ex-pupil's mind. What the pupils preserve durably in their memories is rather the non-schooling and extra-schooling parts, for example, occasional study visits and excursions but mostly what was going on the schoolyards and dormitories, on the sports field (in the case of Anglo-Saxon novels; or gym classes in Germanic schools) and even during weekends at home or on visits to the nearby bordello.

Does this mean that the footprint of the school curriculum is null and void with the pupils apparently learning from everywhere and from everything except for the classroom? Do school subjects lack impact and meaning? Should the educational aim be focused on subjects doomed to be forgotten or on values that will be able to endure a lifetime – or simply on the openness to discovery, on inquiry and intellectual daring? These are questions that Portuguese philosophers, theorists and essayists have debated for years.

The school novel in its 'light' or young adult variety, thrived particularly among English writers and examples are innumerable, from Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown Schooldays* (1857) through the creations of the prolific Enid Blyton up to the recent J. K. Rowling's heptalogy of *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), based on gothic motifs and belonging rather to the fantasy genre setting but nevertheless set in a boarding school, though this does not make these narratives true boarding school novels, as remarked by Au:

Some readers may believe that J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* can be considered as coming of age novels, but one of the necessary elements these books lack is realism within the storyline ([s/d], 3).

The young adult school-novel and school-story production has enjoyed a fair degree of market success with the Portuguese and Brazilian public, mostly through versions in Portuguese or their adaptations. It is thought to be specifically English:



[T]he school-story, like the detective-story, is primarily the creation of the English (Andrews 1970, 103)

It has even had some epigones in a market successfully served in Portugal primarily by female writers, such as Odette de Saint-Maurice, who was renown for novellas intended mostly for girls. She wrote a tetralogy about adolescent boys, which is partly set in a German boys' boarding school (Saint-Maurice 1955, 1956, 1959, 1963). As for Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, she was to choose for one of her books the story of a trip to a Swiss boarding school (1907). In spite of their wide young readership, the fact that the school narrative scene was dominated by female writers and had a clear foreign imprint denied a high literary status to these works in Portugal. But this low appreciation was also shared by most child and young adult literature, with the exception of the classics (Grimm, Ségur and the like), Verne, Kipling and a few titles by prominent national writers (e. g. Aquilino).

The two aforementioned Portuguese 'Enid Blytons' cultivated the school genre not exclusively but along with other genres intended for their youthful audience – adventures, travel, didacticism, etc. It is worth noting that the boarding schools chosen by those two authors (Saint-Maurice and Almeida) were German and Swiss, which were at their height of popularity at the time, although British stories were then starting to attract readers and were actively promoted as a powerful medium of propaganda for their own boarding school system in order to enlist international pupils.

### *School, 'Non-School' and 'De-School' Novel types*

Some further categories of the school-novel are the 'de-school novel' and the 'non-school novel'. The de-school novel, or anti-school manifestos, again take their starting point from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796), where Wilhelm discards bourgeois education for theatre and the artistic life, in much the same way as the Hessian character, Goldmund,

abandons his monastery to become a sculptor in *Narziß und Goldmund* (1930). Hermann Hesse, who was himself a former runaway ex-pupil of the Protestant boarding school, Evangelische Seminare Maulbronn, in Baden-Württemberg wrote *Unterm Rad* (1906) to denounce the scholastic, artificial and anti-life kind of knowledge transmitted by school.

*Unterm Rad* deals not only with the school years of Hans Giebenrath but goes further to the post-school times when this character tries to cope with the damage inflicted to him by the schooling process. The work is a *formative* narrative that ultimately excludes school as the primary path to achieving a successful adulthood with personal fulfilment. In so doing, it challenges the pedagogical dogmas about the worth of formal education.

The de-school novel's main tenet is to prove that growing up can and indeed should be naturally achieved without, in spite of or against formal education. Rousseau's *Émile*, with its idealized home-schooling could also fit this category.

There are three main possibilities to the de-school novel's plot. We may follow the characters in the aftermath of their school years, as in Hesse's *Unterm Rad*. Sometimes, the action may be set during an accidental *intermission* from school, providing an informal alternative to it; this plot, which was once typically set in a South Pacific desert island scenario has had an wide currency ranging from the Scottish writer, Robert M. Ballantyne's, *The Coral Island* (1857) to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), a pessimistic response to the original Ballantyne work. Similarly, French author Jules Verne's *Deux ans de vacances* (1888)<sup>12</sup> contrasts the education imparted at New Zealand

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<sup>12</sup> - While Verne was not impressed by the evidence of his own eyes and failed to write about the places he actually visited, like Lisbon, Portugal or Algiers, he seemed to be deeply moved by countries like New Zealand, which he never visited. In addition to *Deux ans de vacances* (1888) other books cast an attractive light on New Zealand in the minds of his young adult audience. One of the most pedagogic of his accounts, *Les Enfants du capitaine Grant* (1868) ends its action in New Zealand and includes discourses on the Maori, the kiwi, etc – a movie was based upon it, *In Search of the Castaways* [1961] by Robert Stevenson, United States, 94'; *L'Île mystérieuse* (1874) is a Robinsonade staged close to New Zealand Auckland Islands; *Un capitaine de quinze ans* (1878) starts its action in New Zealand; *L'École des Robinsons* (1888) departs from an intended voyage to

boarding schools with the more Darwinian growing up in the wild in Ireland-born Henry De Vere Stacpoole's *The Blue Lagoon* (1908).

The final variety of non-school novel presents a plot where schooling is excluded from the beginning, with the identical purpose of illustrating its artificial and superfluous role in the *Bildung* of the young mind, usually endorsing the view that the most meaningful attainments, such as spiritual life, firmly rooted ethics or vital survival skills can never to be acquired passively in any classroom but are solely realisable through by real life action, probation and practice.

In most cases the non-school novels are descended from folk and mythological tales of feral children, as in the novel about 'Hayy', the gazelle boy, by Ibn Tufail, *Risalat Hayy bin Yaqzan fi Asrar al-Hikma al-Mashriqiyya*<sup>13</sup> (c. 1105-1185). The story of 'Hayy' was followed shortly afterwards by a response, a novel about 'Kamil' the 'spontaneous' child, by Ibn al-Nafis (1213-1288), *Al-Risalah al-Kamiliyyah fil Siera al-Nabawiyyah*.<sup>14</sup>

Ibn Tufail's work belongs to European literature, not only because he was by birth an Andalusian and spent most of his lifetime in Europe performing important political functions but also because of his long-lasting influence, through Latin and English translations, on novels such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and all the Robinsonade tradition, and authors such as Rousseau, up until Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894-1895), in which the wolf-boy Mowgli is an avatar of the gazelle-boy Hayy introduced by Ibn Tufail.

While Tufail's novel had a clear *Bildung* purpose in following the progress of a character from early childhood to adulthood with the key formative years spent in total

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New Zealand; and New Zealand is also present in *Les Frères Kip* (1902) while other novels follow a more topical staging in the South Pacific sea and islands, for example, *L'Île à hélice* (1895).

<sup>13</sup> - *The book about Hayy bin Yaqzan on the secrets of Eastern wisdom.*

<sup>14</sup> - *The book about Kamil on the Prophet's Life.*

isolation, Defoe changed this scope and fashioned a seasoned sailor as his Robinson – creating an ‘adult’ tradition of characters stranded on islands, as, for instance, is the case in the recent movie *Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000, USA, 143'). Most authors, however, returned the age of their characters to childhood or to youth, perceiving such cases of isolated survival as being eminently pedagogical and highly appropriate to the effect of literary experiences on alternative education.

Tufail's opponent, al-Nafis, is, on the other hand, by birth, life and stance a *mashriqi*, ie., an Oriental thinker, reacting to the ideas of the former. His denial of Tufail's thesis refutes the presence of *fermenta cognitionis* from birth in mankind, which ultimately may lead to the dismissal of Revelation or science, etc. If man is able to find his own way without help, why did God send His message to the Prophet?

Authors such as Augustine of Hippo, in his *De Magistro*, voiced objections similar to those later espoused by Tufail. To Augustine, man is insufficient and depends on God and His grace to attain any sort of knowledge.

The report on Victor d'Aveyron by Jean Itard (1801/6) deals with a similar problem: if knowledge is not embedded, is the concept of justice co-natural in mankind? And if so, are values innate or dependent upon education?

In other accounts a master/disciple spiritual bond is held to be more advantageous than schooling, as in Kipling's *Kim* (1901). In some other stories, the sole lifelong wandering search for mentorship is deemed to be sufficient, as in Hermann Hesse's *Siddharta* (1922).

Two 2008 movies, *Australia* (Baz Luhrmann, Australia) and *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, UK), have also assessed the relative merits of informal education vs. formal schooling. In the former, the dispute is settled in favour of a traditional aboriginal instruction as opposed to a colonists' religious boarding school to favour best the interests

and aspirations of the 11 year old mixed White-Aboriginal boy, Nullah. In the latter it is street life, even though violent and unmerciful, and not school that proves to be effective in teaching a useful array of both encyclopaedic and trivial knowledge, that is crucial to allowing the protagonist, Jamal, to find the right way out of his many troubles.

School, non-school and de-school types of narrative can have a *Bildung* component: the opposition of self-determination vs. education and control vs. resistance.

Narratives on youth can thus be mapped across 3 general lines:

Learning from experience (external action and events)	Folk tales & myths	Coming of age narratives	Adventure novels
Psychological, inner novel	<u>BILDUNGSROMAN</u>	<u>KÜNSTLERROMAN</u>	
Schooling and anti-schooling	<u>SCHULROMAN</u>	<u>INTERNATSGESCHICHTE</u>	Un/Deschool novel, 'Robinsonade', 'Feral child', etc.

**Figure 3: Varieties of youth novels**

### *Portuguese contributions*

A study of the contribution to the philosophy of education or to pedagogy in the Portuguese language, outside the works of professional pedagogues, should include texts produced by philosophers, teachers and fiction writers, namely autobiographies, diaries and memoirs written by those presenting personal and subjective accounts of their school years.

As for philosophers, some prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese have made a contribution to the philosophy of education: Delfim Santos (Carrilho 1988), Agostinho da Silva (Manso 2006) Sant'Anna Dionísio (Aresta 2004), etc. Writers of fiction such as Almeida Garrett (Lima 1956), Eça de Queiroz (Sousa 2008) and Teixeira de Pascoaes, among others, have also been thoroughly studied as educationists.

The particular case of when a fiction writer is also a teacher arouses the expectation of finding material concerning his pedagogical thoughts to have pervaded his literary work, although this is not always the case. Portuguese literature encompasses a fair number of teacher-authors (together with journalists and doctors, these are the three best represented careers in the world of Portuguese writers), with the names of occasional or lifelong teachers including António Feliciano de Castilho (1800-1875), Camilo Pessanha (1867-1926), Irene Lisboa (1892-1958), Florbela Espanca (1894-1930), José Régio (1901-1969), Rodrigues Miguéis (1901-1980), Agostinho da Silva (1906-1994), Rómulo de Carvalho (1906-1997), Casais Monteiro (1908-1972), Marmelo e Silva (1911-1991), Vergílio Ferreira (1916-1996), Matilde Rosa Araújo (1921-2010) and Sebastião da Gama (1924-1952) being paramount.

Among these teacher-writers, only two have authored auto-fictional boarding school novels: José Régio (*A Drop of Blood*, 1945) and Vergílio Ferreira (*Drowned Dawn*, 1954). The second novel belongs to the Existentialist movement while the first has a particular philosophical potential, and this is why this study will concentrate on a discussion of Régio's work, from Chapter 4 onwards.

### Chapter 3: Boarding Schools as ‘special places’ or allotopias

*‘in school it was power, and power alone that mattered’*

(Lawrence 1921, 356)

Michel Foucault (1926-1984), in his essay *Of Other Places* (1984), has helped to illuminate issues of power relations, school surveillance and punishment, providing an appropriate lens for considering the historical and cultural construction of schooling, issues of power and subjectification, and the construction of the ideal schooled subject.

Foucault’s investigations of confinement as a pattern may be applied to a number of institutions related to boarding schools, ranging from prisons or re-education centres for young offenders to military barracks [controlling behaviour], convents and monasteries [mastering souls], hospitals and sanatoriums [transforming bodies] and finally to schools and asylums [moulding both mind and body].

Foucault’s analysis of 1984 did not focus specifically on literature but this investigation into the relationship between spaces and the way in which power plays a role in these relationships is helpful in approaching the treatment of the power/space dyad in the school novel.

*Foucault on places special for their power relations*

*‘Every prison is a universe and every universe a prison’.*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> - *‘Toute prison est un univers, tout univers une prison’* – Victor Serge (1930) *Les hommes dans la prison*.

What has made boarding schools such an important literary topic? Foucault once observed that what he argued to be the transition from ‘punitive’ to ‘disciplinary’ societies implied the appearance of new literary forms:

If from the early Middle Ages to the present day the ‘adventure’ is an account of individuality, the passage from the epic to the novel, from the noble deed to the secret singularity, from long exiles to the internal search for childhood, from combats to phantasies, it is also inscribed in the formation of disciplinary societies. (1977, 193).

These new forms, namely the school novel, were linked to new perceptions of space. Modern readings of disenchantment and the desacralisation of space – such as the Weberian *Entzauberung* – seemed to signal the end of ancient and traditional perceptions of spatiality as a discontinuous realm where empowered places burst out occasionally, filled with magical, ‘irrational’ motifs (DeBernardi 1992). Still, contemporary thinkers have somehow reverted to a uniform perception of space and have been exploring new and dynamic spatial fragmentations to such an extent that space seems to be ‘alive’ again, and a ‘space turn’ has arisen from the previous prevalence of time (Withers 2009). An overview of these different approaches can be found in Hubbard & Kitchin (2011).

Foucault himself heralded this space revolution:

Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well (Foucault 1986, 23).

To Foucault, modernity retained its own instances of a now *secular enchantment* of space, conferring upon certain places what he would consider to be *heterotopic* properties; this is to use the term he adopted in the conference paper *On Other Spaces*, written in Tunisia (Foucault 1986) and delivered in Paris to an audience of architects at the *Cercle d'études architecturales* on March 14, 1967, was where he fashioned this Greek term to encompass a number of diverse spaces that shared the same feature of *alterity*. Three years



before, in his literary review 'The Language of Space' (1964, 2007), Foucault had alluded to the contemporary prevalence of space over time but without making any reference to *heterotopia*. More significantly, he did not refer to the concept after 1967, apart from a few brief and circumstantial allusions.

Foucault's address was quite poetical and evocative and not intended to be an exhaustive and methodical treatment of the *heterotopic* concept, which, since then, has remained a spatial category open for debate. He also, probably, stretched the concept rather too far with the examples he gave. Allowing for a redefinition of the scope and usefulness of the *heterotopic* idea, a reassessment of his influential text is due. To that end, a new designation is here advanced: *allotopias* are to be further related to Goffman's 'total institutions'; to Leach's 'anomalous categories'; to Augé's 'non-places' and to Baudrillard's *hyperreality*. These conceptual models of spatial otherness are important to the re-reading of the rich and varied body of narratives – literary, historical, educational, psychological, erotic, artistic, medical, administrative, juridical and popular, which are found in the press, movies, comics and animation and are centred on the concepts of seclusion, reclusion and exclusion. This corpus is a rewarding field for the study of power relations embedded in educational or carceral practices, as advanced by Foucault and others.

The paper of 1967 remains the main source for Foucault's thinking on *heterotopia*. It was only intended as a preliminary exploration and he hesitated at length before allowing its release, seventeen years later, shortly before his death, without any revision or changes, as *Des espaces autres, Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5, 46-49 (1984). It was

translated into English in 1986.<sup>16</sup> When he referred to this lecture in a 1982 interview, he conveyed, perhaps, a certain embarrassment over his past choice of the word *heterotopia*:

I recall having been invited, in 1966, by a group of architects to do a study of space, of something that I called at that time ‘heterotopias’, those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others. (Foucault 1982, 20, emphasis is added in all quotations).

According to the famous 1967 paper, *heterotopia* names those places which display a sort of tabooed deviation from the standard, making them feel disturbingly and excessively *symbolic*. In most cases, this happens because of the peculiar sort of people inhabiting them or, vice-versa, the place bestows peculiarity upon those who enter and exit from it in a dialogical way, since ‘what [these people] do is determined by what they are; what they are is determined by their place, which is determined in turn by what they are’ (Rancière 2010, 17).

Because Foucault never came back to *heterotopias* in any systematic way and revised his somewhat hasty presentation of the *heterotopic* category, various interpretations of what he meant by the word have been – and continue to be – read into his work (Topinka 2010, 58-59). Particularly confusing seems to be his mixing up of what are properly places (*topias*) with various talismanic objects, like mirrors and rugs, which he considered also to embody alterity. Since then, *heterotopias* have attracted the imagination of the public and

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<sup>16</sup> - Miskowiec’s English translation (1986) of *On Other Spaces* leaves a lot to be desired: for instance, on 25-26 he makes Foucault say, absurdly, that gardens are ‘now a thousand years old’, followed by the contradictory statement ‘since the beginnings of antiquity’. In reality, gardens are commented upon in various works by Xenophon from the fourth-century BC, namely in his *Education of Cyrus*, the *Oeconomicus*, the *Anabasis* and the *Hellenica*, and these mentions are not even the first historical records. Such *longue durée* is implied by Foucault when he uses the French word ‘*millénaire*’, i.e. the gardens have a history of various millennia, therefore traceable ‘*depuis le fond de l’Antiquité*’.

Another recurring trend of Miskowiec’s translation is to alter Foucault’s gendering of pronouns: where Foucault employs the neutral ‘*sa*’ (‘one’s’) he renders it by ‘her or his’ (25); he proceeds likewise with the translation of ‘*chacun*’, which is a generic masculine in French (27); and where Foucault writes simply ‘*il*’ (‘he’), Miskowiec boldly replaces it with ‘her’ (26), thus lending a false tone to the author’s intention and expression.

gained wide currency among researchers in the fields of philosophy, literature, anthropology, geography, ethnography, education, sociology, arts, communication, design, architecture and urban planning. Most of the commentaries written so far on *heterotopias* have attempted to make unified and coherent sense of Foucault's loose collection of suggestions but the result has been, to a large extent, unfoucauldian. The current reading of *On Other Spaces* is conceived as a sequel to the original text, developing Foucault's examples and exploring new ones. The tone and the mood of the model have been likewise adopted: a poetical excursus, across various disciplinary fields, centred on the powerful ideas of variance and difference, exile and banning. Foucault's erratic and, at times, inconsistent explorations will be addressed in an effort to achieve a more structured and systematic reading of the *heterotopic* factor and, by redefining its boundaries, the need for a new terminology will become clear.

### *Sovereign power*

Foucault's *heterotopias* can be elucidated through his better-known ideas on power. These have been useful to educationists studying the relationship between governments and education, classroom interactions, surveillance and punishment in school practice and government policies for lifelong learning (Fejes & Nicoll 2008; Santos 2011). In his *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault contrasted two types of power: the first he called *sovereign*, a traditional and predominantly visible and theatrical form, characteristic of the *ancien régime*; the second he labelled *disciplinary*, being a more subtle and modern variety of power, inscribed at the micro level of daily life. He further characterised the latter category not so much as *power* but as what could be considered to be *authority*, i.e., a relational dominance demanding a free subject, being constantly (re-)negotiated, and ruling

more by securing consent through the per(in-)vasive conditioning of the will and mind than by brutal coercion.

Since new ways do not entirely replace the old, remnants from previous practices become important for the characterisation of exceptional spatialities where, in modern times, sovereign power does not give way to manipulated and manufactured consent. Instead, since ‘we are in the epoch of juxtaposition’ (Foucault 1986, 22), an overlapping of power regimes persisting in certain territories where, in fact, the old prevails over the new,

elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another (Foucault 1986, 22).

In his influential 1961 study *Asylums*, Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman (1922-1982) used the concept of ‘total institutions’ to study a number of confinement places previously grouped ‘under a variety of names’ (Goffman 1961, 4). Goffman’s total institutions were later to be included in the broader list of Foucault’s *heterotopias*, although Foucault differentiated his work from that of Goffman. He stated that his point was not to write the history of confinement institutions, or even of the confinement idea, but to explain the rationale behind it, ‘the history of rationality as it works in institutions and in the behaviour of people’ (Dillon 1980, 4), rationality being the leitmotiv, in Foucault’s characterisation, of modernity.

*Seclusion, involuntary membership and surveillance, old and new*

Davies (1989, 77) observed that total institutions were ‘both *part of* and *separate from* modern societies’ and this separation was to Goffman (1961) a material ‘barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forest, or moors’; Foucault added that total institutions are

...not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in, one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures (Foucault 1986, 26).

But the gap separating these *strong places* and the ordinary ones is not so much a spatial one since they could be placed right in the middle of a town. It is rather to be found in the time/space conjunction and their overcharged meaning derives not so much from the places themselves as from the kind of relationship they sustain with all other places: they are not 'different' because of their own *ethos* but for that set of dense interactions they establish with other spaces/times. Interaction is the concept at the core of spatiality itself:

Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites. (Foucault 1986, 23).

...in any differential system, it is the assertion of the space *between* the entities that matters. (Man 1986, 128).

Accordingly, what makes bodies beautiful resides not in themselves but in the harmony of 'the relationship of the body to the space that surrounds it' (Purves 2010, 211).

In addition to their odd placement in the time/space continuum, another major feature of such *troubled zones* is their anxiousness to regulate their own time and space in a very rigid and particular way. We can find this in some regulations of French boarding schools inserted in the *Règlement de police pour les lycéens* of 1809: on time – 'art. 68: 'After the evening prayer, the students will be conducted back to the dormitory, where the schoolmasters will put them to bed at once'; and on space – 'art. 70: 'the beds shall be separated by partitions two metres in height' (Foucault 1978, 28, n. 12). Such obsession with surveillance was justified by the La Flèche Jesuits: 'Do not complain, gentleman, if a great many masters and other people never let you out of their sight. This *eternal vigilance* is embarrassing but necessary'. And embarrassment was certainly present in the extension of the masters' vigilance to the boarders' use of the latrines (Ariès 1962, 255).

According to the monastic model, triple vigilance is established: from above by the hierarchy, from alongside by fellow-pupils and, ubiquitously, by God (Gradowicz-Pancer 1999, 170), as the Rule of St. Benedict was keen to comment:

... let him consider that he is always observed by God from heaven at all times and that his actions everywhere are seen by the divine gaze and reported by angels at all times (Rule of St. Benedict 7, 12-13).

In some cases the reporting role of the angels as overseers of human deeds was taken by the confession to the priests.

At the end of the eighteenth-century, Jeremy Bentham had used the concept of vigilance to establish the hidden affinities between these special institutions:

No matter how different, or even opposite the[ir] purpose: whether it be that of punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected, employing the idle, maintaining the helpless, curing the sick, instructing the willing in any branch of industry, or training the rising race in the path of education: in a word, [total surveillance is needed] whether it be applied to the purposes of perpetual prisons in the room of death, or prisons for confinement before trial, or penitentiary-houses, or houses of correction, or work-houses, or manufactories, or mad-houses, or hospitals, or schools (Bentham 1787, Letter 1).

Bentham suggested his infamous *panopticon* as the architectural solution best suited to ensure constant monitoring and to assist in the pervasiveness of the authorities' all-intrusive gaze. Very few buildings were ever erected according to his plans; most were prisons, some hospitals. One was a prison-asylum, built in 1896 in Lisbon, Portugal, and conceived as a secure pavilion within a mental institution. Here, this notorious structure was adopted to isolate violent patients, including those who had become mentally ill while serving time in prison and those not imputable for their crimes but still sentenced to confinement (Freire 2009).

Such novel devices for the control of people were first put to the test in institutions designed to control lunatics, school pupils or convicts, since they are 'the forcing houses

for changing persons; each [one] is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self' (Goffman 1961, 12); but these model experiences are meant to be applied subsequently, should the results prove effective, to the whole of society, for which new techniques of behavioural engineering are constantly sought. They operate as 'a kind of laboratory of power' (Foucault 1995, 204).

The possibilities for the extension and amplification of such techniques are limitless. In modern times, zealous lawmakers – inspired by political, religious, sexual and property rights, eager to control mobility and acting on other pretexts – incessantly have added 'new regulations or laws, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of regulations and laws already in force' (Kropotkine 1887, 1); the largest and most formidable regulatory system ever established. The world is coming to resemble the famous literary carceral dystopias such as the one Camus anticipated in 1953 as

a time when, in a [world] of concentration camps, the only people at liberty will be prison guards who will then have to lock up one another. When only one remains, he will be called the 'supreme guard' and that will be the ideal society [towards which] governments and police forces throughout the world are striving, with great good will, to achieve such a happy situation (Camus 1995, 87).

In regimes administered by elected officials, politicians have found that voters appreciate the growing imprisonment of 'others'; the number of these 'others' tends to increase as repression ceases hounding some of its customary targets only to turn itself more virulently than ever against new ones.

To monitor becomes insufficient. Space is classified, categorised and split by ever more challenging barriers. Frontiers are modelled upon prison perimeters: they are festooned with barbed wire and have no-man's-lands at their edges. Or new walls are built encircling entire territories; mobility is denied and citizens converted into virtual prisoners within the boundaries of their own nations, barred from entering, exiting or migrating.

In the past, exclusion was based on single-category regimes, like those based on age, birth, status, race, religion, poverty, family, lifestyle, criminal record or illness. *Rational* times required a new criterion to inhibit more people from moving from one space to another and so an additional, more *objective*, rationale for segregation was created: nationality, given substance by the invention of the passport and its required visas. An instrument of immobility, the passport imposes restrictions upon spaces and answers to the question of

...knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end (Foucault 1986, 23).

As well as added efficacy, the passport brought additional advantages. Not only did it render states able to distance themselves rhetorically from the former set of segregation criteria that they boisterously ‘rejected’ in order to appear benign, enlightened and *modern* – in addition, thanks to this more comprehensive tool, they were able to retain, in the most arbitrary way, the majority (if not all) of those old criteria, now enforced in a *cold*, technical and impersonal way (Houtum 2010; Higgins & Leps 1998; Kearney 1991; Chalk 2009).

As exact microcosms of the larger contemporary state *scopophilia* so, too, the ‘total institutions’ – which comprise the bulk of Foucault’s *heterotopias* – are the consequence of that peculiar *animus vigilandi*, a drive for total control, not only to prevent people from moving out or in but also to regulate, in the strictest way, their time/space expenditure. Lexical analysis unveils their kinship: the German ‘*Internat*’ means ‘boarding school’; in Spanish and Portuguese, ‘*internado*’, as an adjective, applies to people confined in asylums and hospitals, while as a noun (Port. ‘*internato*’) it designates both a boarding school and an intern position (houseman) in a hospital. To these last two meanings the Italian



*'internato'* adds that of a military prisoner in an internment camp during the Second World War. Meanings also flow freely from etymological associations: 'school' is related to the Greek *scholai*, meaning a troop of soldiers; *apprehendere* was the Latin word for 'arrest' and 'imprison' and in the Romanic languages came to mean 'to be schooled'. Echoing Bentham's summing up of surveillance institutions, Foucault asks: 'Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?' (Foucault 1995, 228).

In fact, each of these names merely denotes a specific focus of surveillance: when these institutions are established for the control of behaviour, they are named prisons, mass incarceration camps or re-education centres for juveniles. When intended for the control of souls, they are called convents and monasteries. Bodies are the main objects of control in hospitals or sanatoriums. Minds are supposed to be changed in asylums. And, overarching all others, when the focus lies on controlling and changing behaviour, souls, bodies and minds together, they are termed schools and boot camps.

In the prison-like group of institutions, the control and surveillance process is directed towards visible conduct but in the reprogramming type, such as re-education centres, convents, asylums and schools, it reaches the members' inner selves, 'the inmate's private feelings are presumably at issue. Mere compliance with work rulings would not here seem to be enough' (Goffman 1961, 118).

There are further, even more extreme experiences of confinement, namely islands, mountains and other remote places of terminal seclusion and eviction, such as the leprosaria:

I had never heard this English word before and I was bewitched by it. Leprosy was a primitive and dark disease, like an ancient curse. It suggested the unclean and the forbidden. It called to mind outcasts. It was an aspect of old, unsubtle Africa. Leper, leper, leper. I was sick of metaphors. I wanted words to have unambiguous meanings: leper, wilderness, poverty, heat (Theroux 1994, 130).

Exclusion may use many singular masks but never truly leaves the stage. Blanchot condensed Foucault's remarks on its persistence: 'before the mad, there were lepers, and it was in the sites, simultaneously physical and spiritual, left empty by the lepers, who had disappeared, that shelters for the newly excluded were set up' (Bosteels 2003, 124).

So the leprosaria became the asylums and also the sanatoriums for tuberculosis patients. With the advent of AIDS it was suggested that there was a need to create 'aidsatoria' ('*sidatoria*' in French) which met with public disapproval and which were never built; instead, some sections within hospitals were set up to isolate and confine the stigmatised patients. Terminal confinement differs from all other confinement practices because its aim is to order not life but death.

#### *Allotopias as spaces of otherness*

According to Foucault, *utopias* cannot, by definition, exist since when they are made to exist they cease to be *utopias*; instead, *heterotopias* are like *erected utopias*, a 'mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live', 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within [a] culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (Foucault 1986, 24).

Foucault additionally differentiated between *heterotopias of crisis* and *heterotopias of deviation* but this distinction seems to be insufficiently grounded, as deviation always springs from some crisis, and *crisis* – i.e. 'choice' – comes out of a *detour* from a given route, i.e. from a 'deviation' (Foucault 1986, 24-25). With regard to retirement homes, Foucault did realise that 'old age is a crisis but is also a deviation' (Foucault 1986, 25). So, too, any of his other *heterotopias* can be assigned both to a state of crisis and to an attitude of deviation: the prison that he deemed to be the *heterotopia* of deviation *par excellence* presupposes a crisis, a *déroutement* in individual and social life.

It is possible to question, on semantic grounds, the use (or misuse) of the qualifier *hetero-* with the noun *topos*, as employed by Foucault. The word *heterotopia* is a medical term well known to doctors as indicating the slight displacement or misplacement of an organ or other body part to an abnormal but *adjacent* location, a mere *changing* of place. Medicine is Greek in vocabulary and employs this composite noun to designate a slight misplacement and not a dislocation to a completely different place: there is *heterotopia* when some grey matter falls into the cerebral white matter and not into any distant and different organ. Hence *heterotopia* is a word that is unfitted to designate a place that would be thought of as being *radically different*.

*Allotopia* better suits the meaning of ‘place of otherness’, from the Greek *allos*, implying *differentiation* (something *distinct from*) rather than the simple *variation* suggested by *hetero-*. It properly conveys the Foucauldian meaning of exceptionality and *sacredness*, in the Latin sense of *sacer*, both fearful and forbidden to the common people.

In the following paragraphs, an overview of the historical and transcultural embodiments of Foucault’s ‘other places’, now renamed *allotopias*, will help us to fine-tune this category.

### *The uer sacrum*

In his definition of *heterotopias of crisis* Foucault included, prominently, a boot camp and a traditional boys’ boarding school:

In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e., there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc. In our society, these crisis heterotopias are persistently disappearing, though a few remnants can still be found. For example, the boarding school, in its nineteenth-century form, or military service for young men, have certainly played such a role, as the first manifestations of sexual virility

were in fact supposed to take place ‘elsewhere’ than among the family (Foucault 1986, 24).

At the cultural root of the boarding school or the boot camp educational model lies the banning of young men from common society called, in ancient times, the *uer sacrum*. The *uer sacrum* targets young manhood at the fringes of society, fringes that can be moral, behavioural, racial or social and are grounded in feelings of non-belonging, of non-fitting, shared and agreed by excluders and excluded. This age-old ‘forbidden spring’ custom also inspired the Viennese modernists when they parted from established artistic conventions: in 1897, they founded a new artistic society called *Secessio* and their magazine was aptly named *Ver Sacrum* (Bisanz-Prakken 2006).

Thus *uer sacrum* was an ancient example of the *allotopic* secession of young men similar to the boys’ boarding school or boot camp separation from family and friends. During the Roman *uer sacrum*, all the boys born in a given year were consecrated then expelled into the wilderness, as soon as they could endure the departure, to a place that was truly a not-yet-a-place; the unknown, the uncharted, a *futuretopia*. This ‘scapegoating’ procedure can be traced back to Rome’s foundation itself since it was found in the banning of Romulus and his companions from Alba Longa, which led them eventually to found the new city of Rome in Latium. ‘Scapegoating’ is taken here, not in the common sense of assigning to an ‘innocent victim’ the expiation of collective guilt, nor in the Girardian sense of surrogate guilt (Girard 1979), but in its pristine meaning of ‘expelling the outcast’. Mithridates Eupator, the aggrieved king of Pontus, was keen to trace the criminal nature of the Romans’ imperial drive back to their descent from the brigandry of Romulus’ companions. He grounded their insatiable hunger for conquest in a taste for the possessions of others, including the coveting of others’ females, as was blatantly initiated in the abduction of the Sabine wives. Expelled to the nowhere, the former Alban denizens had

become ‘deniedzens’ precisely to be forced into founding a new city, a colony, on robbery and rape, or what we would call today ‘biocolonisation’:

[The Romans] have possessed nothing since the beginning of their existence except what they have stolen: their home, their wives, their lands, their empire. Once vagabonds without fatherland, without parents, created to be the scourge of the whole world, no laws, human or divine, prevent them from seizing and destroying... (Sallust (c. 39BC) *Histories* 4.67.17).

As with the Romans, most empires have originated in the banning and expelling of certain people or in their exclusion from power centres. Imperial motivation arises from the resentment and revenge of the dregs: Romans, Arabs, Franks, Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, British, Americans, all these people were considered as peripheral at some point in their pre-imperial history and execrated as marginal and the underclass. They lived by ‘the dream of seeing the whole world abased in fear and love, admiration and remorse, at the feet of the once despised!’ (Mann 1999, 299).

Sergent (2003) has studied this banning institution among other Indo-European peoples. Many among them shared the religious and political solution of sending out belligerent expeditions composed of brotherhoods of dispossessed young men with no return allowed. Yet the same recurring motif of the banned young man is present in non-Indo-European cultures as well, such as in the series of reiterated narratives in *Genesis*. Cain, the son of Adam, Ham, the son of Noah, and Ishmael, the son of Abraham, are wrecked young outsiders who are sent to wander in ‘the east country’ and who stand for entire generations of future outsiders; the last two becoming the nation-founders of the Arabs and the Egyptians, consequently considered in the Hebrew worldview as *underclass* races, the lees of mankind fitted only for slavery and serfdom, ‘servants of servants unto his brethren’ (Leach 1988, 2). These three characters are somehow assumed to retain their perpetual sonship and never attain the full status of accomplished men, of ‘patriarchs’.

Even if they are credited with the establishing of marginal nations after their errantry through the placelessness of the desert, the remoteness of the countries they eventually established comes to mirror, in geographical terms, the social gap between the misfit and the dominant, standard society. They are at the limits of the known world because they are at the very limits of mankind themselves, in the same way as slaves have been sometimes considered to be a type of only half-human being.

It is known how Ishmael, the primordial desert castaway condemned by his own father to become orphan-like, was to find a surrogate, half-present-half-absent father in the no man's land of the desert, for 'God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness'. When he was still young, his mother arranged a marriage for him with an Egyptian (Genesis 21:20-21) and – while the agency of the mother seems to reinforce the son-character of Ishmael – the episode establishes a significant connection with the descendants of Ham, another excluded son.

To these three unfortunate young men we may add a fourth. Joseph's abduction and sale into slavery by his brothers is a renewal of the cast-off boy motif. Not surprisingly, the descendants of Ishmael eventually came to acquire him:

Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver (Genesis 37:28).

The selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites is a further knot in their tightly interwoven experience of alterity and otherness; finally, Joseph, too, ends up in Egypt to further associate his destiny with that of the cursed African descendants of Ham.

The Ishmael-type as the iconic primal young castaway has left a sizeable imprint in history and literature alike. Expelled sons function as symbolic orphans and vice-versa, and not surprisingly both have walked hand in hand: Ishmael came to forefather the refounder of the Arab nation, the Prophet Muhammad, and quite predictably, Muhammad was

orphaned at a tender age; as the new Ishmael, he was bound to renew the motif of the desert orphan.

Scapegoats like Romulus, evicted sons like Ishmael, orphans from classic and folk narratives and exposed infants all belong to the same social and psychological type as those young men who have been sent to boarding schools and boot camps, as mentioned by Foucault: they are age-old embodiments and modern varieties of the universal archetype of the young outcast. Sometimes, however, *the outcast of one age is the hero of another*: it was the abandonment and rejection of the nine-year old Mongolian boy Temüjin, abandoned in the steppes by his own clansmen, together with the women and without any sort of protection, that paved the way to his eventual rise as lord of the World, Genghis Khan, as the *Secret History of the Mongols* (1228, in Mongolian Tobchi'an, 2.74 tells us: Urgunge Onon

[74] And so the Tayichi'ut brethren set out and left behind in the camp the widowed Lady Hö'elün, her little ones, and the mothers and their children.

#### *Restricted eligibility and transience*

Although Goffman remarked that 'obviously, significant differences in tone will appear in total institutions, depending on whether recruitment is voluntary, semi-voluntary, or involuntary' (Goffman 1961, 118), it is the principle of *involuntary membership*, together with *restricted eligibility*, that generally applies to *allotopias*. Boarding schools also provide a good illustration of restricted eligibility: 'despite their reputation for excellence, elite boarding schools remain largely outside the public gaze, and debates about schools rarely consider these highly selective, privileged institutions' (Gaztambide-Fernández 2009, 1090). The exceptionality of the secluded ones is further intensified after they undergo certain rituals, during a precisely defined span of time, in places that

...are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies (Foucault 1986, 26).

These troupes of youngsters are both *exclusive* and *excluded*. They are excluded, not in the sense of being deprived of economic or decisional power but as constituting tiny minority groups, both privileged and underprivileged, forced into temporary detachment from regular exchanges with the remainder of society.

The practice of enclosing groups or lifestyles away from the common view usually leads the public to obsessively wonder what is going on behind the walls. Seclusion has the double effect of hiding and revealing some of the realities targeted: concealed from the scrutiny of ordinary folk, these places are perceived to be shrouded in mystery, trouble, enigma and nervousness. Imagined as the hotspots of a culture and zones of disconcerting signification, they prompt a number of appealing narratives: whatever is *taboo* becomes the focus, not only of anxiety, *but also of special interest* (Leach 1989, 156, inverted). So says Foucault:

The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, together with the psychiatrist and the hysteric (...) seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted (Foucault 1980, 4).

A plethora of works intended for general consumption has been born out of this curiosity for human experiences taking place in restricted environments: carceral literature such as Fyodor Dostoevsky *Memoirs from the House of the Dead* (*Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*) (1862); sanatorial literature like Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*) (1924, or asylum literature such as Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962). These subgenres have been developed by authors who have used their first-hand experience on behalf of a non-incarcerated or non-interned readership; these are



works not aimed at engaging those directly acquainted with the events narrated, on the contrary, actual and ex-inmates are expected to be outside their target audience.

Boarding schools, too, as exceptional crossings, stage ‘a rite of initiation, a hardening procedure comparable in some ways to the ‘rites de passage’ of social puberty found among many peoples’ (Davies 1989, 93). In Van Gennep’s system, to board would be a ‘*rite de marge*’ or ‘*rite liminaire*’ (Zhang 2012, 122); I suggest that it may further be labelled as well as an ‘expiatory rite,’ in a classification of rites as propitiatory/expiatory/gratulatory. This type of rites separate, single out a given life span from all previous and future events, and they usually leave a durable imprint because of their over-significance and excessive meaning. That lasting effect inspired so many *old boys*, from a variety of cultures and in many different languages, to write an impressive corpus of more or less autobiographical short stories, novels and memoirs about their boarding school years, intended, also, for consumption outside the institution. This genre flourished over a period of roughly one and a half centuries with remarkable success among a wide range of readers, a sort of a gift offered by senior writers, drowning in nostalgia, to young adults daydreaming of adventure.

There are basically two narratives about boarding school culture. In the first, boarding schools are places of constant surveillance, authoritarian practices and ferocious competition among pupils, with violence inflicted over the weaker ones and resistance by those (still) imbued with a sense of justice. The other narrative emphasizes camaraderie, strong friendships that may last a lifetime, protective masters, exciting learning and quality teaching and environment.

Along these lines two types of novels have developed. The first, which we may call the ‘adult branch’, belongs to the Romantic tradition with its focus on the *Bildung*, inwardness and individual separateness; it has produced a few masterworks by writers who

have also been famous for cultivating different genres. The other, the 'young adult branch', has had a much more positive approach and has been, by far, more prolific having been served by a mass of school story professionals writers who have produced the 'schoolboy story' proper, while the adult counterpart would be better defined as the 'story of a boy's inner troubles at school'. There have been boy-hero types for all tastes: the bookish, the solitary, the cruel, the troubled, the rebellious, the misunderstood and the melancholic are the most expected to figure in novels of the first branch; in the second the sporty, the popular, the gentle and the winner types are required.

The novels have also split into two branches of self-narrative: the psychological autobiographic type, in which action and reaction take place mostly inside the subject's consciousness, and the plot-based type that privileges external action, such as the memoirist type of factual recollection.

Especially among the young adult branch, social class has become a major player: class tensions are expected to figure conspicuously since a most ambiguous feature which sets boarding schools apart from all other confinement institutions is that, according to rigid lines of wealth and status, they are considered an exquisite privilege for the rich, a cruel punishment for unruly middle class boys and a sad fate for the destitute orphan who forges there his future doom as an antisocial troublemaker. So the same institution is able to inspire narratives encompassing a range of establishments as diverse as Tom Brown's prestigious Rugby School (Hughes 1857) and David Copperfield's notorious Salem House (Dickens 1849). Yet Dickens' socially committed criticism of schools designed for the working-class and the indigent eventually failed to be adopted as the preferred setting for the school story, perhaps because the main character in his novels, which anyway deal only episodically and incidentally with Victorian schooling either in its worse traits or in a not so scandalous depiction, was none other than society itself with all its contradictions and

absurdities, and not really the school or the young schoolboy. Later, the English young adult boarding schoolboy story was to retain in an expected way this concern for status and class: it came to be beguiled almost exclusively by the (mis)fortunes of upper class youth:

...there is, in the English tradition, the added fascination, one assumes, of class. About 7 per cent of English children attend private schools (a figure which has changed little in a hundred years), yet these are the favored settings. This suggests that the genre drifted at a quite early stage towards fantasy (Hunt 2001, 300).

This social escapism was certainly desired by the ‘boys at very cheap private schools, the schools that are designed for people who can’t afford a public school’ (Orwell 2008, 71-72), since this was the niche of that type of story: those *excluded from seclusion*, those remaining within the society from which the others were *temporarily set apart*, those trying to live *vicariously* the more or less exciting adventures found in the pages of works *written by*, and about, *but not for*, the upper class boarding schoolboy:

It is quite clear that there are tens and scores of thousands of people to whom every detail of life at a ‘posh’ public [independent] school is wildly thrilling and romantic. They happen to be outside that mystic world (...) but they yearn after it, daydream about it, live mentally in it for hours at a stretch (Orwell 2008, 71).

The school story genre came to dilute any hint of social criticism in order to focus on its two protagonists, the boy and the school, according to the two different types: in the first, centrality was awarded to the young hero’s innermost troubles, his private and less confessable thoughts and, consequently, less attention was paid to the school itself. It was a kind of literature targeted at a mature, seasoned audience, eager to deal more with psychological, existential and sexual issues than with educational trends or minute school particulars. In the other subtype, greater care was placed on recreating school life, its details and incidents, and on conveying more consistently the collective dynamics of school forms, sport teams and matches and even the characters of the schoolmasters, at the expense of the

schoolboy's solitary ruminations. Such was the sweeter recipe that was deemed to be successful among the youth and youth-yearning adults alike.

Another subject inspiring a massive body of literature is seafaring. The boat, as Foucault suggested, is the quintessential *allotopia* because it stands for a radical type of seclusion: it is a place in the middle of placelessness. While the train moves through cities and across lands, plains, forests and mountains, thus giving us a glimpse of different sights and views, the ship moves across the visual featurelessness of the seawaters. When people are 'confined on the ship, from which there is no escape' (Foucault 2009, 9) they can only know 'where' they are amidst such nothingness by resorting to abstract knowledge and technical tools. This is why '...the boat (...) has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the *heterotopia par excellence*' (Foucault 1986, 27). Also, it should not be forgotten that, in the past, most crew recruitment was compulsory and only in modern times has prison replaced the galleys as a place to serve time. As in the modern passenger aircraft so in the boat, a form of sovereign power persists in the *absolute authority* of the captain. As Foucault claims,

... the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens... (Foucault 1986, 27).

#### *Charting the allotopical attributes*

A comprehensive definition of *allotopia* consequently requires the presence of most of the following features:

- 1) abnormal *chronotopia*, i.e., the presence of the old strong power regime reminiscent of the sovereign type;
- 2) eccentric *topia*, i.e., *seclusion and secrecy*;

- 3) stressed *chronia*, i.e., overall *transience* and strict surveillance over the spending of time, emphasised by its periodic loosening through halts and breaks: ‘By the early 1900’s the [prisons] modeled themselves on the outside community, affording inmates the opportunity to mix in the yard and work in groups’ (Morris & Rothman 1995, vii);
- 4) involuntary membership, which can result in the sovereign type of power in place being more resented;
- 5) restricted eligibility, i.e., the exceptionality of status and circumstances leading to recruitment.

This table compares the full set of total institutions for each of the above categories:

**Figure 4: Comparison of the features of total institutions**

PLACES OF CONFINEMENT	SOVEREIGN POWER	SECLUSION	INVOLUNTARY RECRUITMENT	RESTRICTED ELIGIBILITY	SURVEILLANCE	HALTS, BREAKS	TRANSIENCE
PRISON	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	MOSTLY
JUVENILE CORR.	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
BOARDING SCHOOL	YES	YES	MAYBE	YES	YES	YES	YES
BOOT CAMP	YES	YES	MAYBE	MAYBE <sup>17</sup>	YES	YES	YES
CONVENT	YES	YES	MAYBE	MAYBE	YES	NO	NO
HOSPITAL	YES	MAYBE	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
ASYLUM	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES <sup>18</sup>	MAYBE
LEPROSARIA	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
BOAT	YES	YES	MAYBE	NO	YES	YES	YES

<sup>17</sup> - Does not require any special status but only physical fitness.

<sup>18</sup> - In hospitals and asylums some recreational moments of relief from the stress of treatment are possible, although they are not absolutely indispensable as in prisons and schools.

*'Anomalous categories'*

This concept is derived from the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) but was further elaborated on and appropriated by his British colleague, Edmund Leach (1910-1989). In an essay, which is particularly useful to the understanding of the way the *allotopic* factor operates, Leach calls a category 'anomalous' when it overlaps another, blurring the 'clear cut and unambiguous' (Leach 1989, 155) borders that should keep them apart.

The suggestive power of ambiguity lies precisely in its destabilisation of neatly and well-defined limits and norms: day is bright and night is dark and so they cause no trouble to our perceptions of them. However, dawn and dusk hold far more complex connotations: '[s]unset was an omen of evil' (Mishima 1978, 284). They carry the double nature of being neither, really, one nor, yet, the other and that is why they are recurrent metaphors for troubled and disordered states of conscience in poetry and novels .

Ambiguity is at work in *allotopias*. To Foucault they are 'capable of *juxtaposing* in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible' (Foucault 1986, 25). Accordingly, Goffman remarked, 'the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different places, with different co-participants', whereas 'the central feature of total institutions can be described as a *breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating* these three spheres of life' (Goffman 1961, 5-6). Hence, what makes *allotopias* anomalous categories is their dubious status, their mingling of different spheres of life, namely, in boarding schools, 'home' ('sleeping' for Goffman) and learning (which is 'working' in Goffman's tripartite functions). Likewise, camps and convents also merge the categories of 'working' and 'sleeping' and the internees of hospitals, asylums and sanatoria are forced to adopt an involuntary 'home' as part of their treatment. Prisoners, too, are required to make

home out of a most unhomey place. What matters here is the constant juxtaposition and the compulsory conciliation of these two basically contradictory categories, 'home' and 'non-home', which one would expect to experience in a clearly differentiated manner. It is precisely in this intermingling of neatly opposed territories and in the creation of non-home homes that the source of the evocative power of *allotopias* as 'anomalous categories' resides. Going beyond the binarity of thought, they harmonise oppositions, combine contradictions, reconcile irreconcilabilities, and this is why they

...are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together' (Foucault 1994, xviii).

Another feature common to *allotopias* is that they boast 'official aims' (Goffman 1961, 6) which do not match their real ones. For instance, they 'frequently claim to be concerned with rehabilitation' (Goffman 1961, 71), among other 'avowed goals of total institutions', that

...are not great in number: accomplishment of some economic goal; education and training; medical or psychiatric treatment; religious purification; protection of the wider community from pollution. (...) It is widely appreciated that (they) typically fall considerably short of their official aims (Goffman 1961, 83).

Such 'contradiction, between what the institution does and what its officials must say it does' (Goffman 1961, 74) has been observed by a number of authors:

Penologists today often agree that [prisons] have not lived up to their promise (...) Correction through segregation was thus the key notion which distinguished the modern prison from previous spaces of confinement. Reformation has been the most powerfully seductive idea espoused by modern penology, although the history of prisons, if it demonstrates anything, shows how they have generally failed to rehabilitate prisoners. Prisons from the very beginning resisted their supporters' intended purposes, generating wretched institutional conditions where humanitarian goals were heralded. (...) A chasm



separates proclaimed intentions from actual practices. (Dikotter & Brown 2007, 2-3).

Prisons, particularly, are purportedly intended for the recuperation of prisoners while their distorted actual role consists in the mere infliction of fruitless punishment. It should be noted that, if the reformation principle were to be taken seriously, a life sentence would undoubtedly be understood as the absurd acknowledgement of the prison's failure to fulfil its theoretical function. Others have remarked that

...reformation is an unexceptionable purpose of incarceration. But it does not justify the prison. Indeed the prison turns out to be an ineffective and undesirable venue for reformatory efforts – be they educative, psychological, social adaptive, or whatever. It is hard to train for freedom in a cage (...) the rhetoric of imprisonment and the reality of the cage are often in stark contrast (Morris & Rothman 1995, x, xi).

Also, the psychiatric asylum that is supposedly set up to treat the mentally ill, in reality, aims merely at freeing society from the unwelcome presence of this inconvenient type of patient; convents and monasteries that are said to enable a life of solitary inwardness (*monachos* means 'lonely') in reality instigate a thoroughly communitarian (*coenobium*) dependency; *Bildung* is achieved by undoing oneself through one's exposure to disturbing, provocative, unsettling words and thoughts in order to achieve autonomy of mind. Accordingly, education should be what 'will disturb but also reward [those] who struggle with it' (Roberts 2013, 398). However, 'rather than nurturing independent thought and encouraging personal growth, schools enforce conformity and quash individual expression' (Atwood & Lee 2007, 102). In a most uneducational way, school practice consists of enforcing society's values and prejudices upon the pupil and this process begins in the classroom with the values and prejudices of the teacher, who is rarely an awakener but, more often, a 'merchant of sleep'. The ringing of the school bell prefigures the future prison bell. As was stated by Emile Durkheim in his 1925, *Moral Education*: 'it is through the practice of school discipline that we can inculcate the spirit of discipline in the child'

(Kentli 2009, 84); school is a *disciplinary* institution, so *compulsory* schooling, mirroring a future *compulsory* army service and a likely *compulsory* jailing, becomes the first social imprisoning institution, the fore-chamber of all the future constraints on the individual, the primal penitentiary of one's life. As the poet, Guerra Junqueiro, wrote back in 1879 (Junqueiro 1906<sup>4</sup>, 63):

*The school heads for the prison*

*just like a curse without fail:*

*it harvests the little grain*

*whose cellar will be the jail.*<sup>19</sup>

#### *Allotopias and hypertopias*

With their excess of signification, *allotopias* fit within a broader category of over-places – *hypertopias* – which are places over-invested with significance and meaning. *Allotopias* are only a special subcategory of *hypertopical*, over-meaningful, places, and it is to this latter group that we should assign a number of additional spaces like temples and shrines, red-light districts, etc., that some of Foucault's commentators have included in an excessively loose version of *heterotopias* that has been over enlarged to the point of uselessness.

Foucault himself inadvertently inflated his examples of special places. Acknowledging the singular character of the cemetery, '...the strange *heterotopia* of the cemetery' (Foucault 1986, 25), he added:

The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. This situation shows us that the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life... (Foucault 1986, 26).

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<sup>19</sup> - *D'esta escola a uma prisão / vai um caminho agoireiro: / a escola produz o grão / de que a enxovia é o celleiro.*

What Foucault missed here was the fact that cemeteries share few, if any, characteristics with, for instance, boarding schools. Actually, except for seclusion and involuntary membership, very little of the *allotopic* function fits here. So they should be assigned to that wider *hypertopical* universe, which can include all those spatialities that, in spite of possessing some degree of otherness, do not exhibit the core features of *allotopias* as listed above.

Certainly, even *non-allotopic hypertopias* are also inspiring and poetically suggestive, as in the case of the said cemeteries and of theatres. Both are important in the literature of the Romantics because they are especially equivocal in hiding their gloom beneath and their unaesthetic backstage behind, an overly sumptuous and splendid façade. We can add here the brothels, so popular in Realist literature. The brothel, the most famous among *erotopias* (a category including the harem and the massage parlour) is the alternative to the *family bedroom*, which, in turn, is itself already a *hypertopia* within one's home, separated from the visitor's access area from modern times onward: 'the closed or semi-closed sites of rest – the house, the bedroom, the bed' (Foucault 1986, 24). Novelists such as Robert Musil, Heinrich Mann and José Régio have aptly explored the ambiguity (or double *allotopia*) of plotting their boys' boarding school novels in the physical and psychological vicinity of a brothel. The near compulsory visit of the virgin boy to the brothel has become a literary topic in a number of adult-intended novels about boyhood, as another 'rite de passage' into virility. But often a nervous, stressed and shy schoolboy delivers a poor performance in a unprepared for and undesired situation, as in the classic depiction of Mishima's (1958) *Confessions of a Mask*. So it is a common outcome of such an ordeal that the unhappy protagonist ends up buying, not an unwanted sexual initiation, but the far more convenient silence of the professional concerned.

A fair number of Foucault's additional examples of spatial otherness should be included within this larger group of *non-allotopic hypertopias*: museums, libraries, *hammams*, theatres, cinemas and gardens. The ambiguity of gardens rests in their mixing of outside and inside categories; they are a portion of the outside brought inside:

Cyrus and Cyrus the Younger crafted perfect microcosmic ideals of the household (...) in their cultivation of the oriental park or *paradeisos* that the kings would spend time in, both at home and on campaign, in the pursuits of planting, walking, and hunting. These Persian 'walled gardens' can be thought of as 'inside-out' versions of the house for they bring those outside elements that Xenophon considers to be important to the household inside, within a 'walled enclosure'. By bringing the outside inside, the *paradeisos* (garden) neatly folds the extended landscape and ideals of the household into a single physical space (Purves 2010, 202).

Xenophon's elaborations on the allegory of the king as gardener, bestowing order and harmony upon a disorderly and chaotic nature, are in line with a series of narratives connecting kingship to gardening. When, in the 1960's, the Chinese rulers assigned the office of public gardener to an aged Pu Yi, the last Manchu boy-emperor, they were re-enacting Xenophon's vision based upon the testimony of the Spartan general Lysander about Cyrus planting and gardening with his own hands, as recalled by Socrates: 'I measured and apportioned all of them myself', said the king, pleased at Lysander's amazement, considering 'the beauty of the clothes that he wore and perceiving his perfume, and the beauty of his necklaces and anklets and the other finery that he had on' (Purves 2010, 203, 205). To Xenophon, the *ruler-gardener* was a kind of exponential ideal of the *gentleman farmer*: the garden is a *perfected farm* as much as the Persian king is the *perfect gentleman*.

#### *Gradations of hypertopia*

Gradations apply to the *hypertopic* factor. Leach observes that 'we need to consider not merely that things in the world can be classified as sacred and not sacred, but also as more

sacred and less sacred' (Leach 1989, 165). Thus, a scale of increased meaning operates in different spots within places and this is why boarding school narratives assign distinct levels of *hypertopia* to the dormitories, the sports field, the refectory, the headmaster's office, etc. The dormitories stand alone as a formidable tool on the side of mutual vigilance, and not only that: when the monasteries exchanged the *cellae* for the common dormitory they created the first Panopticon – the beds were disposed in a circle with the Abbott in the middle to watch over everybody around him (Gradowicz-Pancer 1999, 181).

Other examples of overloaded spots within already over-meaningful *topias* include the shower facilities in prisons, the refectory (*mensa*) in convents and the isolation chambers in asylums. These are places where people who are supposed to be alone join together, or vice-versa, adding an unsettling twist to already irregular circumstances. Revisiting the places of his own memory (*memotopias*), the autobiographical boarding school novelist will establish his own personal gradation of *allotopia* to different time/place instances (*chronotopias*) and the most tabooed and disturbing memories typically arise from moments and places involving strong power relations, as, for instance, the enactment of corporal punishment in the headmaster's office.

Another characteristic of *allotopias* is their sharp gendering. Some of the institutions mentioned by Foucault were conceived of as *ebotopias* (places for young men) or *androtopias* (places for men), i.e. spaces to enshrine and enact masculinity, and so they came to practise a strict separation of the sexes. As a rule, their female counterparts were established afterwards and profited from the experiences of the male forerunner, but the male were never fashioned upon the female. It is noteworthy that gender segregation was an historical accident in the life of these institutions and they went through it only at a given moment in their evolution and never in a complete way. Thus schools became single-sex mainly during the nineteenth-century, in some cases even later: a significant example

being Christ's Hospital in London, which was originally created as a co-educational boarding school in the sixteenth-century and then converted to single-sex in 1902 and reverted to becoming coeducational in 1985. Some co-educational boarding schools survived the overwhelming preference for the single-sex model and typically mixed classrooms and refectories, segregating dormitories and sometimes sports and playing fields. Also, during the nineteenth-century and in line with new Victorian concepts of morality, hospitals and prisons began to separate the sexes: 'Over the course of the nineteenth-century prisons began to specialize, so that (...) women (...) entered another type of institution' (Morris & Rothman 1995, vii), thus corroborating the remark that 'contrary to certain misconceptions, the early modern school was in many ways a model for the prison and the Panopticon itself, rather than the other way around' (Deacon 2006, 122). Similarly, naval ships 'were run like floating boarding schools for adults, on public school lines' (Gibson 1978). Monasteries became single-sex in the fourth-century AD, which is around one century after their commencement: 'By the late fourth-century (...) segregation of the sexes and enclosure were becoming the norm' (Dunn 2003, 54). In Barbaric Europe, double-houses fell out of fashion only by the eighth-century, roughly one century after their establishment within these new Christian societies (Foot 2006, 176). Coincidentally, one century was all it took to start the practice of segregation in modern prisons and hospitals. In some countries, there are sexually segregated universities or hospitals, while in others the segregation of universities is unfashionable and the only segregated health institutions are maternity hospitals. While current trends against segregation have caused single-sex boarding schools to look even more like a superimposition of different times, this perception has not been commonly applied, for instance, to segregated prisons,.

Therefore, *hypertopia* is a supra-category of highly emotionally significant places where an excess of meaning can be found in superimposed and contradictory layers; and

*allotopias*, the most enticing subset of *hypertopias*, tend to become the symbolic *intimate parts*, at one moment veiled and at the next unveiled, of the social (and geographical) body of a given nation and culture.

### *Hypertopia inverted*

At the bottom of the place-meaning scale stand the *hypotopias*. These are the *non-places* or *nowheres* studied in Marc Augé's 1995 essay. According to him, non-places are '(s)paces formed in relation to certain ends – transport, transit, commerce, leisure' (Augé 1995, 94). Plainly accessible to the common man, they have burgeoned in contemporary times: railway stations, airports, hotels, highways, supermarkets, huge department stores and shopping malls. Although some theorists have mistaken Foucault's *heterotopias* for non-places – and the same mistake was made by Leach when calling the tabooed parts of an environment 'non-things' (1989, 155) instead of 'super-things' – the *other places* and the *non-places* are in reality an exact inversion of each other.

Under-invested with meaning, these non-places are not true *topoi*, definite spots where one can remain, but only byways to somewhere else, not-enough places where *transience*, the sole feature they share with *allotopias*, becomes the one and only paradigm; and, due to its dominance, the strict control of time operated in stations, airports and even hotel rooms resembles that of a prison.

In all other features, the *hypoplaces*, or *underwheres*, sharply contrast with *allotopias*. Where *allotopias* restrict eligibility, Goffman says that places 'like Grand Central Station are open to anyone who is decently behaved' (Goffman 1961, 4). Where the former call for a severance from the rest of the world, the latter are channels for ordinary folk to communicate, commute and mix with a multitude of strangers. Where *allotopias* need secrecy, restriction and taboo, *hypotopias* rely on advertisement and publicity.

Any appropriation of and emotional connection to *hypotopias* becomes impossible because we do not look at them with any sense of intimacy, of strong repulsion, or, inversely, of belonging. They are neither special nor powerful and they cannot evoke strong emotional responses like hospitals, boarding schools or prisons. They are the *unemotional places* because one airport lounge, one hotel room, one train compartment is roughly like any other. Their anonymity makes them *cold* and aggressively over-commoditised. We can graphically represent the scale of *topias* this way:



<p style="text-align: center;">Hypertopias</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Overmeaningful places to stay at special moments of life</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Hot places]</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Topias</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ordinary places which people remain in and return to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Warm places]</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hypotopias</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Places to pass by, as transient as hypertopias but undermeaningful</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Cold places]</p>

**Figure 5: The scale of topias**

Thus the dichotomy *hyper/hypotopias* acknowledges that all places are charged, undercharged or overcharged with meaning. Within each place, increased layers of meaning can accumulate, upgrading a given spot to higher levels of suggestion and connotation.

#### *The hyperreal delusion*

Foucault opened the investigation into yet another category of spaces. While he considered his *enacted utopias* to be places where, as already quoted, ‘all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted’ (Foucault 1986, 24), he nevertheless admitted an alternative option as well – that *allotopias* can stand *not* for the inversion of the outside world but instead as a paradigm of it:

...[T]heir role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived) (Foucault 1986, 27).

Foucault introduced here the *allotopias of illusion* that were to be developed years later by Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) within the category of *hyperreality*. Baudrillard's many references to *hyperreality* are compiled in Coulter 2007, including his famous example of how the 'real' had come to resemble 'simulacra':

Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal (Baudrillard 1981, 12).

Leach illustrated the *hyperreal effect* in politics when he signalled that pointing at a racist South Africa was then the best way to hide and ignore the racism of the entire world:

English language media in the United States and the British Commonwealth are now almost unanimous in holding that the heartland of racial prejudice is to be found in South Africa. It is exemplified by the apartheid laws. There are problems about this. It is true that South Africa is now almost (but not quite) unique in having apartheid built into the Constitution but there are plenty of other places where apartheid is practised. (...) I am not pretending that South Africa is not 'racist'. Quite the contrary, not only is it racist but it is racist in a singularly unpleasant way. But (...) let us worry first about our own society (Leach 1988, 3-4).

Therefore, places that are allegedly distinctive and singular, almost grotesque, caricatures of life, are indeed disguising the equally grotesque nature of their surroundings; they falsely suggest detachment, disconnection from the larger space of which they are ultimately the quintessential specimen and faithful sample. Taken in the *hyperreal* sense, *allotopias* function as a synecdoche of real life, a part that stands for the whole.

This also applies to the scopophilic drive for total surveillance. In our current Orwellian society (Vlemixx 2012), the difference has already been lost between confined and outside space since all spaces are subject to equal surveillance (Lyon 1994): 'just as prisons exist to mask the fact that society *itself* is one' (Sim 2001, 281) and they are merely prisons within prisons. For the same reason, people are sentenced to death only to evade the fact that we are all sentenced to death, 'the very image of the human is the man condemned

to death' (Wood 2000, x); one may assume here, as Kafka puts it, that in such a final sentence, nature's 'basis for deciding is this: guilt is always beyond doubt' (Kafka 2011, 10). Theatres are there simply to disguise the reality that 'all the world's a stage' (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2-7). Prostitution and brothels conceal the fact that everything we desire must be bought and a series of other expressive allegories may have us looking convincingly at our societies as boarding schools<sup>20</sup> or as cemeteries, boats (and Earth as a starship) or 'the world like a madhouse' (Mann 1999, viii).

To think of human society in these terms, which is done in art and literature, exposes the *hyperreal ruse* of *allotopias*. Such was the purpose of the famous book by Sebastian Brant, *Ship of Fools* (1494) that Foucault commented on extensively in his *Madness and Civilization* ([1964] 2009) and this inspired Hieronymus Bosch and many other artists. Based on its actual use in the Late Middle Ages, the narrative envisions a ship, Foucault's *allotopia par excellence*, as a kind of *floating asylum* crewed by lunatics who, like lepers, have been banned from the cities (*a uer sacrum*) and then, through their navigations, go on learning as in a (*boarding*) *school*. The whole allegory stands for a *hyperreal* depiction of the Catholic Church itself, which, according to Brant, was as much 'lunatic' and adrift as the expelled pariahs.

### *Conclusions on Foucault's Other Spaces*

Foucault's text has been highly influential on a vast number of authors in many fields of research. It has suffered, however, from being only a preliminary inquiry that is in need of further theoretical sophistication. His tentative profiling of *heterotopias* does not apply to most of the examples he gives and even the choice of this word is inaccurate and unhappy.

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<sup>20</sup> - See for instance the use of Baudrillard's simulacra effect applied to Doon School, a boys' boarding school in Dehra Dun, Northern India (Srivastava 1996, 166-190).

Others have tried to advance the analysis of the, nonetheless, valuable intimations contained in that ‘frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent’ digression (Soja 1996, 162) but, in the process, they have, initially, ended up confusing Foucault’s *heterotopias* with their contrary – Augé’s *non-places* – and later on, as in Soja’s case and most of the current research, with Baudrillard’s *hyperreality*.<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of this revisiting of Foucault’s *other places* is not only to offer a more consistent terminology as an alternative to some of Foucault’s imprecise choices but also to satisfy the need for a better articulation of the three related concepts of *allotopia*, *hypoplace* and *hyperreality*.

Foucault remarked that, ‘apparently unlike time, contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified’ (1986, 23); one may ask if it will ever be, or why it should ever be...

School novels depict hypertopias of the allotopic kind. In their narratives, not only are the relations between spaces of paramount importance, as we have seen, but the narratives also assign an unsurprising importance to the multiple strategies used by pupils for acquiring and maintaining emotional power over the group, within set hierarchies. Schools are true ‘laboratories of power’ and the experiments at play are multiple and tend either to stabilize or to revert to, to one’s profit, the volatile relations of dominance, always at risk of reversion if not reiterated and replayed continuously.

In school novels it is generally easy to identify the ingredients of power: from a previous ‘legacy’, i.e., the social class or standing of the father, the pupil will need to add more consistent arguments related to age, size, race, masculinity, (proclaimed) sexual

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<sup>21</sup> - Pace Koskela’s enthusiasm for Soja’s ‘profound analysis’ of *heterotopias* (2003, 296), what we find in *Thirdspace* is merely an erroneous summary of Foucault’s lecture. For instance, when Soja states that boys and girls were required to lose their virginity ‘anywhere other than the still-sanctified homeplace’ (Soja 1996, 159), he is totally missing the point that to Foucault the extraordinary, sacred, magical and ‘sanctified’ places – the boarding schools and the honeymoon trips –, were meant for the loss of virginity and *not* home.

experience or ability, sporting prowess, access to money or goods, cunning, popularity (among the school masters as well), allegiances to the right associates, resilience and overall achievement, all of them objective and measurable, to be coupled with the more subjective individual ‘charm’, which consists of the capacity to manipulate the emotions of others.

## Chapter 4: On Schools in Literature

Boarding schools have rich historical roots. In his *A History of Education in Antiquity*, Henri-Irenée Marrou (1982) predictably mentions their Spartan ancestry, the ἀγωγή, where ‘boarding school’ meant a military barracks of youths in arms: *‘The whole system of education was thus collective: children were simply torn from their families and made to live in a community. (...) [A]t the age of twelve the ‘adolescent’ – πάμπαις – had to be made tougher, and was obliged to leave home and go to a boarding school – i.e., the barracks’* (Marrou 1982, 20-21). The arts too, as well as warfare, were imparted in residence in Ancient Greece and Marrou also refers to the young ladies’ boarding schools where, again, a sort of ‘community life’ was in place, taking *‘the form of a religious fellowship, θίασος’*. Such was the case, among other examples, of the arts school led by Sappho, the poetess and educationalist from the island of Lesbos (Marrou 1982, 34-35). In 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, where Classics were such an important part of education, these ancient models certainly played a role in fashioning the boarding school ideal as part of a classical revival.

During the High Middle Ages in Europe, the Church also created boarding schools both for the priesthood and for laypeople, mostly attached to monasteries. Immersion, seclusion from the outside and segregation from family and the household were the prerequisites for an efficient education and boarding had become an obvious need given how widely the population in semi-rural areas was scattered. In addition to the Church’s educational initiatives, royal patronage also created boarding schools, sometimes to prepare the elite for the highest offices and, elsewhere, to care for the poor in institutions meant for orphans or neglected children. The boarding paradigm was so universal that it extended to the very different situation of non-schooled youths, such as apprentices, who boarded at their master’s house – an educational system that has shown a remarkable resilience to

change. By Late Modernity it ‘*was really rejected as a training method only under the modern external pressures of universal education and a raised standard of living*’ (Lane 1996, 211).

Later on, the propagators of a more ‘muscular education’ were to indict the religious boarding school system as the cause of the degeneration of an entire civilization, as Max Nordau did, in a very simplistic way, in his famous *Entartung* (1892):

It is a necessary consequence that all the rich and snobbish parvenus send their sons to the Jesuit middle and high schools. To be educated by the Jesuits is regarded as a sign of caste, very much as is membership of the Jockey Club. The old pupils of the Jesuits form a ‘black freemasonry’, which zealously advances their protégés in every career, marries them to heiresses, hurries to their assistance in misfortune, hushes up their sins, stifles scandal, etc. It is the Jesuits who for the last decade have made it their care to inculcate their own habits of thinking into the rich and high-born youth of France entrusted to them. These youths brought brains of hereditary deficiency, and therefore mystically disposed, into the clerical schools, and these then gave to the mystic thoughts of the degenerate pupils a religious content (Nordau 1895, 113).

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the moment this criticism was being voiced, the time had come for a new type of boarding school; a freshly shaped, post-Jesuit, non-religious *bourgeois* institution. Indeed, it took an entire chapter of Philippe Aries’ *Centuries of Childhood* (‘From Day-School to Boarding-School’) to illustrate the rise of the 19<sup>th</sup> century boarding school because, in spite of its being a return of something deeply rooted in the universal educational experience, it had also certain specificities that made it a novelty in its civilian, secularist, non-confessional and rigidly classist approach. Such an approach differentiated these institutions from their distant ancestors, as is pointed out in this rather naïve comparison:

While English schools and Spartan barracks may both take children from home, the one returns them for holidays – the other did not; the one gives genuine intellectual formation to the highest level – the other did not; the one is imbued with Christian teaching – the other was not; the one is socially exclusive – the other was not (Johnson 1961, 241).

Still, in spite of their ideological orientation and historical contours, all boarding schools shared the same nature: by combining residence with teaching, they stood for an alternative home, being at the opposite pole from home schooling – a solution which, by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, had become ever more restricted to royals and aristocrats. Boarding schools also differed substantially from joint residence with the teacher, as in the aforementioned situation of apprentices who boarded in the house of their masters entirely for professional training. In fact, the most striking specific feature of this system was the joint residence with peers. The vision of a monosexual society, where boys ruled over other boys, something that could hardly be sustained in the outside world, was indeed the mythical, visionary appeal of the boarding school system, resulting in an intricate mixture of guardians and bullies, camaraderie and tyranny, and order and chaos.

After the boarding school peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, its popularity declined somewhat in the following Century, when the Western educational heritage became thoroughly contested. Complete and permanent education in boarding schools came to be perceived as turning children into adults too soon.

Nowadays, the time for families to dream about sending their young to the legendary Swiss boarding school seems long-gone. Prolonged adolescence has become fashionable and the dominant tendency has been to extend it beyond any possible age limit, a trend that requires and favours the half-pace education of the day school, in which the pupils attend school without really leaving the family home. This solution is more in line with the raising of the mothers' standing within households and their propensity to resist the emancipation of youth and their wish to keep 'their children' under the 'protective wing'.

To this new trend, others were added during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Co-education also counteracted the monosexual creed of this educational model – because it was rarely



thought to combine harmoniously with the constraints of boarding and likewise had accounted in the past only for a residual number of boarding schools – and compulsory schooling, which was the death blow to the apprenticeship model. The new creed of universal education asked for a cheap, underpaid and vast supply of labour, thus opening the doors to the feminisation of teaching: ‘The common school movement (...) brought a pressing demand for a huge supply of relatively inexpensive teachers’ (Blount 2000, 85). In the process, families were also encouraged to intervene more in schooling matters than before when they had formerly entrusted their boys to austere, revered schoolmasters – because the girls started being massively schooled too and they required close protection – and the young became bound physically and psychologically to the family’s symbolic and material space, the home, no matter how much they resented being overprotected. Thus, the notorious isolation of the adolescent in his own room with his fierce defence of privacy and chaotic messiness (or dirtiness) became a strategy of rebellion and resistance, stressing that such is the stage in life for one’s parting from parents and their influence:

The bedroom (...) is an important haven for most teenagers, a private, personal space often decorated to reflect teens' emerging sense of themselves (...) a personal space in which they can experiment with ‘possible selves’ (Steele 1995, 551, 554).

The popularity of the day school paradigm from the 1960s onwards affected mostly the above-mentioned civilian and secularist, private-owned institutions, which have become scarce since then. However, other types of boarding schools seemed better positioned to resist this general decline:

1. A few elite-exclusive, status-focused, mostly single-sex traditional boarding schools continue to attract their own public, now in some cases from across the globalized world;
2. Some ethnically oriented boarding schools assert their right to existence as ways of cultural resistance in a world tending to uniformity: e.g., African-American boarding schools in the USA or Māori boarding schools in New Zealand;
3. The Church and Army, remnants of the medieval priestly and warrior orders that sustained the pre-bourgeois boarding school, managed to maintain a few complete

- education institutions, pleasing families in religious terms and/or providing the discipline and rigour that are allegedly unfashionable in mainstream system;
4. And far more visible in foreign literature are the boarding schools with a strong vocational component operated by welfare authorities to accommodate and instruct the destitute (be these real orphans or ‘orphans of living parents’). Here public imagination, helped by ultra-realistic novels, had a tendency to picture these schools as unhappy heirs of the infamous orphanage depicted in Charles Dickens’ 1838 feuilleton novel *Oliver Twist*. Today, they remain a recurrent target of negative attention in the media.

In Portugal and Brazil, the boarding schools belonging to the Church never faced concurrency from local elite-oriented institutions so typical of other cultures. The priesthood-gearred boarding schools directly run by the diocese were called *seminários*, where poor boys had a hope of social promotion through instruction but which they often left with no wish to embrace a religious career (such was the case of Portuguese President Salazar, for instance). Still active, in spite of facing increasing desertion from the 1970s onwards, due to the decline in numbers of aspirant priests, they left a sizeable mark on Brazilian and Portuguese literature. The Church also put in place a number of welfare types of institution.

The Army, too, retained its boarding schools, catering primarily, but not exclusively, to the families of officers and accepting others enamoured of a military style of education. They have been enjoying a slight gain in enrolment these days, perhaps due to widespread militarism: *‘From their heyday of more than 900 military schools between 1783 and 1914, approximately 40 remain. While the choice of attending military board schools has always existed, the option has recently experienced a minor resurgence’*, notes Shane, Maldonado, Lacey and Thompson (2008, 181). While institutions of this type were the setting in Austria for Robert Musil’s landmark novella, *The Confusions of Young Törless* (1906), they did not receive a great deal of literary attention in Portuguese literature outside memoirs by former soldiers – Raul Brandão and Júlio Dantas (1968) being among the most prominent of these memoirists.

Not only the controversial type of welfare institutions but also the other surviving boarding school types in Portugal are either under fire from persistent harsh media campaigns targeting them over court scandals or are suffering the pressure of government disaffection. The combined forces of mainstream indifference or hostility, growing parental control and pressure for uniformity present apparently scant hope for their expansion in the near future, in spite of the signs of slight recovery from elsewhere<sup>22</sup>. For the time being, the boarding school model, religious or secular, military or civilian, public or private, monosexual or co-educational, tends to be ever more confined to the few niches listed above.

*Literature goes to school: the literary conventions of the boarding school novel*

Although the boarding school system was meant to produce gentlemen not novels, this form of education has left an outstanding legacy in literature. The boarding school is a literary myth and also a sociological one: a complex combination of narratives encompassing themes of utopian vision, social engineering, power relations, burgeoning sexuality and individual boldness. Debate may persist about its peculiarities but here we are concerned with the ideology and ethics behind the pedagogical practice of boarding schools and the way they are reflected in literature.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, while the boarding type of education was the dominant educational ideal, it was also a powerful source of inspiration to a number of prominent novelists. And even by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the time when Régio wrote *A Drop of Blood*), while day schools were becoming predominant, some writers were still drawn to a type of education that enabled them to depict not only the brightness and

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<sup>22</sup> - Inter alia, see ‘Chinese Use of Boarding Schools Rises’, *Wall Street Journal, Eastern edition*, April 21, 2004; ‘Alaska boarding schools rebound’, *The Seattle Times*, May 31, 2004; ‘Le collège public parisien qui accueille des internes’, *Paris.fr – Education*, January 20, 2010.

promise of innocent adventures in the classroom but also the dark, nocturnal side of micro societies ruled by boys on their own.

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, boarding schools were to be found more in the memoirs of now elderly old boys than as the favoured settings for newly written popular novels. Novels inspired by boarding life, aiming at both young and adult readers, appeared then as the relics of a forgotten past and their demise mirrored the decay of the institution itself, until the surprising worldwide success of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* cycle (1997-2007); in spite of their plots being about fantasy and not realistic school life, these narratives, set at a boarding school, proved the universal and enduring appeal of the boarding myth itself.

In Portuguese-speaking literature, the upper class group of boarding schools was only featured in narratives imported from abroad that had been translated or recreated; the ethnic kind of school was absent both from the educational map and the literary one. The same applies to the institutions for the deprived: school subjects were not favoured by the social critics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the so-called 'realists', and were ignored by the Neo-realists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who preferred unschooled, slave-working youths to be the heroes of their novels that were centred in adolescence. Therefore, Portuguese-speaking boarding school novels and memoirs focus on establishments intended for middle to lower-middle class youth, either Church run or secular and privately owned.

A school novel is easily identifiable by its conspicuous school theme and the presence of a main set of conventions traceable back to the folk tale: from the initial conflict (usually with family), the hero journeys far on a mission 'to grow'. Feeling abandoned by his parents, he has to fight fearsome enemies, rivals and other distracters from the assigned mission. He tries to befriend prospective allies and meanwhile he discovers the problematical nature of society and its willing agent, the school. He overcomes (*or not*) the challenges, either by joining his invincible enemy (accepting a more

or less comfortable place among the society once so vigorously detested) or by remaining at a distance from it, for instance as an ‘artist’ – an outsider. In either case, the once misfit adolescent is co-opted by society, losing the innocence and beatitude of the pre-school stage, together with the rebelliousness of youth. Only by surrender is he able to accomplish the ascribed mission.

The *peripetia* and the characters of the typical narrative structure include: the first day at school (and occasionally the last); excursions into the outside world; contrasting personality types; discipline and bullying; sports and team rivalry – the last, mostly in the English-speaking novels since team sports faced strong official resistance and were, therefore, introduced late into Portuguese education (for different reasons, resistance to British sports came from nationalists in Portugal and from left-oriented writers in Brazil)<sup>23</sup> –; contrast between daylight behaviour and dormitory night moods; lack of nourishment (as in Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*); loyalties, jealousies and treachery by untrustworthy friends; episodes of daring and punishment, physical and/or psychological; the eruption and repercussion of erotic tension with troubling results for the individual and the group, sometimes involving the breaking of anti-sexual rules among pupils or staff or with an occasional, disturbing feminine presence; growing distrust of the adult world (intergenerational conflict presumably extending to the pupil’s family, parents or their substitutes); consequent disbelief in education (and possibly in God, when the Church is in charge of the school); and detailed moral portraits of teachers (e.g. the friendly or weak teacher versus the tyrannical and unfair one).

These episodes and twists may not be present in each and every novel but they are certainly the most commonly featured.

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<sup>23</sup> - In Brazilian boarding school novel *O Ateneu* (1888), by Raul Pompeia, a series of traditional games is described.

*Masculinist thinkers and novelists: measuring manliness*

In the ambience of masculinist ideology that influenced other literary genres – and also other art of the time – the boarding schoolboy novel allowed the expression of strong gender considerations and original proposals for educational policies rooted in sexual segregation, raising such subjects as male friendships, an uneasy but popular topic. New Zealand author Hugh Walpole (1884-1941) proposed his own inventory of boarding school novel components:

All the conventional things are there, the football, the fights, the bullying, the friendships, and the rest. It is a true story and not, I think, sentimental (Walpole 1927).

Since the main topics are listed here concisely (much more so than above), Walpole's reader may think that the subgenre is nothing more, in fact, than a series of clichés. In fact, writing a boarding school novel was no easy task according to Walpole. For him the trouble was not in the number of ingredients but in the slippery nature of some of them, namely 'the friendships', the young and immature male friendships, the real cornerstone of the schoolboy novel:

No one has yet written in English an account of a boy's friendship that does not appear either too emotional or too unemotional to be true. Tom Brown's protection of Arthur still appears to me a beautiful and true thing... (Walpole 1927).

The problem with this feature, he argues, is that it is plagued with taboos – and here truth is only possible *within wise limits*:

The fact is that boys are both little beasts and little heroes, that the age of puberty is the terror of parents and headmasters, and that no one dares to speak frankly, even in these frank days, of what everyone knows to be true. However, these are dangerous matters. I didn't write in Jeremy at Crale the school-story that I would like to have written, but I did, I think, tell the truth so far as I thought wise (Walpole 1927).

In his famous 1910 essay on Hölderlin, Wilhelm Dilthey called these passionate friendships ‘*a kinship of souls*’ and highlighted their subversive potential:

A kinship of souls which can no longer be obstructed by conventions, a striving for the development of our full potential, which will no longer allow itself to be suppressed, the awareness of personal dignity – all this came into conflict with the social order and, in the end, with the very nature of things (Dilthey 1985, p. 337).

The powerful boys’ exalted and romantic friendships, although short-lived, had the potential of raising awareness of individual aims opposed to society’s design and to ‘the nature of things’.

If in most cases, these friendships were soon to be ended but they were not forgotten, as in the D. H. Lawrence novel of 1915:

He was glad to leave school. It had not been unpleasant, he had enjoyed the companionship of the other youths, or had thought he enjoyed it (...) He had loved one warm, clever boy who was frail in body, a consumptive type. The two had had an almost classic friendship, David and Jonathan, wherein Brangwen was the Jonathan, the server. But he had never felt equal with his friend, because the other's mind outpaced his, and left him ashamed, far in the rear. So the two boys went at once apart on leaving school. But Brangwen always remembered his friend that had been, kept him as a sort of light, a fine experience to remember (Lawrence 1921, 11).

The second issue, closely linked with the first, is the question of manliness, that most praised of virtues in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Authors needed to be extremely gender-conscious while striving to achieve the right measure of *masculine* virtue in their characters: not lacking and not exceeding the virtuous middle, avoiding both the traps of unmanliness and those of ‘overmanliness’. Accordingly, Walpole criticized *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* author, Thomas Hughes, for being ‘*almost too manly in his admiration of British virtues*’.

According to Walpole, at the junction of these two main problems – employing the right dosage of manliness and rendering the immaturity of ‘*beautiful and true*’ tender hearts

–, arose that most delicate and elusive subject of ‘*a boy's friendship*’ which made the emotional life of boyhood ‘*very dangerous and difficult for analysis*’: it required a challenging balance between *emotional* passion and *unemotional* manliness. To Walpole, a sensible rendering of male bonding was the key to safely writing within a genre where the passionate infatuations of boyhood, which were inherently perplexing and disconcerting, struggled to safely progress into crystal-clear manliness.

The distinctive mission of man-making assigned to the male boarding school was supposed to tame the wild rebel boy into a ‘decent man’, according to Christian and bourgeois values. The boarding school system seemed to perform effectively the task of controlling young lads’ behaviour, although not their thoughts; a gap gladly explored by novelists.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a resurgence of masculine ideals (Corbin 2011) made manliness a subject that many were fervent about. It was a time when thinkers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Weininger were indicting feminine characteristics and disapproving of cultural feminisation, which they linked to moral decay, *degeneration* and vital weakening.

A masculinist ideology was pervasive at the time and it can be found in various types of novels, be they school themed or of adventure – historical, colonial, war, westerns, picaresque, etc. In addition to being centred on the young male protagonist, they also required male authorship to attract a male audience seeking realistic psychological characters for complicity based on the male experience.<sup>24</sup> Their distinctive male monosexual flavour made them designed for the enjoyment of a predominantly, if not

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<sup>24</sup> - In the biographical note of Harry Potter’s creator, J. K. Rowling, we read that ‘before publishing her first book, her publisher, Bloomsbury feared that the target audience of young boys might be reluctant to buy books written by a female author. It requested that Rowling use two initials, rather than reveal her first name (Joanne)’ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J.\\_K.\\_Rowling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._K._Rowling).



exclusively, male audience: ‘...my boys, you whom I want to get for readers...’ (Hughes 1911, 16). That is why many boarding school narratives adopt a conveniently matching misogynistic tone, that of the *male-oriented novel*, because they are expected to reflect the period of life when a boy is separating from everything motherly or feminine in order to acquire his highly-valued male identity. In order to accomplish this turn, ‘[w]hen a boy arrives at adolescence he turns from his mother to his father’, wrote Forbush (1907, 131).

Ramalho Ortigão (1836-1915) was among those who represented this tendency in Portugal. At the reputable boarding school, Colégio da Lapa, in Oporto, he was the teacher of French and the lifelong friend of the much-celebrated writer Eça de Queiroz (1845-1900). Both travelled and lived in Europe for years and Ortigão wrote books and essays about The Netherlands, England and France, advancing his own theories on manliness but adapted to Portuguese culture. Queiroz chronicled contemporary political events in England and the British Empire with a critical anti-colonialist eye but he also admired the new educational fashions.

One of the main points Ortigão wanted to emphasise was the need for mothers to step back from sons when the boys reach puberty, something he thought most mothers were not prepared to do. Such was the case of the Portuguese Queen Maria Pia (1847-1911) towards her son, Crown Prince Carlos (1863-1908). In June 1883, when the Prince was aged 19, Ortigão reacted with outrage at a piece of news he read in a newspaper: ‘Her Majesty the Queen is willing to take at her care, following daily, with great discernment and extreme caution, the education of her [two] sons’. In a public letter to the Prince that he published in his political magazine (co-published with Queiroz) *As Farpas*, he asserted

boldly: ‘Such an intervention is deplorable, Your Most Serene Highness, deeply deplorable’ (Ortigão, 1883, 62).<sup>25</sup>

Unfolding his argument, Ortigão stated that

the mission of the mother in the education of a man ends when he reaches the fourteenth year. (...) The psychoses, as well as the anatomic outbursts and the physiologic functions belonging to puberty, hold secrets that no mother has the right to access in a boy’s education (...) Any mother who intervenes to restrict the legitimate intellectual curiosities of a young male offends equally his decorum and hers (Ortigão 1883, 63).<sup>26</sup>

By ‘intellectual curiosities’ one can easily read ‘sexual curiosities’ and Ortigão pointed out that it was because of the influence of such a mother that the Prince was attending Holy Mass too much, instead of befriending a companion and comrade:

Because your Highness did not have until today a [male] companion and a friend, you keep virgin one of the main tools of human activity, your heart, and in it, useless and unproductive, lies buried the precious capital of your affections (Ortigão 1883, 61).<sup>27</sup>

Of course, royals had their private tutors; they did not attend bourgeois boarding schools but it was the idea of preserving sons from the damaging influence of mothers that was likewise implied in the mental climate that made so successful the monosexual boarding school, with its anti-familial inclination.

Queiroz had made similar claims in his 1876 anticlerical novel, *The Crime of Father Amaro*. Amaro Vieira is the son of the maid of a pious and rich marchioness who, after the boy has been orphaned, ‘began, with great scrupulousness, to watch over his

<sup>25</sup> - ‘Sua magestade a rainha quiz especialmente tomar a seu cuidado seguir dia a dia com grande discernimento, e extremado cuidado a educação dos seus filhos. ‘Deplorável, serenissimo senhor, profundamente deploravel, semelhante intervenção!’.

<sup>26</sup> - ‘A missão da mãe na educação do homem termina quando este chega aos quatorze annos. (...) As psychoses, assim como as manifestações anathomicas e as funções physiologicas, características da puberdade, encerram segredos que nenhuma mãe tem direito de devassar na educação de um rapaz. (...) Toda a mãe que intervem fiscalmente nas legitimas curiosidades intellectuaes de um mancebo offende igualmente o pudor d'elle e o d'ella’.

<sup>27</sup> - ‘Vossa alteza, que ate hoje não teve ainda um companheiro e um amigo, conserva em folha um dos principaes instrumentos da actividade humana, o seu coracao, e n'elle, improdutivo e inutil, o capital precioso dos seus affectos desempregados’.

upbringing' (Queiroz 1876, 25; 2003, 24).<sup>28</sup> The result is the perfect nightmare for the masculinist writer: the old lady decides not to send the boy to school because she 'feared the impiety of the times, the immoral comradeships and the dirty words learned there'; (Queiroz 1876, 26).<sup>29</sup> Instead, Queiroz narrates with dismay, the boy Amaro is *educated* at the manor, where

[t]he maids feminized him; they thought him pretty and would encourage him to nestle amongst them; they would tickle him and smother him in kisses, and he would roll in their skirts, brushing against their bodies, uttering little contended shrieks. Sometimes, when the Marchioness went out, they would dress him up as a woman, all the while hooting with laughter (Queiroz 1876, 27; 2003, 25).<sup>30</sup>

By the beginning of puberty, Amaro focuses his lust on religious images and paraphernalia and becomes a degenerate and a dissimulator who welcomes the priesthood as the best way of reaching and corrupting vulnerable women. The feminised education he was exposed to in his childhood has likewise feminised his tastes and excited his lust. Such was the result of having a woman in charge of his education and of being deprived of the character-strengthening benefits of *male comradeship*.

Another Portuguese novelist, Vergílio Ferreira (1916-1996), wrote *Drowned Dawn* (1954), a novel about a boy who, following the will of a rich patroness, Dona Estefânia, goes to study in a *seminário*. He becomes so unhappy that he mutilates himself in order to escape his expected life as priest. The subject of symbolic emasculation, feminization and the unmasculine nature of priesthood in the miseducation of boys by mothers or mother figures is recurrent in the narratives of Portuguese old boys, who were echoing worries

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<sup>28</sup> - '...e começou com grandes escrupulos a vigiar a sua educação'.

<sup>29</sup> - 'receiava a impiedade dos tempos, as camaradagens immoraes e as palavras impuras que se decoram;'.

<sup>30</sup> - 'As criadas feminisavam-n'õ; achavam-n'õ bonito, cobriam-n'õ de mimos, faziam-n'õ sentar no meio d'ellas, davam-lhe beijos, faziam-lhe cocegas, e elle rolava por entre as saias, em contacto com os corpos, ganindo baixo, com gritinhos de contentamento; ás vezes, quando a sr.<sup>a</sup> marquezia saía, vestiam-n'õ de mulher, entre grandes risadas;'.

about feminization widespread in European literature, such as those articulated by Max Nordau in his novel, *The Malady of the Century*:

All who saw him were powerfully attracted, but half-unconsciously felt a slight doubt whether even so fine a specimen of manhood was quite fitly organized and equipped for the strife of existence. At the university he had been given the nickname of Wilhelmina, on account of a certain gentleness and delicacy of manner, and because he neither drank nor smoked. Such jokes, not ill-natured, were directed against his outward appearance, but had a shade of meaning as regards his character (Nordau 1898, 7).

In the face of wide social upheavals, the reputation of the boarding school was doomed to decline when the balance swung toward families and females. Against all the warnings of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century masculinists, mothers started to have a say in boys' education. Day school (moreover with a feminised teaching staff, softened discipline and strong anti-risk-taking ethos) was preferred because it provided for unprepared, immature youths who would depend on families for longer, while boarding schools had been designed to cater for the more readily functional and independent youths that fathers were more likely to wish for: in Portuguese-speaking boarding school novels it is always fathers who want to board their sons in order to liberate them from the influence of female relatives and maids.

In the typical masculinist novel the main dialogue and interaction occurs among males. Females are excluded from the deuteragonist role, usually reserved for a male companion, and they are not the target of romantic investment. Often they are limited to the roles of mothers (or motherly characters), prostitutes, nurses, therefore all of them providers of services, such as physical or psychological care – and are used merely as commodities. In the 'de-schooling narrative' of Kipling's *Kim* (1901), the widow of Kulu and the lusty woman of Shamlegh are shameful examples. Accordingly, the male characters usually show a strong abhorrence of sex and females, who '*are not even considered to be desirable sexual partners*' (Viola 1997, p. 164); the heroes are defiant of their influence

(*'the boy's inaptitude for female guidance'*: Hughes 1911, p. 27) and they resent them as an obstacle to their free male lives, as in Rudyard Kipling's boy hero Kim's famous formulation: *'How can a man follow the Way or the Great Game when he is eternally pestered by women?'* (Kipling 1902, 420).

In José Régio's *The Old House* cycle (1945-1966), the first female character appears at the end of the first volume (*A Drop of Blood*) in the shape of a prostitute, who makes her brutal and unmasked appearance in a sordid night encounter with the young pupil in the vice quarter of the town. In the post-school times covered by the second instalment, a variant of the prostitute's character – the lascivious woman – is presented as the unscrupulous girlfriend of prefect, Senhor Bento Adalberto. Females are therefore chiefly associated with mothers (Ortigão) as patronesses and servants (Queiroz) or as prostitutes (Régio), with the concept of *decadence* being synonymous with feminization, one of the main fears of the time.

### *The female counterpart*

According to Whitworth (2005, 100), the distinctive 'male orientation of the [school novel] genre' due to the detailed 'narrative components of sexual encounters' made difficult the emergence of a parallel feminine tradition, either in authorship or subject, in a *Bildungsroman*'s form or in the *Internatsgeschichte* (school novel) variety.

Around the same time, parallel to school novels about boys, a set of stories flourished about the schooling of girls. The female school novels presented characters growing from pupil to teacher (such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* [1847]), or boarding abroad (*Villette* [1853]), or they would portray a male teacher in an all-girls school (*The Professor* [1857]) or a governess who later becomes a teacher (Ann Brontë's *Agnes Grey* [1847]).

Such novels established their own tradition, which was one that shared most of its topics with its male-authored and male-themed counterpart: *'the hostility of the father, a constraining environment, and inadequate schooling'* (Whitworth 2005, 100), with an extra focus on the possibility of 'emancipation' through education. This feminine lineage had few followers in the world of the Portuguese-speaking school novel, its most noteworthy example being Brazilian writer Rachel de Queiroz' *As Três Marias* (1937), a novel only partially set at school.

Thomas Beebee argues that the main difference between the masculine school novel and the feminine, during the 19th Century, was the presence of strong male antagonism and territoriality embodied in problematic and complex power relationships:

In all of the [girl's boarding school] novels it is the students that educate each other (...) without repressive measures on the part of the teacher. The male (...) axis, however, tells a story of repression and rebellion typical of works of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (...) Each of these works [with an all-male ambiance] depicts the boarding school as a system of surveillance and control, usually personified in a tyrannical headmaster (...) [here] discipline had replaced conversation as the guiding principle of education (Beebee 1994, 108).

The male power relationships can be summarized under the domination/humiliation dichotomy, which occurs in pairs such as older/younger, strong/weak, bully/bullied, prefect/fag, etc.

### *The voiceless adolescent*

...a knowledge of that peculiar species of human beings, the boarding-school boy... (Bangs 1895, 32).

It is fascinating how the subject of school life has interested a wide adult readership. Perhaps one of the major assets of the adult boarding school novel lies in the ambiguous

nature of a child's or a youth's actions and thoughts being conveyed by an adult writer to an adult readership. Walpole crystallised this paradox:

Jeremy at Crale has been my single attempt at a school-story. The genre is not an easy one for the very simple reason that a school-story can be only truly written by a boy who is still at school (... so) we await the schoolboy of genius who will tell us what things are really like! (Walpole 1927).

As well as being written by authors who were in a period of life already far from school days, these novels were mainly the work of those who had really not fitted in – due to *their* peculiarities more than to the peculiarities of a given school. The novels were possibly a masochistic return to situations and events that had shaped their personalities. In Portuguese-speaking literature, the protagonist of the boarding school novel is never a sadistic bully or an athletic type nor a pliable, submissive young boy but a bookish, perhaps shy, but definitely an intellectual and certainly conscious and rebellious character that one imagines would turn into a writer. Generally, he is acutely aware of the traps that lure both sides of a power relationship and this susceptibility is usually rooted in miscommunication with his father, the biographical root of many schoolboy novels in Portuguese and of a significant part of Portuguese literature as well, as emphasised by Phillip Rothwell (2007). After all, 'in school it was power, and power alone that mattered' (Lawrence 1921, 356) as has been argued in the previous chapter on Foucault and special places.

As Walpole remarked, the schoolboy novel marks the (temporary) silence of the schoolboy writer himself, who needs to take years to write his own story: the precondition seems to be his no longer being a boy nor a pupil at school.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> - Argus Cirino (1984), who is among the last Portuguese speaking boarding school novel writers, stated in the prologue to his book that he actually wrote it while still at school. This must be a fictitious claim since boys of sixteen years are not expected to have the required skills to write an acceptable novel.

Adolescents are not heard when their narrative is at stake. The adolescent may write only short and creative fiction. At the most, poetry is welcome from adolescents, since poetry is the ‘creative’ genre par excellence and well fitted to a period of life of so much pathos. In Greek, ‘poetry’ means ‘creativity’, it is a primeval force springing from the young ages of mankind, so to Hermann Hesse:

In the beginning was the myth. God, in his search for self-expression, invested the souls of Hindus, Greeks, and Germans with poetic shapes and continues to invest each child's soul with poetry every day (Hesse 1953, 1).

So the only remedy for the silent boy are old boys turned writers, even if they ‘all recall the same things’ (Walpole 1927), arguably an articulate set of similar experiences giving some unity to the subgenre across cultures. If ‘infancy’ means ‘not yet being able to speak properly’ (Isidorus 2006, 241),<sup>32</sup> adolescence turns out to be ‘not yet being able to *write* his own story’. The adolescent has had many authors writing in his name but he is denied his own version. This is ironic, since the school novel asserts the emergence of adolescence as an autonomous and valued topic, which has increasingly attracted the attention of thinkers and writers from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards.

In the next chapter we will look at the treatment of youth and school in the Portuguese-speaking boarding school novel.

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<sup>32</sup> - Isidorus, XI, 2, 9: ‘[D]ictus autem infans quia adhuc fari nescit, id est loqui non potest’: A human being of the first age is called an infant (infans); it is called an infant, because it does not yet know how to speak (in-, ‘not’; fari, present participle fans, ‘speaking’), that is, it cannot talk.



## Chapter 5: José Régio and the Portuguese autobiographical school novel

Perhaps the perception of the school novel as a genre that is typically English may account for the fact that school literature in other languages has not received a lot of attention from English speaking academics. It may be because these works have been deemed to be, at the very best, mere shadows of their brilliant English originals or, at least, strong debtors to some sort of Anglo-Saxon influence? It could, moreover, also have something to do with the lack of suitable English translations of some of these foreign productions, including those in Portuguese.

However, Anglo-Saxon influence was not the case with school literature in Portugal and Brazil. During most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Luso-Brazilian literary world, with a few residual exceptions, was under French cultural hegemony and reacted mostly to French *stimuli*. On their side, a significant number of French intellectuals and writers were permeable to influences from German literature – hence, for instance, the prestige and impact of the German quintessential school *katabasis*, Robert Musil's (1906) *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, an autofictional rendering of the author's days in an Austrian military boarding school. Musil was an influence explicitly acknowledged by Régio.<sup>33</sup>

The German school story leant quite decisively towards an undoubtedly adult readership and so did the French and the Portuguese-speaking writers on this path. The young adult English school literature was considered to be imported, imitative and without prestige, restricted in its age appeal and not expected to find a readership among sane adults, in spite of claims to the opposite; as Williams puts it:

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<sup>33</sup> - Régio's interview, <http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/espelamentos/01/01.html>.

The real boy of fifty (years) (...) reads the novels of schoolboy life as eagerly as his sons (1921, 241).

Not only was the quality of the German and French novels in the *Bildung* tradition different, so was the quantity. Adult schoolboy novels were dense, deeply introspective, complex – and infrequent. However, the English school novel found an immense audience among young adults and invited the abundant production of popular series that were sold for generations, such as the works of Enid Blyton.

Nothing was done to make Portuguese-language titles available in English. Traditionally, in the Portuguese speaking book market, a French translation was considered sufficient to reach the entire world afterwards and that is why we have Pompeia's *L'Athénée. Chronique d'une nostalgie* (Fr. tr. 1980), Vergílio Ferreira's *Matin perdu* (Fr. tr. 1990) and a number of other titles by José Régio and Aquilino Ribeiro translated into French but not a single schoolboy novel in Portuguese that has been translated into English so far. Only a strong multicultural commitment could drive a publishing house to translate these narratives for the pleasure and enjoyment of the English-speaking reader; a complex situation well summarized Morris:

In the four quarters of the globe, who reads a Portuguese book? And with English translation inaccessible, who across that globe is likely to read these books in the 21st century? (2009).

This question should not go without answer because works written in Portuguese span almost a millennium and across four continents, Portuguese being the most spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere, the first in South America and second in Southern Africa.<sup>34</sup> Even though literature in Portuguese is generally absent from English-speaking academic concerns, the situation is different in French, Spanish or Italian universities. So, it is surprising that Lusophone literature has remained *terra incognita* in the English-speaking

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=por](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=por)

world, with very few exceptions – among which we tentatively include the authors Camões, Vieira, Queirós, Pessoa, Drummond, Amado – and among contemporaries, Saramago and Coelho, thanks to some media coverage. As Morris fairly remarks:

Of course, Portuguese literature is not exactly obscure, being the mother tongue of one of the world's largest nations. (Morris 2009).

A comprehensive study of boarding school novels in Portuguese across a range of authors has to deal with some famous names about whom there is a fair amount of information, like Régio and Aquilino, and others so poorly known that any research will be extremely difficult, as in the case of Cirino. It does not always take the more acclaimed author to write the best schoolboy story. To some authors, like Rangel, the genre was inaugural in their literary careers and to others, like Pompeia, it closed their literary lives; none of them wrote solely schoolboy novels or even kept writing within the subgenre. Some of these works have been considered to be minor titles from a major author, as in the case of Rego and Aquilino, while, for others, for example, Pompeia, the school novel was their *opus magnum* and, with a few exceptions, such as Régio, most schoolboy novels in Portuguese are today waiting for new or better editions in their original language.

### *José Régio, the teacher-writer*

It is important to place our examination of José Régio text(s) in the context of his life, work and times since his oeuvre responded acutely to the period in which he lived. It was a time which his vision of the world was formed and unfolded and where he went from being at the forefront of the literary avant-garde until, in the later stages of his life, being accused of living in the past.

José Régio was the literary pseudonym, first appearing in 1925, of José Maria dos Reis Pereira, who was born in 1901 and died in 1969. He led a very quiet life without

travelling abroad any further than the provincial Spanish cities on the Portuguese-Spanish border and remained, for almost all of his teaching career from 1929 until 1962, a high school teacher of French and Portuguese in a small Southern Portuguese town, the quiet and serene Portalegre, a largely forgotten village in the Southern Portuguese borderlands, far from Vila do Conde, his Northern home and birthplace.

Régio refused the cosmopolitanism and the travels that were becoming so popular in his days:

...The world is big  
 But repetitive, and easily gets tiresome.  
 If you ever saw the sky with pure eyes  
 To whatever other skies can you aspire?<sup>35</sup>

These strophes echo the same idea that can be found in Saint Athanasius' *Life of Antony* (c. 360):

The Greeks travel over land and sea after knowledge: but we have no need to go abroad for the kingdom of heaven, nor to cross the sea after virtue; for the Lord hath said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you"... (Luke xvii, 21) (Athanasius 1898, 201).

He found his teaching job so absorbing that, in order to avoid imperilling his literary production, he had to sacrifice most of his social interactions to the point that he became almost a hermit, as he wrote in a letter to José Osório de Oliveira (04.11.1942):

If one, besides being a writer, has a job with intellectual demands which consumes a fair part of his day, one has either to renounce one's ambitions to build a solid oeuvre or, at least, has to sacrifice one's comradeship duties (Régio 1994, 166).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> - ... O mundo é vasto / Mas repete-se, e é fácil esgotá-lo.../ Se uma vez viste o céu com olhar casto, / Que outro céu poderá ultrapassá-lo? (1936) 'Sarça Ardente', *As Encruzilhadas de Deus*.

<sup>36</sup> - 'Mas quem tem, além da de literato, uma profissão que ocupa o espírito e várias horas do dia, – ou renuncia à pretensão de deixar qualquer obra relativamente sólida, ou não pode, materialmente não pode, cumprir todos os deveres sociais de camaradagem'.

Five hours by train from Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, Portalegre's quietness was only disturbed by the military border force it hosted and the frequent changes of troops; a factor important in Régio's life since it made it possible for him to become friends with writers doing military service there, such as David Mourão-Ferreira in 1952 or Eugénio Lisboa in 1954.

But the peace and calm of the small town where Régio lived was not present in the essentially vital stance of his production for it was from abyss of his anguished and deeply hurt soul that he was to get his powerful inspiration and where his art was to be rooted. Throughout his writing he presents his authorial persona as that of a being torn by a tormented, self-tortured conscience; not simply because of his despairing solitude as a human being but also as an artist and creator, who is specially endowed, through art, with the ability to touch things eternal, such as beauty, and achieve connection with the Creator. Added to this is the image of a man who is grasping the depths and complexities of the self, to which has been added the acute consciousness of his nature as a poet in conflict with bourgeois hypocrisy and fake morality that was embodied in dead and dry social and religious conventions. There were many reasons for his nonconformity including his longing for sincerity and his disarming authenticity in all things personal or even intimate. In addition, his defence of art as echoing life and individual despair, was not always welcome in a literary world where rigid literary tenets, dogmatic ideological conventions and dubious political agendas seemed to prevail over honest, heartfelt and confessional literature.

The quiet of the life he chose to live, away from the burgeoning urban centres, made him suspect of the flaw that New Zealand writers, confined in their isolation, also struggled intensely to avoid — 'provincialism'. Katherine Mansfield saw 'a highly self-conscious sense of literary style, not a romantic nationalism (...), as the solution to the problem of

provincialism’, (Stafford 2002, 32) and such a remark could also be applied to Régio. He maintained an aesthetic and thematic distance from the then prevailing regionalist themes and also from nationalist rhetoric, creating something that was an extension of provincialism. Having eschewed both regionalism and nationalism, he further theorized a departure from the tenets of the realist movement, launched in Portugal by Eça de Queiroz back in the 19th Century, and its Marxist avatars, called the Neo-realists, who rivalled the *presença* group from 1937 onwards and engaged in aggressive polemics with Régio as we will see below. For him, the problems of the inner world were far more important than social and outer troubles, so he devoted his work to the exploration of ‘timeless concerns, deeply and largely human, higher than the current goals of the communist revolution’ (Régio / Sérgio 1994, 38).<sup>37</sup> He preached a return to the individual who had been dehumanized in the age of the masses. In the works he wrote while living in the province to avoid exposure to trivial and ephemeral urban trends and passing cultural fashions, there is nothing even close to the ‘provincial’; his poetry, novels and dramas possess universal significance exactly because they are inspired by the ‘individual’, which, at least in the Western tradition, is the most *universal* of human realities.

### *Régio’s time and works*

Few writers in the Portuguese-speaking world have succeeded in all the literary genres as Régio did. He was a poet, a dramaturge, a creator of fictions (novels, novellas and short stories), an historian of literature, an essayist, a memoirist, a chronicler, a columnist, a reviewer, a diary writer, an autobiographer and a prolific writer of letters. To all these roles

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<sup>37</sup> - ‘preocupações eternas, profunda e largamente humanas, superiores à preocupação atual da revolução comunista’.

he even added that of painter, illustrator, literary magazine editor, art and antiques collector and, lastly but not least, high school teacher.

Portalegre was the refuge Régio needed in order to avoid the triviality and waste of time of the urban lifestyle and where he would be able to consecrate his prime time to his literary work. To remain in the hinterland was a solution derived from his professional duties, and being at a safe distance from the literary scenes of Lisbon and Oporto cost him the presumed advantages of the lime light, even if his name and work had already been established at national level through the aptly-named literary magazine *presença* (presence) that he launched with Gaspar Simões and others in 1927, while still a student at Coimbra University, that was to give name to the aesthetic movement of the entire generation, the *presencism* or Second Modernism; his reputation was later secured by a regular output of books of poetry, drama, criticism, essays and novels.

Thanks to the impact of his earlier books of poetry he soon became, to many, a sort of moral and artistic icon in a fashion similar to that of the inspired prophet-like artist in the tradition of Tolstoy or Takhur (Tagore). Because of his fame the authorities felt compelled to treat him with respect, young poets to take him as a model and other writers to resent him as a shadow.

Meanwhile, Gaspar Simões, another *presença* director, rose to the status of supreme and final judge of the literary value of works written by those arriving fresh to the literary world and also the reviewer, in a very personal light, of books written by established names as well (William H. Brow wrote his doctoral dissertation about the ethos of the three main *presença* critics: *Literary criticism in the Portuguese review Presença (1927-1940): an appraisal of the roles of José Régio, João Gaspar Simões and Adolfo Casais Monteiro*, presented to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980).

Gaspar Simões was the first Portuguese professional literary reviewer and the most successful ever but he acquired even greater fame thanks to his two unauthorized, controversial and ground-breaking biographies of Eça de Queiroz (the first Realist Luso-Brazilian novelist) and Fernando Pessoa, the occultist and visionary writer, in which he developed a psychoanalytical approach to their lives and work and uncovered new evidence of the overlapping of literary production, private life events and psychological impasses, much to the outrage of both the writers' families. This approach was called 'biographism' or 'historicism' and was soon to become popular with a public that fancied literary biographies.

Where Régio was the first ever critic to draw public attention to the importance of Pessoa, his friend Simões was the first editor of Pessoa's literary legacy. Both were strong forces driving the taste of the public away from the provincialism, academicism and conventionalism typical of previous generations. This new literary generation of the 1930's, which Régio undoubtedly led from his tribuneship at *presença* and then through his imposing literary production, was to adopt the psychologist influences of Dostoevsky, André Gide and Marcel Proust, the aesthetic school of the *Nouvelle revue française* (a group of French writers and critics led by André Gide) and the then emerging psychoanalytical explorations of Freud, whose work Pessoa, himself, and Gaspar Simões were among the first to introduce in Portugal.

Adhering to these guidelines, 'presencist' writers developed a keen interest in the intricate psychology of the protagonist character as the main impetus for their novels, plays or short stories. They centred their inquiries on the self; a self that is unique but that faces situations shared by many others under analogous circumstances.

The leading literary voices at the time Régio was starting his literary career, the coryphées of the 'official literature', were Raúl Brandão (1867-1930) and Aquilino Ribeiro



(1885-1963), who were both fond of rural Portugal (and Brandão of the fishing coasts and the islands as well) as the preferred setting for their narratives. Brandão was the author of a memoir book that included a chapter on his boarding school years and Ribeiro had authored two boarding schoolboy novels set in the religious educational institutions of the Portuguese hinterland.

Local picturesque was not essential to Régio, who was to set most of his narratives and his dramatic productions within a half-mythical frame, or in a loosely defined time-space. Some of the settings for his novels are provincial towns, where some degree of individual disconnection starts to exist but where social groups such as the family, neighbours or peers, too overwhelming in a one-horse village, still manage to retain some of their power and influence.

The potential for the psychological approach was enormous. Against the concept of a reality ‘as is’, objective, perceivable, a subject for a writer to disassemble and analyse through artistic craftsmanship – as the realists seemed to believe was the path for the novel –, the psychological approach held that ‘reality’ is in fact unique to each of us, ever-changing with new circumstances and shaped by our interaction with others and an inescapable inner evolution. That is why the *presença* writers, and Régio more than any of them, turned their attention to intellectual and spiritual autobiographical writing in the form of novels, autobiography, confessional letters, confessional autobiography and diaries. They also found that no other period of life illustrates more acutely the perception of reality’s changing paradigm than adolescence, a complex stage of life where the individual is riven by strong, and at times self-destructive, inner (and outer) conflicts and contradictions, unfolding within a still tender, idealistic and naive soul. As such he is bound to clash with a cold, cynical, hypocritical, cowardly, insensitive, unromantic and unemotional world.

This explains why Régio and his colleague, Simões, were to write down their experiences under immersion education, i.e., during their boarding school times. The genre was already present in Portuguese narratives but it was developed by Régio and Simões using far more complex psychological guidelines. Régio was not fascinated by adolescence by itself (he was suspicious of writers who idolatrised youth) and even less by the specifics of the adolescents he worked with everyday in the classroom. *He was narcissistically fascinated by himself*, as artists usually are, and only for the sake of fostering his self-knowledge and testing his feeling of being inscrutable to others (and perhaps to himself) was he committed to find the roots of his personal intricacies during his adolescent years. That is why he published *A Drop of Blood*, a work not understood by the reviewers at the time of its publication and by the general public during his lifetime, in the middle of his literary career. Even if the reviewers understood that the novel mirrored real life events, they failed to acknowledge the central place, in Régio's oeuvre, of this personal self-fiction as a deep psycho(self-)analysis, with moral overtones that are more than simply 'existential' because, to his Alter-Ego, Lelito, the world outside might be unfair but is not absurd or nonsensical. The main conflict, which the 'outside' triggers, is the inner conflict; bad actions and feelings from others can be disregarded but what really wounds are the bad feelings and actions they arouse within those who are hurt.

### *Régio's troubled literary life*

His professional life as a teacher seems to have been an uneventful one. We know little about it but I had the opportunity of personally questioning one of his former pupils on the subject. He insisted on the highly professional way in which Régio conducted his classes, with authority and knowledge, but never tyrannically. He was rigorous in marking,

demanded that work be done on time and kept, firmly, a hierarchical distance from his pupils inside and outside the classroom.

In contrast, his artistic life as a creator was filled with public polemic, conflicts and schisms with former literary companions.

In spite of the fact that he once engaged actively for the opposition in an electoral campaign, he was keen to avoid contamination by agendas that would quickly out-date his literary production and turn it into something less personal and therefore less authentic. He became vocal in his refusal to follow the trend, then prevalent, of mixing politics with literature and denounced all militancy that was disguised as poor art. As he wrote to his comrade, José Osório de Oliveira, in 04.11.1942:

...confusions between politics and literature [...] are fashionable these days and I oppose to them, no matter they come from left-wing or from right-wing writers (Régio 1994, 166).<sup>38</sup>

To Régio, art had no external or extrinsic end or goal: ‘we, true artists, don’t live in that world of petty fights between politics and art’ (Régio 2004, 123-122).<sup>39</sup> He had already enunciated this, in 1928, in a famous satirical passage against the pressure of different agendas over the artist.<sup>40</sup>

One could say that they demand everything from literature – the chastening of mores; the building of character; the consolidation of social conventions; the strengthening of the race; the certification of the Immaculate Conception dogma; the extirpation of the Jesuit hydra; the defence of feminism; the progress of the Scouts; the propaganda of the republic, of the monarchy, of anarchism, of socialism, of bolshevism, of

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<sup>38</sup> - ‘...confusões entre política e literatura [...] estão hoje tanto em moda, e que eu detesto venham das esquerdas venham das direitas...’.

<sup>39</sup> - ‘nós, os verdadeiros artistas, não vivemos em tal mundo (...) de lutazinhas entre política e arte’.

<sup>40</sup> - ‘E dir-se-ia que eles exigem tudo da literatura – a morigeração dos costumes; a formação do caráter, a solidificação das convenções sociais; o robustecimento da raça; a certificação do dogma da Imaculada; a extirpação da hidra jesuítica; a defesa do feminismo; o progresso da Associação dos *Scouts*; a propaganda da república, da monarquia, do anarquismo, do socialismo, do bolchevismo, do óleo de ricino, dos pós de Keating, do calçado Atlas, das calças largas, dos milagres de Fátima, ou das predileções particulares de cada um – tudo, menos o que se deve exigir à literatura (...): satisfação à nossa necessidade de emoções estéticas’.

castor oil, of Keating's Powder, of Atlas footwear, of baggy pants, of the miracles of Fátima, or of each individual's personal appetites – everything, except what should be expected from literature (...): to satisfy our need for aesthetics (Régio 1928, 3).

Thus Régio advocated an art that would be independent and not determined by social, moral and political disputes. If these topics were approached in a really personal way, rooted in the artist personality, they had room in the artist's production; if they were stereotyped manifestos, thematic conventions and fashionable postures, they were not art.

*A famous quarrel: does art need to be socially 'useful'?*

A boisterous literary group working in those days, also under regionalist inspiration, was the Portuguese Neo-realists who followed the tenets of the Northeast Brazilian realist/regionalist movement and its major authors Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953), Lins do Rego (1901-1957), Rachel de Queiroz (1910-2003) and Jorge Amado (1912-2001) – incidentally, Rego and Rachel were also celebrated for their boarding school novels. This literary school was introduced to Portugal with the impact of the international success of Ferreira de Castro (1898-1974), the novelist who wrote about the hardships of his own enslavement in the Brazilian Amazonian jungle as an infant-worker. His chronicle of the *seringueiros'* labours in his novel, *A Selva*, published in Portugal in 1930, made him the first Portuguese writer to receive wide international acclaim and it was translated into an impressive number of foreign languages (on my comparison of Ferreira de Castro's *A Selva* with Eustasio Rivera's *La Vorágine*, a modernist novel on a similar topic, see Santos 2007). The new movement was also heralded by, among others, Carlos de Oliveira (1921-1981), a Portuguese writer born in Brazil.

The movement came to be known as ‘Neo-realism’ because it was not allowed, because of official censorship, to use its true name of ‘Socialist Realism’. According to Alexandre Pinheiro Torres:

...The label Neo-realism was a playing down that did not appeal even to the writers who had to adopt this classification, only because they were prevented from using Socialist Realism or any other designation more suitable to that ideological movement (Torres 1977, 15).<sup>41</sup>

The socialist realist novelists had little, if anything, in common with the Christian socialism of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) and his heart-breaking denunciation of the appalling circumstances in which the poor were trapped: the dreadful lives of abandoned orphans, petty-criminal street kids and young inmates in boarding houses and schools. On the contrary, it was merely an art of impotent protest by those who, being impotent to combat effectively in the political battleground the supremacy of the conservative culture then prevailing, had no option but to resort to the production of inconsequential ‘printed revolutions’, consisting mainly of narratives with predictable plots that illustrated ‘class conscience’ – i.e., the miraculous and hagiographical *anagnorisis* inside the hero’s mind of the ‘universal truth’ of controversial Marxist tenets. That Manichaeistic, rudimentary, emphatic, pamphleteering and demagogic plotting of their novels matched their poorly sketched characters, in literature as in cinema alike: ‘The plots were harshly simplified and the characters certainly reduced to “types”’ (Stites 1992, 116).

Against this misleadingly called Neo-realist literature which had, in its black and white views, so little bearing on reality at all, Régio proposed artistic creativity and individuality, sincerity and authenticity. About the same time a similar debate was going on

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<sup>41</sup> - ‘...a própria palavra Neo-realismo era um remendo, uma improvisação, um termo que não agradava mesmo àqueles que tiveram de lançar recurso dele, na impossibilidade de usarem Realismo-Socialista ou outra denominação mais próxima da verdadeira natureza do novo movimento ideológico’.

in Brazil, opposing Southern writer Érico Veríssimo to the Northeastern realist novelists (Martins 1976).

*The debate on Art: vanguards vs. academicism, bourgeois vs. völkisch*

The Neo-realist writers were certainly not concerned with schoolboys, even those who came from the lowest social classes, in as much as they also averted their attention from types such as Dickens' urchins, rascals, prostituted girls and greedy murderers of the *lumpenproletariat*, only to endorse, instead, a sweetish, mellow and ultimately ultra-bourgeois view of the 'revolutionary hero' arising from farm and factory, who in spite of being heartlessly exploited by ferocious and caricatured capitalists, is, even so, capable of exhibiting in the highest degree all the potentially achievable human virtues and ethical strengths. Collective salvation was reachable in 3 steps: sacrifice (martyrdom) / awareness (*anagnorisis*) / retribution, or the Revolution as the ultimate 'happy ending'. From 1932, this same type of 'heroic' socialist realism was in vogue in Soviet Union, ordaining 'of the artist a truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development' (Murphy 1996, 960) in order to glorify the Revolution and the Dictator (Jorge Amado, a then high-profile and unquestionably talented representative of this ideology in Brazil, became, in 1951, the recipient of Moscow-awarded 'Stalin Prize'), and in the process they downgraded 'art' to something closer to raw propaganda.

There were some serious difficulties in socialism realism and its strange blend of *socialism* with *reality*; among them, how to ideologize reality, i.e.: 'Can there be a socialist, capitalist, Christian or Mohammedan realism?' (Murphy 1996, 960); or, what was the interpretative role of the artist if art was to be nothing more than *mimesis* of 'history'? Moreover, what could be more false than the revolutionary hero painted without nuance or

density, like little boys' shining paper soldiers, and what could be more true than the self-tortured anti-hero in a maddening conflict – precisely with 'reality'?

Socialist realism banned confessional lyricism to return to primeval and age-old epic heroism. In Russian literature this was a switch towards the exaltation of the *positive hero*, replacing the figure of the 'superfluous man' found in Dostoyevsky (Roberts 2013) and other 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian writers (Murphy 1996, 995), or in that paradigm of superfluosness that is Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (1915). Curiously, the writer who had most contributed to the fashioning of socialist realism, Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), moved to fascist Italy when the Bolshevik revolution was triumphing in Russia, only to return to his homeland to die at the hands of his fellow party men (Murphy 1996, 416).

Such was the pattern of 'engaged art', communist and fascist alike: after their respective rise to power their purported artistic ideals fell into the driest academicism and the most artificial conventionalism, which overcame their initial flirting with the vanguards – constructivism/formalism for the communists, and modernism/futurism for the fascists:

Andrei Zhdanov and his associates railed against foreign influence and formalism and made it crystal clear that Soviet art was superior to all others. He called for a fusion of politics and culture, the hegemony of the party over art, 'mass interest' over the whims of artists, and sharp hostility to both elitism in art and to popular culture from below (Stites 1992, 117).

Except in what regards the 'country culture', which the fascists were eager to uphold, the pathways of communism and fascism were the same: their initial interest in the vanguards joined a broader movement towards the renewal of a stagnating culture and the new art was assimilated as part of their respective revolutions; but such infatuation soon gave place to the academic/realist turn and the impugnation of any experimentalism as futile and alienated from the great social and political realities, as Hitler stressed in his 'Speech at the Opening of the House of German Art in Munich', July 18, 1937:

Millions of people felt instinctively that these art-stammerings of the last few decades were more like the achievements that might have been produced by untalented children of from eight to ten years old and could under no circumstances be regarded as the expression of our own time or of the German future (Sax 1992).

The National-Socialists were eager to apply to art the biological/medical concept of ‘degenerescence’ – *entartete Kunst* – a concept made popular by Max Nordau’s reactionary book *Entartung* (1892). According to Hitler, degenerescence was the by-product of the artist’s Narcissist tendencies towards self-infatuation:

Men of letters are not the creators of new epochs; it is the fighters, those who truly shape and lead peoples, who make history. (...) The artist does not create for the artist, but for the people! We will see to it that from here on the people will be called on to judge their own art. No one must say that the people have no appreciation for a truly valuable enrichment of its cultural life. Long before the critics did justice to the genius of a Richard Wagner he had the people on his side (Sax 1992).

So, the people (*Volk*) despises an Art that in turn had ignored the people: Hitler derided those works ‘which cannot be comprehended and are validated only through bombastic instructions for use’ (Sax 1992). When the people (*Volk*) have become the supreme art critique, the way is paved for the apogee of conservatism and the glorification of the *völkisch*, which was the ‘anti-decadent’ remedy that was to flourish in Germany.

Meanwhile, on the communist side,

What the guardians of ‘Soviet’ culture disliked most of all was foreign inspiration which produced both frivolity (...) and excessive difficulty (Stites 1992, 117).

Difficulty was not good for the people, who enjoyed better in literature the simplicity of schematic plots and plain types instead of characters ridden by complexity.

The National-Socialists assumed that those bourgeois cosmopolite and degenerate artists had communist leanings, as opposed to the nationalism of the grassroots; but when the Soviet Union won the war the victor took on the prejudices of the vanquished and there



was a major shift towards the *völkisch* in Russia as well. The communists also felt tempted to resort to that infinite and always at hand repository, in literature as much as in visual and performing arts, even if this trend was actually far more romantic and fascist than ‘realist’:

Music, said Zhdanov in a major onslaught against musical modernism in 1948, had to be rooted in the people and accessible to them, nationalist in content, tied to classical traditions, and programmatic. This all reflected of course the upsurge of Russian nationalism and the tremendous exaltation of the folk that the war had accomplished. (...) State promotion of folk music shot upward. (...) Nostalgia, represented most vividly by ‘folk’ music, became the handmaiden of stability – or even stasis. This is why a lord of the folk establishment, Zakharov, played such a key role in chastising the ‘difficult’ composers and the cosmopolites; and why folksong writing and performance grew so luxuriantly from this time onward (Stites 1992, *idem*).

The German and later Russian road from Modernism to the *völkisch* was taken in Portugal as well: António Ferro, who served as Minister of Culture to President Salazar from 1933 to 1949, under the title of National Secretary of Propaganda until the end of World War II and from then onwards as National Secretary of Information, was himself a member of the Portuguese modernist group and editor of the influential magazine *Orpheu*. He supported his modernist friends (namely by providing a prize to be given to Fernando Pessoa in 1934) together with young writers and artists starting their careers. Initially centred around nationalism but turning later to ‘Atlantism’ (the ideology that favoured strong links with Brazil), his aesthetic creed, as expected, replaced Modernism with mild conventionalism, abandoned most of his subversive stances of the past, which had led for instance to the prohibition by the Censure of his play *Mar Alto* in 1923. At the head of the official state culture, he also fed a long lasting *völkisch* stream by supporting craftsmen and other plastic artists from the rural and illiterate grassroots: conservatism and communist establishment in politics were bound to embrace the *völkisch* in art.

In Portugal,, the communists secured some control over the literary milieu but they fail to seize power: and since they were not a political ‘establishment’, despite posing as the

‘artistic conscience of the proletarians’, they tended to remain in the pre-*völkisch* (pre-War) version of Soviet socialist realism and so they despised the culture of the uneducated folk and paid little, if any, respect to its art, moreover if it was linked to the religious thematic, which they considered to be an expression of backwardness, ignorance and lack of proper direction by the Communist Party. But their literary movement was not any less reactionary than the Soviet post-War directives on Art both in its stance and mindset. Something in the label ‘*Neo-realism*’ acknowledged a *return* to the kind of works like *Germinal* (1885), by Émile Zola, a founder of naturalism and the hyperrealist movement (so realistic was Zola that he lived for a while among the miners in order to describe accurately their poor living conditions, a device also used in Portugal by some Neo-realists). The majority of the Portuguese Neo-realists was to abide by the ‘realist’ and anti-vanguards tendency, rejecting cosmopolitanism and Modernism (in an all-too-easy move since most Modernists, including Pessoa, have had strong links with the right-wing movement), and without any will to embrace the *völkisch*, since the traditional art of the rural and urban poor was also too much cherished by the ruling authorities.

In fact, in the Portugal of the 1940s Neo-realism was a gross and multiple anachronism: it was bourgeois, after the enshrinement of the *völkisch* tradition by the romantics; it presumed of being mimetic towards ‘reality’, after Rimbaud, Apollinaire and the French pre-Surrealists; it was heroic, going back to the primeval collective hero, the personification of class, race or virtues, after literature had long forgotten the virtues of heroism; it was moralistic and preachy, after Nietzsche and his indictment of morality as being a twisted vengeance put up by the weak and wicked against life and potency; it was academic, programmatic, and tending to an orthodoxy, after the Modernist subversion; and, last but not least, it was communist, precisely when their rivals, the fascists, had supremacy in Europe and an upper-hand in Portuguese politics.

If they were still pre-*völkisch*, the Portuguese Neo-realists shared with their Soviet counterparts the same rigidity and dogmatism, wanted art to be controlled by political commissars and the artist's expression to be closely restricted, at the exact antipodes of the *presença* movement, launched by Régio one decade earlier. Fatally, the Neo-realists were to come into harsh conflict with *presencism* and its aesthetics. Being apolitical, Régio's movement had not attracted the attention of the authorities or their supporters in the literary world. But what had been its safe conduct for the authorities, was to become its sin for the Neo-realists, who found the movement's lack of political content a challenge to their controlled and 'corseted' art. They resented Régio's withdrawal from 'engaged art' as a defiance to their absolute grip on what was deemed 'acceptable' in Portuguese and Brazilian literature. This clash was to be translated as the quarrel over 'engagement'; according to Neo-realist critic Pinheiro Torres:

The First and Second Modernisms were allergic to all and any ideology (...), absolutely convinced that Art and Ideology were two worlds apart and impossible to bring together (Torres 1977, 24).<sup>42</sup>

And Torres further stressed:

In the entire Portuguese literary history there is no other example of a so consciously programmed dissociation from social realities (*ibidem*).<sup>43</sup>

What the Neo-realists try to mask is that their motivation was more moralistic than social. What they call 'social realities' was simply their *moral judgments* about those realities and not the realistic presentation of social facts through literature taking into account all their complex dynamics.

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<sup>42</sup> - '[As gerações de ambos os Modernismos eram] alérgicas a toda e qualquer ideologia (...) absolutamente crentes de que Arte e ideologia eram dois mundos impossíveis de conciliar'.

<sup>43</sup> - 'Em toda a história da literatura portuguesa não há outro exemplo de um afastamento tão conscientemente programado das realidades'.

Was Régio any less socially concerned than his opponents? His poetry and novels are plenty of the destitute types, mostly portrayed with deep sympathy; he never refrained from voicing social criticism, using strong words to describe the flaws of poverty, the miseries of prostitution (that he knew well) and the social abuses perpetrated by the rich in poetry books like *Fado* (1941) and *A Chaga do Lado* (1954). But he presents these plagues without trying to sell any ready-made solution to solve them, let alone one magical and all-remedying ‘revolution’ with its dubious historical results. His poetry illustrates powerfully the age-old sacrifice of the oppressed, the hopeless deprivations they are forced to endure by the greediness and selfishness of the exploiters, but does not subscribe the distrusted panacea offered by the demagogues, of which he grew suspicious.

In his very personal way, Régio flirted with the *völkisch* in poetry and art, but aside from official initiatives.<sup>44</sup> Although he came from the regional elite of his town, he did not share an iota of the prejudice against folk arts, poetry and religious practice that most ‘progressive’ intellectuals tended to display, providing that it was genuine and deeply-rooted in ancestral forms of spiritual life; he was an enthusiastic collector of *völkisch* sculpture, either for his own taste or because he could not afford the older and more expensive items the poet Junqueiro had traded as an antiquarian back in his old days.

On the other hand, Régio was suspicious of Contemporary Art as being insincere and speculative and considered *völkisch* art to be the natural sequel to Medieval Art, a claim that was not quite true, unless we consider that what he called ‘Medieval’ (Romanesque and Gothic) was intermediated by the Baroque revival of these art expressions: with its taste for the ‘imperfect’ and its strong religious motives, Baroque left a long-lasting imprint in folk imagination, at the time when the elites were moving towards the Neo-Classical and later other new artistic fashions:

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<sup>44</sup> - Except in one single occasion: see Chapter 9, Régio’s stand on Portuguese culture.

From all the expressions of Contemporary Art (which rarely impresses me, judging as I do that our times are not particularly favourable to the creation in visual arts), are the true art works of the Cinema those that have impressed me the most. (...) I sustain a true love for the non-industrialized folk art, as well as for the Medieval, seeing strong links between both. Consequently, as an art collector, I have been paying particular attention to both (Régio 1984, 250).<sup>45</sup>

Régio's departure from the epochal and his alleged '*umbilicalism*' – his centring of Art in the Self of the artist:

And in every thing, what did I see? A man!: I;<sup>46</sup>

placed him at odds with the Neo-realists' thematic and ideological bareness and their absolute fascination with the 'class struggle' allegedly taking place in the fields and huge farms of the hinterland (*latifundia* / fazendas), in the factories and in the precarious slums erected by rural migrants in the peripheries of towns. It is not surprising that the left-wing Neo-realists reacted by launching a permanent and fierce denigration of Régio's 'mysticisms'<sup>47</sup> and scorned his creative tension for being sourced in the spiritual rather than the social. And when the smaller group of right-wing Neo-realists, among which Amândio César (1921-1987) was the most prominent, approached Régio and the *presença* in a highly sympathetic way, Régio accepted their homage, although being unsympathetic towards the Government they supported. Such independence of mind was another scandal to those following a sectarian obedience.

Since Régio came to endure far more ostracism by the leftist *intelligentsia* than by the New State government that he opposed publically as a citizen, over time he became as suspicious of one as of the other until, eventually, he was to write:

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<sup>45</sup> - 'De todas as manifestações da arte contemporânea (a qual raramente me toca a fundo, não julgando eu a nossa época particularmente favorável à criação artística) são as verdadeiras obras de arte do cinema que mais me têm emocionado. (...) Alimento verdadeiro amor pela arte popular não industrializada, assim como pela medieval, vendo íntimas relações entre uma e outra. Por isso, como colecionador, lhes tenho ligado particular atenção'.

<sup>46</sup> - 'E em tudo, o que vi eu? Um homem!, eu;' (1936) 'Sarça Ardente', *As Encruzilhadas de Deus*.

<sup>47</sup> - *O Globo*, Lisbon: 15.09.1944, 11.

I consider communism and mediocrity even more dangerous for culture than the tyranny of Salazar (Régio 2004, 293).<sup>48</sup>

Thus he took the communist dictates over what art should be to be about as big a menace to culture as the authoritarian nationalist government's (rather loose) control over what could and could not be published and staged.

This hostility attained its paroxysm during the premiere of Régio's play *Benilde ou a Virgem-Mãe* (*Benilde or the Virgin-Mother*) in Lisbon on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1947, when it was met with fury by the Neo-realist mob present in the event. It is interesting that Régio, in a letter to his friend Alberto de Serpa on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1947, hesitantly credited the jeering to 'maybe a group of young catholic zealots' (Régio 1994, 202-203)<sup>49</sup> and later on, in the same letter, assigned other types of provocation, like the shouting or '*apartes*', to the Neo-realists. According to a source present at the première, the literary critic Manuela de Sousa Marques, a disciple of the eminent German literary theorist, Wolfgang Kayser, both the jeering and the shouting came in fact from the Neo-realists and there were no religious fanatics in the place (Marques 1947).

Régio's play had still more tribulations to endure when the movie, posthumously based on it, premiered on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1975. It was disdained and almost ignored by the film reviewers citing the argument that religious and metaphysical or existential interrogations bear no relevance to the 'common man'. About the movie's plot and the strong animosity towards it by the Marxists, Randal Johnson wrote:

Benilde [the movie, released on 21.11.75] was accused of having nothing to do with the country's political situation [Marxist at that time] and of being antiquated in theme and form (Johnson 2007, 33).

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<sup>48</sup> - '[A]inda considero mais perigosos para a cultura o Comunismo e o Cabotinismo do que a tirania salazarista'.

<sup>49</sup> - '...parece que um grupo de jovens católicos aguerridos'.

It was this very same argument that was used by the Nationalist Government in 1956 to deny a subsidy to stage Régio's play *Jacob e o Anjo* (*Jacob and the Angel*), written in 1940 and already staged in Paris in 1952 in a French translation. Marcello Caetano, future successor to President Salazar as Head of the Government, assured Régio in a letter written to a common friend that the regime had no political animosity towards the author and that, while conveying his personal admiration for his work, which he deemed not scandalous at all – on the contrary, he wrote, *Jacob* was 'a spiritually inspired text' – he justified the refusal to subsidy its staging on the grounds that the play's high idealism and dramatic intensity were not accessible to the average theatregoer (Régio 2004, 295-296), remarkably echoing Marxist views about the lack of social relevance of Régio's literary endeavours. Again, in the early 1960's, the Fundo de Cinema declined to fund the projected two cinematic sequences with screenplays co-written by Régio himself and director Manoel de Oliveira, based on Régio's *The Old House*, the novelistic cycle that included as its first instalment *A Drop of Blood* (Johnson 2007, 27). In spite of keeping his literary production away from political causes of the moment, Régio did not refrain, as mentioned above, from taking an active role in a number of civic matters of a complexion clearly opposed to the New State, the regime that was in place from 1933 onwards, namely supporting the opposition ticket in the major presidential election of 1949. Even if he had not been personally persecuted for that, his work, already sensitive and polemic, never found any official favour whatever, though, as we have seen, some officials of the regime individually acknowledged their admiration for him and his oeuvre. The official culture even ventured to assimilate his work once, during the '30 years of Culture Festival' of 1956, when his play *Jacob* was performed on the radio – without his consent or even informing him.

Ruth S. Lamb has commented that ‘many of his plays have not been staged because of censorship, although they have been published’,<sup>50</sup> in a reference to Régio’s 1949 play *El-Rei Sebastião*, which was banned from the stage but not from being sold in the libraries, – a ban that was waived in 1956 in accordance with new policies that the authorities stated were ‘intended to provide bigger protection to the Portuguese theatre’.<sup>51</sup> (Régio 2004, 297). Still, the staging at the National Theatre of Régio’s play *A Salvação do Mundo* (*The World’s Salvation*) was vetoed by the Minister of Education and Régio mocked the decision in a letter of 17.07.1953: ‘this veto might have been beneficial to the public’ (Régio/Sérgio 1994, 104). He complained to the censors that theatre plays far more daring and subversive than his own but written by foreign authors were not only permitted but also subsidized (Régio 2004, 298).<sup>52</sup> He was reacting to the authorities’ wording, when waiving the ban, to allow for a ‘*stronger protection*’ to be bestowed upon Portuguese plays in competition with foreign ones. The Portuguese authorities at the time, unfortunately following a pattern noticeable during most historical periods, while proclaiming their fierce nationalism actually tended to despise and disparage national authors and works.

The explanation for the waiving of the ban in 1956 on *El-Rei Sebastião* (and later, in 1963, on *Blind Man's Bluff*, as we will see below) is to be found in the confluence of Régio’s progressive isolation towards the end of his literary career and his craving for

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<sup>50</sup> - In spite of being against the Portuguese constitution of 1911, censorship had been enforced *de facto* for a considerable period of the Old Republic years (1910-1917 and 1919-1926). In 1923, a literary spat between Fernando Pessoa and the League of Catholic Students led to its reinforcement and, in that same year, it was re-established in Brazil as well. A famous victim of banning was the play *Mar Alto*, by António Ferro, which had been staged in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1922, and was premiered in Portugal at the São Carlos Theatre in Lisbon, 10 July 1923, only to be withdrawn the next day. Censorship was abolished by the Portuguese National Revolution of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1926 and again restored by the military rulers shortly thereafter and kept by the New State from 1933 onwards.

<sup>51</sup> - ‘Em virtude do estabelecimento de novas diretivas para a Censura Teatral, com o objetivo de uma maior proteção ao Teatro português, foi levantada a interdição da representação da peça *El-Rei Sebastião*’.

<sup>52</sup> - ‘...o subsídio de montagem concedido a peças estrangeiras cujos atrevimentos vão além dos meus’.



public recognition at a period when some critics refused to place his latest work on the same quality level as that of the early days. While still young, he had rapidly enjoyed an enviable status as a poet, essayist, historian of literature and literary critic. But subsequently, the reception accorded to his plays oscillated between perplexity and reserve and, finally, both *Blind Man's Bluff* (1934) and his major work as auto-fictionalist and novelist, *The Old House*, which he deemed to be the apex of his literary production, was met with embarrassment. The public did not expect an acclaimed poet to strip his soul in a prosaic, extended and straightforward manner, however extremely sincere. His last collections of poetry were considered not to add anything more to his glory in the best of circumstances or to be lacking the ‘sulphuric and youthful vigour’ present in his youthful verses, in the worst (Lisboa 1997). As regards to aesthetics, he was now bound to the Nietzschean ideal of departing from the herd and being ‘...like a lone aristocrat...’ (Régio 2004, 113).<sup>53</sup>

Régio reacted with bitterness to the defection of many of his admirers. Also because of his need for recognition he was to accept, in 1961, the semi-official *Diário de Notícias* prize which he went to Lisbon to publicly receive. It was a distinction bestowed upon one of his poetry editions, *Filho do Homem (Son of Man)*, and demonstrated the changing mores of the time and a latent consecration of his poetry by the regime as well. A bit too late, in 1970, the Government of Marcello Caetano, through his Secretary of State for Information and Tourism (César Moreira Baptista), posthumously awarded him the *National Prize of Poetry* and the Parliament did public homage to his memory.

What is undeniable was the success of Régio’s *presença* literary magazine, that was in print for 13 ½ years and remains one of the longest surviving Portuguese literary

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<sup>53</sup> - ‘Mas talvez a incompreensão da maioria nos atire, precisamente, para este ideal de aristocrata solitário’.

magazines, which strongly inspired writers far beyond its inner circle and its period of publication. At his peak of success or in the isolation of his more solitary elder years, Régio always felt the loneliness of the artistic creator; a creature alien to this world and abandoned to the ghosts dwelling in his mind whom he summoned to populate his work in order to have dialogue with them.

*The subject of friendships and enmities among boys and young men*

Not surprisingly, it was out of moral rather than political considerations that his first novel *Jogo da Cabra Cega (Blind Man's Bluff)*, was also banned by the censor in 1934, only to be released, still under President Salazar's government, in 1963 (Stern 1976, 60, n. 2).

State censorship started in Republican times, fundamentally as a war contingency during the First World War, and was applied to correspondence and the press. It was kept, thereafter, by the Republic, briefly deactivated after the National revolution of 1926 and, once again, again institutionalised under the New State (1933), probably as a result of the memory of the press's part in the downfall of the monarchy. Because of its military origins, the Government handed censorship over to retired army officers, a group with scant intellectual leanings. It was more political in its attitude to the press and more moral when it came to books. Of course, tolerance and guidelines changed a great deal throughout its *longue durée*, with periods of tighter control following others of openness and permissiveness.

This explains why *The Blind Man's Bluff* was banned; because its main topic was subject of male complicity and friendships and because it was a work that, to its merit, still remains undeniably subversive today. Also understandable is the fact that, in 1963, the authorities had changed their view about a novel Régio had written 30 years previously and, also, why Régio's theatre became acceptable to the regime, once mores and mentalities

had drastically changed since the ban. Actually, his drama was staged much more during the time of the regime than it was to be after its downfall.

While *The Blind Man's Bluff* was still banned, Régio wrote the following comment on the book:

I wrote a volume of almost four hundred pages about the never before covered subject of friendships between complex men. Time will do justice to this exceptional book, which has, perhaps, plenty of flaws but is also filled with originality, daring and psychological richness (Régio 2004, 59).<sup>54</sup>

The subject of young men's friendships and not so much 'adolescentism' – the literary aesthetics focusing on youth and its problems, as it was named by Mourão-Ferreira (1977) – had become fashionable in European literature and had already produced such landmark works as those by Hermann Hesse – *Narciss and Goldmund*, *Klein and Wagner* or the boarding schoolboy novel, *Beneath the Wheel*, among others.<sup>55</sup> In Portugal, the topic became important to the writers of Régio's generation, namely to the two major 'presencists': alongside *The Blind Man's Bluff* by Régio, Gaspar Simões wrote *Amigos Sinceros* (*Sincere Friends*) in 1941, which dealt with his own friendship with José Régio, as stated in the public dedication to him (Simões 1962, 12).

The boarding schoolboy novel was a canonical locus that dealt, in depth, with the subject of male friendships and boarding school was believed to be one of the places where they most flourished and also where they were put to the hardest test. There had already been boarding schoolboy novels in Portuguese and Brazilian literature long before the

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<sup>54</sup> - 'Eu escrevi um volume de perto de quatrocentas páginas sobre o tema inédito da amizade entre homens complicados. O tempo fará justiça a esse livro excepcional, talvez cheio de defeitos, mas também cheio de originalidade, ousadia e riqueza psicológica'.

<sup>55</sup> - These last two works were translated into Portuguese by Manuela de Sousa Marques through the agency of the 'presencist' philosopher Delfim Santos: *Ele e o Outro* (1952) Lisbon: Guimarães; *Narciso e Goldmundo* (1956) Lisbon: Guimarães.

'*presença*' but there was room for new and more audacious approach, particularly along psychological and introspective lines.

*The Blind's Man Bluff* concerned friendships between college students and not between high school pupils. It had superbly inaugurated Régios' fiction, rendering, in fictional guise, a memoir of his years as a student at Coimbra University. In literary terms, *A Drop of Blood* became the prequel that was required when Régio decided to produce a complete auto-fictional rendering of his life in four and, later, an intended massive heptalogy (see Lisboa 1999, 80), parts of the auto-fictional roman-fleuve, *A Velha Casa* (*The Old House*). He then wrote number II of the series, *As Raízes do Futuro* (*The Roots of the Future*) about the period between boarding school and college and proceeded to his college years in number III of the cycle, *Os Avisos do Destino* (*The Ominous Signs*).

It is significant that Régio decided to start the study of his inner life upheavals only from his late school years onwards and not in preschool or boyhood times (which he was, after all, to cover in his *Confessions*); this was because he needed some degree of emotional complexity that was unrealistic to credit to the earlier stages of his life.

Simões, however, has as the protagonist of his boarding schoolboy novel a naïve twelve year old boy, a character who, in psychological terms, can be seen as less promising (thus leaving to the narrator a bigger part in the narrative). He chose to do this because it was a time when he actually boarded and the same 'real life criteria' only applied to Régio when he entered boarding school at seventeen years old but both wished to mirror, faithfully, their actual boarding experience.

In Régio's *A Drop of Blood* there is as much concern with male psychology as in *The Blind Man's Bluff*. He is concerned with positively portraying the tension between the introspective, spiritual and nervous type of boy/man on the one side and the strong, self-assured and dominant type on the other – and the mutual attraction of both:

I am a delicate person who enjoys all the inner delicacies. [...] That is why I write brutal verses and I let myself be subjugated by the brutality of some characters (Régio 2004, 42).<sup>56</sup>

This emotional dyad functions mostly for the protection and mentoring of the younger. As Fernando Namora, author of another schoolboy novel, wrote:

Take care with the headmaster. When you least expect it, he can put you on bread and water. And one of the prefects is a bastard. The dudes, obviously, are cool. What you need is the protective wing of a senior, to protect you. That is most important: to have a protector (Namora 1990, 119).<sup>57</sup>

In addition to these two types (the strong-minded Lelito and the strong-bodied Pedro), Régio also featured in his novel more two psychological characters: the weak, humble and subservient type (Olegário), and the offensive, vulgar, violent and lascivious Adélio, with whom all the other types were in sharp opposition and with whom they were fated to clash.

### *José Régio as educationalist*

In spite of his principal fame as a poet, playwright and novelist, Régio started his authorial life as a pedagogue and, from his experiences during his official probationary year as teacher in 1926-1927, he wrote *Some remarks and reflections arising during my pedagogical probation term (Portuguese 2<sup>nd</sup> year)*,<sup>58</sup> and, from his classroom experiences, he derived *Some reflections on the teaching of French – 3<sup>rd</sup> year*. Both reports were published in 1929, sixteen years before he returned to the subject of school in *A Drop of Blood*.

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<sup>56</sup> - 'Eu sou um delicado que saboreia todas as delicadezas íntimas. É talvez por isso que tenho versos brutais, e que me deixo subjugar pela brutalidade de certos temperamentos'.

<sup>57</sup> - 'Acautela-te com o diretor. Quando menos o esperas, põe-te a pão e laranjas. E um dos prefeitos é sacrista. A malta, claro, fixe. O que precisas é da asa de um matulão, que te defenda as canelas. É o mais importante: um tipo que proteja'.

<sup>58</sup> - At the Escola Normal Superior de Coimbra.

As a teacher, the classroom appears discreetly in his writing. In an entry in his *Diary* of 29<sup>th</sup> February, 1948 he quotes a composition by one of his pupils, fancying that the pupil's name: Delicado, meaning 'delicate', is the way he used to think about himself, as we have seen above. In another revealing passage he states:

I started marking the compositions of the first grade kids. Sometimes I find myself reading and marking the boys' compositions with the same attitude as women do crochet (Régio 2004, 120).<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 6: Régio and his pupils; source: *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 10.06.1970**

Again it is remarkable that Régio did not choose to represent himself as teacher in any of his novels. He was only interested in his self-representation as a pupil and later as a college and university student.

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<sup>59</sup> - 'Comecei a ver exercícios dos pequenos do primeiro ano. Ponho-me, às vezes, a ver e classificar exercícios dos rapazes como as mulheres se põem a fazer *crochet*'.

However, we cannot forget that, unlike Simões' boarding schoolboy novel, his *A Drop of Blood* was written by a professional teacher and was the work of a lifelong educator. Thanks to this, his writing has a different and more educational tone, and school life is more detailed and realistically present than in Simões' *Boarding School*, whose omnipresent (and often nocturnal) hero's ruminations somehow manage to overshadow daily school life. So, it can be said that Régio's novel exceeds, in its descriptive accuracy, the work of Simões, because beyond Régio's novel is an author immersed in schooling and more deeply concerned with education.

Régio's narrative skills are certainly fascinating and are today as alive and as provocative as ever they were, mostly because of the 'blood' with which he wrote, to use the metaphor he chose for the title of his novel. His Alter-Ego, Lelito, is portrayed as a 'special boy'; one who is certainly 'delicate' and who is painfully aware of the abyss that separates him from his fellow-pupils. He is a bookish kind of boy, distant and cloistered in his recondite universe of poetry and novels, fragile, oversensitive, all the more rebellious and deeply sorrowful. His sorrows are not so much the result of a lost-in-advance clash with the absurdities of the outside world but rather they arise from the self-destructive double nature of his inner impulses and tendencies, much in the Romantic lineage of the broken, divided and conflict-ridden self: 'I'm the offspring of the love that unites God with the Devil' he wrote in one of his poems (Régio 1925).<sup>60</sup>

#### *The vitalist ideal of the presencists' aesthetics*

Back in 1927, as it has been mentioned, and together with his friend Gaspar Simões (1903-1987) and a few others, Régio launched his audacious *presença* literary magazine

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<sup>60</sup> - 'Sou fruto do Amor que há entre Deus e o Diabo'.

(*presence*), whose name also came to designate an aesthetic movement and even an entire generation of writers, illustrators, thinkers and visual artists. The magazine was to remain in print until 1940, for more than 13 years. It was, for many a subscriber throughout the Portuguese hinterland, the only cultural and literary ‘presence’ (justifying its name) of some cultural and artistic cultivation. As such, Georges le Gentil wrote:

To put it plainly, almost all the poets and novelists who had a name at that time (1927-1940) had been, at one moment or another, presencists, publishing episodically or regularly in the magazine and sharing more or less its principles (Le Gentil 1995, 204).<sup>61</sup>

The principles that Régio took from the main European literary tendency of his time were a literature of sincere self-exposure, intimate in tone and confessional in purpose.

Many presencists came to the movement from the magazine *A Águia* (*The Eagle*, 1910-1932), that had been launched by the Neo-romantic ‘Saudosist’ (‘Nostalgic’) movement called ‘Renascença Portuguesa’ (*Portuguese Renaissance*), a joint initiative between the poet Teixeira de Pascoaes (1877-1952) and the philosopher (and old boarding schoolboy) Leonardo Coimbra (1883-1936), two of the most prominent mentors for the next generation. It also enjoyed collaboration from the would-be modernist coryphées Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) and Mário de Sá-Carneiro (1890-1916). ‘Saudosistas’, ‘modernistas’ and ‘presencistas’ shared the same *Zeitgeist*: anti-positivism, Nietzschean (or Bergsonian) vitalism and a strong reaction to the fin-de-siècle defeatism of the influential 1870 Generation (self-stylised in Portugal as ‘Os Vencidos da Vida’ – The Vanquished of Life group).

Like *A Águia* had done before, *presença* sought to unite young artists, creators and writers with a similarly young generation of rising theorists and philosophers. One of the *A*

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<sup>61</sup> - ‘À vrai dire, presque tous les poètes et les romanciers qui comptent à cette époque (1927-1940) ont, à un moment ou à un autre, été ‘présencistes’, collaborant épisodiquement ou régulièrement à la revue, en partageant plus ou moins les valeurs’



*Águia* directors, Casais Monteiro (1908-1972), later became director of *presença* and another director of the former magazine, the philosopher Delfim Santos (1907-1966), introduced Heidegger in Portugal in a pioneering article on poetics intended for *presença* but finally published by another Coimbran rival literary magazine, the shorter lived *Revista de Portugal*.

The main difference between *presença* and *A Águia* movements was summed up by Ruth S. Lamb:

The *presença* group proposed the critical diffusion *and the 'deprovincialization' of Portuguese culture*, and the writers tried to get away from the influence of the *saudosistas* (Lamb 1984, 164).

This departure meant the rejection of the poetic (and at times political) ultranationalist tendencies that had inspired the former movement. The *presença* circle was to be, in contrast with *A Águia*, decidedly cosmopolitan and should foster cultural diversity, thus introducing to Portuguese readers, in most cases for the first time, a significant number of contemporary foreign authors and motifs.

Like the (pre-)existentialists, especially Dostoevsky (1821-1881) who was widely known to the Portuguese through French translations, the presencists also favoured the psychologizing trend in their novels but, unlike those, the focus of the presencists did not rest on the incompatibility between the individual and the world outside him – in the way in which F. Weltsch evokes ‘the alienation of [Kafka’s] heroes from their environment’ (2007, 705) – but rather upon the incompatibility of the individual or individual aims with the self that harbours them.

That was the direction in which Régio’s rich literary lineage was also pointing. His main inspirers encompassed influences as far back as the Symbolists (Gustave Flaubert, 1821-1880, who opens his celebrated *Madame Bovary* in a boys boarding school) and the Decadentism of António Nobre (1867-1900), including the Portuguese Modernists whom

Régio regarded as the *presença*'s predecessors, and finally 'psychologism', as cultivated by authors such as Marcel Proust (1871-1922) and the circle of the *Nouvelle revue française* (*NRF*) founded by André Gide (1869-1951) and directed by Robert Brasillach between 1940 and 1945, to whom 'the topic of 'life' was the criterion to identify the good literature'<sup>62</sup> (Renard-Payen 1966, 633), since 'literature that is nothing more than literature is only a game' (Brasillach, *apud* Renard-Payen 1966, 633).<sup>63</sup>

It was this last outlook that Régio was to adopt for his novels, short stories, poetry and plays, being followed by Gaspar Simões, who added to their literary pantheon Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) and a bouquet of women writers: the Victorians, Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) and Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), and New Zealand short story writer, Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) (Brow 1980).

At the top of this group of mentors there were also significant Nietzschean, Freudian and Bergsonian contributions, which were to play an important role in *presencism*:

In art, is alive everything that is original. It is original everything that arises from the most immaculate, truest and innermost part of an artistic temperament (Régio 1927).<sup>64</sup>

Subscribing to the mystique of the demiurgic *Pygmalionic*, Régio wrote:

...living literature is one into which the artist has infused his own life, and which by virtue of that life acquires its own autonomous living (Régio *ibidem*).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> - 'Le thème de la « vie » sert fréquemment à Brasillach de critère de la bonne littérature'

<sup>63</sup> - '[L]a littérature qui n'est que de la littérature n'est qu'un jeu', quoting Robert Brasillach, *Virgile*, 73.

<sup>64</sup> - 'Em Arte, é vivo tudo o que é original. É original tudo o que provem da parte mais virgem, mais verdadeira e mais íntima de uma personalidade artística'.

<sup>65</sup> - 'Literatura viva é aquela em que o artista insuflou a sua própria vida, e que por isso mesmo passa a viver de vida própria'.

According to this vision of literary creation tending to more authentic and less ‘fictional’ writing, Régio’s work as a novelist is mainly driven by the pursuit of introspection and psychological self-inquiry, where the individual prevails over the collective and the exploration of emotions and states of mind are the main focus – to which characters and plot are there more to serve than to be served by.

### *Auto-fiction and autobiography*

In accordance with his literary tenets, Régio was to exceed most writers of his generation in the cultivation of the literary genres of the self, being one of the few to write not only extensive auto-fiction but also his *spiritual autobiography*, along with keeping a (not so regular) *Diary* and generously filling his *correspondence* with a plethora of insights on his life and work. Other prominent *presencistas* felt similarly attracted to autobiographical genres: Simões published his memoirs (*Retratos de Poetas que Conheci*, 1974), and his correspondence with Régio and Fernando Pessoa, but he did not keep a Diary.

The memoirs of writers are different from those written by others because the fame of the author is the result of his writing talent. Anyone can write an autobiography and the public generally welcomes those written by the military, politicians, bankers, actresses and prostitutes. The autobiographical works of writers have a different character, not simply because they are enriched by an artistic writing technique but also for their outcome: to writers, the autobiographies become part of their authorial corpus and are another reason for their reputation and a further celebration of their art. In the writer’s memoirs there is material to support a better understanding of their respective fictional oeuvres since they are taken as a key to their life, ideas and creations, and can become the crowning glory of their entire literary career:

Memoirs are written generally at the end of one's life and they are often misleading for the mirages of the past are commonly as illusive as those of the future (Chaves 1978, 8).<sup>66</sup>

Portuguese writer Rodrigues Miguéis was 67 years old but he was still hesitant about his future writing plans, noting:

I don't write memoirs, and maybe I never will; unless transposed into fiction... (Miguéis 1968, 99)<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, though Raúl Brandão and Teixeira de Pascoaes had written their somewhat hasty memoirs in their 50s, that was definitely not the rule: a writer would generally wait until his 70's (Jorge Amado, Pedro Nava) or 80s (José Saramago) or, even more likely, would leave them in manuscript form to be published posthumously (Júlio Dantas, Aquilino Ribeiro), preserving their testimony for posterity without having to face the shockwaves caused by their not always candid disclosures. That was also Régio's choice for his *Confession of a Religious Man*, which met its public two years after the death of its author.

We know from a passage of *The Old House* that Régio was committed from his youth to turn his life into the written word, first and foremost through writing his intended *memoirs*. However, he was to turn that project into a *spiritual biography* that he wrote as a fierce response to Nietzsche (mostly to the latter's *Ecce Homo* autobiography and to *The Antichrist* manifesto), under the Rousseauian title, *Confissão dum Homem Religioso* (*Confession of a Religious Man*), posthumously published in 1971.

Although Régio published his autofiction during his lifetime, autobiographies and memoirs (the former are centred on one's own life and the latter on events one has taken part in) were an endeavour he was to address only in his elderly years. *Diaries* and

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<sup>66</sup> - '...as memórias. Estas, escritas geralmente no fim da vida do autor, iludem bastas vezes pelas miragens do passado que são, em muitos casos, tão enganosas como as do futuro'.

<sup>67</sup> - 'Mas não escrevo memórias, talvez nunca as escreva: a não ser transpostas em ficção...'

*correspondence*, where autobiography and memoir are conveyed in fragments, are permanently works in progress and are only really complete when life has found its completion, so they also, generally, ask for a posthumous edition. Régio's *Diary* was started in 1923 but was distinctly intermittent and was never really completed; it suffered the same fate as his confessional autobiography and was published even later, in 1994.

Irwin Stern noted, in his article on Portuguese literature suppressed thanks to official censorship, that in Portugal

[I]n the 1930's a great number of memoirists [emerged], who evoked with *saudades* (nostalgia) their childhoods and university years. Since the Portuguese were officially encouraged to recall their glorious history and traditions, these works generally faced no difficulty with the censor (Stern 1976, 55).

Although we do not detect the political implications hinted here by Stern, it is an interesting suggestion that what is deemed to be the recollection of *real life* will end up suffering less scrutiny and repression than what is estimated to be (more or less purely) fictitious, thus pointing to the more subversive nature, and greater power of engagement, of fiction over reality. Auto-fiction has an added subversive potential: under the guise of artistic license, one can hold absolute control over the selection and treatment of the biographical material and get a potential excuse, through the 'fiction' label, for whatever is being revealed, a device that can further induce audacity and freedom of speech. A more pragmatic reason to prefer auto-fiction to autobiography during one's lifetime is that it is easier to find readers and a publisher for it.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> - Recently it was personally disclosed to me by the Portuguese writer and Dutch national Rentes de Carvalho (1930-) that his own autobiographical account of 'years 0 to 15', entitled *Ernestina* from the name of his mother, and first published in 1998, was denied printing by the editors if 'pure autobiography, as it really was' and who, in turn, only accepted to publish it under the condition of its being marketed as fiction in order to secure wider sales.

Unlike Stern's assertion, neither memoirists nor novelists ever evoked with *nostalgia* their childhood or school years; quite the reverse, Portuguese school autofiction and school memoirs belong mostly to the negative approach to boarding.

A few words are needed about Régio's spiritual autobiography. As Stern noted, the freedom accorded to this genre meant that the book suffered no publishing difficulties of any kind. Among the reasons for this was the prestige of Régio's name when the text was published in 1971, two years after his death, a time when the authorities were particularly keen to express respect for his legacy. But the book was full of provocative propositions, like denying the divinity of Jesus.

This surprising *Confession* was partly a polemic on Nietzsche (as we will see below), partly inspired by the *Imitatio Christi*, partly a recollection from boyhood and early adolescence memories, partly a *confession* in the sense of acknowledging his imperfections and doubts but not regrets and, by the end of the book, an essay on art and religion and a psychological self-study. Its specific combination of genres and motifs makes it unique among Portuguese autobiographic narratives. In foreign literature the closest parallels are the autobiographical writings of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Tolstoy.

One of the main topics, as mentioned above, is the *Imitatio Christi*; not only does literature imitate life but life itself is all about imitation, *mimesis*. The serpent of the *Genesis* 3,5 said: '*Eritis sicut Dei...* You will be like gods...', and, since then, mankind has always imitated gods with an endless, and equally impossible, desire to overcome the limits of the human condition itself. But gods are too inhuman to be suitable models. It is better to try imitating Jesus, who Himself imitated God and was, as Régio says, His best imitator. Being also a man, He was the ideal model for mankind, and Régio's upholding of Jesus' role as human model for humans, took him to deny His divinity. If this gross departure from official Christian doctrine did not cost to Régio a Christian funeral when he died, still

because of this and other heresies the rites were to take place in a church and not in the Old House, where, probably, he would have wanted them to be performed (see Ferro 1980).

## Chapter 6: The search for a mentor

Why was Régio willing to write his school auto-fiction? In the middle of his literary career he knew that the moment to publish his memoirs had not yet arrived, in spite of their composition being part of his plan from his early years – even before he had become a writer: he tells us that he felt the urgency to retell his difficult boarding school experiences while he was still trying to cope with their aftermath, i.e., right from the moment the ordeal was over – shortly after escaping from school and returning back home, Lelito, then 19 years old, shares his writing projects with his brother, João, feeling the urge to write down

...things he kept secret, through shyness or modesty, or by not having someone with whom to share. So – asks his brother João, – do you intend to write books? – At least one, my memoirs, he says. João was surprised: – don't you think it is too early to contemplate the writing of your memoirs? – Yes – says Lelito smiling – it is something for later.

His brother then advises him:

...our personal memories count, they may count; but only when they can be of some benefit to other men (Régio 2002b, 362-363).<sup>69</sup>

According to João's words, the memoirist should consider the interests of the reader, not their own. This posed a serious problem to Régio, who was ever doubtful that his auto-fictional, *A Drop of Blood*, was beneficial to anyone or if it had been published at the right moment, or if it would ever be able to find its intended audience. In a letter of 29th January, 1946 to António Sérgio (1883-1969) – the conceited old boy from a military boarding school and a notorious dissident from the Saudosist group –, he almost apologizes for having written *A Drop of Blood*, humbly stating that

<sup>69</sup> - '...coisas que mais ou menos mantinha secretas: ou por timidez e pudor, ou por não ter com quem as partilhar. – Ah! – fez João, também sonhas com escrever livros? Já o devia ter suspeitado. – Ao menos um..., as minhas memórias. (...) Mas não será demasiado cedo para pensares nas tuas memórias? – Sim, – respondeu Lelito sorrindo – é coisa para mais tarde! – (...) As nossas memórias pessoais valem, podem valer; mas só quando realmente interessem a outros homens'.



I would be grateful if, when you are able to find enough time to read the novel, (and I know that there is not too much time for you to read more or less mediocre novels!) – and then time to write me – you could say something about it. You know you can be sincere (Régio / Sérgio 1994, 190-191).<sup>70</sup>

It is surprising to see Régio, usually more assertive even with his colleagues and friends and so self-conscious of his artistic capacities, judging here his novel as ‘mediocre’ reading for a person he regarded as a respected *maitre à penser* during a part of his life, and one who, though presuming himself to be an educator, was never to understand the importance of his younger friend’s *A Drop of Blood*.

The reason for this self-humbling can be explained in psychological terms, taking us back to a famous Régio’s life episode, which is at the root of *A Drop of Blood*. Régio tells us in his *Confession* that, because he rejected as his mentor the philosopher Leonardo Coimbra, one of the most prominent leaders of *A Águia* and the *Renascença Portuguesa* movement, he had to negotiate with his father a boarding school year in Oporto in exchange for not being enrolled in the Leonardo-founded and orientated Faculty of Letters of Oporto. Whilst being magnetic and charismatic, Leonardo had a hysterical, feminine and passion-driven character in contrast with the ‘rational’ Sérgio, a more masculine and unambiguous fatherly figure. Régio deliberately chose a father and not a mother, stating that, for a tortured artistic character like his own, i.e. to his likewise feminine and ‘hysterical’ soul, the allegiance between two of the same kind would promise no good:

...we [writers] are like women, for it is passion that exalts us, and the longing of our soul must remain the longing of a lover (Mann 1999, 159).

Significantly, in a letter to Sérgio, while proclaiming that he is with him and *not* with Leonardo, Régio also alerts his ‘philosophical father’ that he is not with him *against*

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<sup>70</sup> - ‘Agradecer-lhe-ia muito que, quando tivesse vagar para ler a novela, (bem sei que o tempo lhe não sobrá muito para ler novelas mais ou menos mediocres!) – e, depois, vagar para me escrever – me dissesse alguma coisa a seu respeito. Bem sabe que me pode falar com inteira franqueza’.

Leonardo. At the time, Sérgio enjoyed some popularity (he was considered to be a rival of Salazar by the famous Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre), which soon faded away and he was somehow spiritually deserted (although not formally) by Régio. Sérgio's *Essays* are now long out of print and can find no publisher. In contrast, his rival, Leonardo, enjoys ever more attention from scholars intrigued by his anarchist, and later catholic ideas, and his complete works are currently being republished in Lisbon.

*The reviewers of A Drop of Blood*

In private letters already published or in public reviews, the reception of *A Drop of Blood* was slight and disappointing. On his part, Gaspar Simões was quite vague and chose to restrict his not too flattering comments to simple matters of style, infuriating Régio who strongly objected to his review of *A Drop of Blood* in his *Diary* but sent thanks to him in a private letter. Other reviewers of *A Drop of Blood*, such as Álvaro Salema, displayed a degree of reticence and failed to comment on the psychological or auto-fictional issues.

In addition to the comments on Régio's boarding school novel by Sérgio in a private letter, we have two separate reviews published in *Seara Nova* (*New Crop*), the political and cultural periodical Sérgio had inspired for years. Rodrigues Lapa, one of the two *Seara Nova* reviewers, in a joint review of Régio's novel with Simões' *Internato*, wrote some sympathetic lines but took the opportunity to blame 'private education' for the two boys' misadventures, narrowing his concern to the private ownership of schools, a matter he dealt with from a Marxist and demagogical perspective: in his opinion, finishing with privately owned boarding schools would help to 'abolish the abominable practices of homosexuality'[sic]<sup>71</sup> (Lapa 1947, 166); as if the issues addressed in both novels were determined by the economic nature of a school's ownership and not by the way it was

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<sup>71</sup> - '...desterrar as práticas abomináveis do homossexualismo', 166.

actually run. At least in the case of Régio's novel, it would have made utterly no difference to the plot if the school had been boarding, private, public or even a day one.

So Lapa presented the two novels:

Recently, and within a short lapse of time, two novels by José Régio and João Gaspar Simões were published, entitled respectively *A Drop of Blood* and *Boarding School*. Both books deal with school life: the one by Gaspar S. has a twelve years old boy, Ramiro, as hero, the son of a grocer from Leiria; the other by Régio deals in detail with the reactions of Lelito, probably in his seventeenth year, the offspring of a prestigious and well-to-do family. Both boys are shy, sensitive and introspective, and of that kind to whom the sort of collective school life, with its violence, brutality and roughness, is bound to harm in the deepest of their souls (Lapa 1947, 165).<sup>72</sup>

Whilst acknowledging that it was not a manifesto for school reform, Lapa failed to grasp Régio's purpose in writing the novel:

We may say that both novels offer a dark portrait of schools. (...) The authors' aim is not to draw the attention of the authorities or educationalists to what is going on inside these institutions. They have in mind only the study of two children's souls, removed from their familiar nest and resettled in an unknown environment where everything seems to be hostile. (...) Let us put it straight: willing or not, the pages of both authors are bold denunciations of private schools. (...) To plunge a sensitive child, used to homely tenderness, into our boarding schools is to deliberately cause the kind of reaction so meticulously described in Gaspar S.'s novel which finally leads the main character to despair and revolt. (...) The prefects, the plague of private schools, – so darkly depicted in both works but particularly in that of Régio, should give place to trained and legitimate teachers who can understand in detail the fragile functioning of the children's soul (Lapa 1947, 165-166).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> - 'Saíram há pouco, a curta distância um do outro, dois romances de José Régio e João Gaspar Simões, respetivamente intitulados *Uma gota de sangue* e *Internato*. Os dois livros tratam da vida colegial: o de J. Gaspar Simões escolhe como herói da história um rapazinho de doze anos, Ramiro; filho dum merceiro de Leiria; o de Régio descreve com minúcia as reações de Lelito, rapaz dos seus dezassete anos, filho de boa e abastada família. São ambas pessoas tímidas, sensíveis, amigas do isolamento, a quem aquela vida em comum, com os seus choques, as suas brutalidades, as suas limitações, fere no mais íntimo da alma'.

<sup>73</sup> - 'Em ambos os livros se traça um quadro sombrio da vida colegial. (...) O propósito dos escritores não é certamente chamar a atenção do político e do pedagogo para o que se passa nesses estabelecimentos. Visam apenas estudar duas almas de criança, saídas do ninho familiar e transplantadas de chofre para um ambiente desconhecido, em que tudo lhes parece hostil. (...) Digamos, sem rodeios: queiram ou não queiram os seus autores, as páginas desses dois romances

The reviewer did not intend to go into educational matters deeply, or to debate real pedagogical problems. In fact, readers will probably spot that the rather exaggerated reference to the ‘prefects, the plague of private schools’ is merely aimed at President Salazar, who had started his own professional career as a prefect in a seminary, a catholic boys boarding school in Coimbra, preparing for future priesthood.<sup>74</sup> In addition, in spite of Lapa’s mentioning the prefects *in both novels*, we find no prefects in Simões’ *Internato* – and in Régio’s, *A Drop of Blood*, though one of them is a foe, another becomes an ally and a friendly figure to Lelito, which proves that Lapa was consciously misreading the two novels. Given their bourgeois mentality, for these Marxist intellectuals even the economic and political had to be wrapped in moralistic preaching. Everything was a matter of being ‘morally correct’. They could never espouse the amoralistic, or beyond morals, approach and *ethos* of the Modernists, who were so influenced by Nietzsche and Gide. Rather they seem to replicate the thoughts and mindset of the old lady in Queiroz’ 1876 novel (see Chapter 4).

But the reviewer of *A Drop of Blood* was right in one respect. The novel is not a manifesto calling for a change in the system nor is it intended as a proposal of alternative

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constituem um tremendíssimo libelo contra o ensino particular. (...) Mergulhar nessa idade uma criança sensível, habituada aos mimos do lar, num internato como os nossos, é provocar deliberadamente na sua alma as reações que vêm finamente descritas no romance de J. Gaspar Simões e que culminam pôr fim no desespero e na revolta. (...) A praga dos colégios particulares, os perfeitos, descrita com tão negras cores nos dois livros, mas muito em especial no de Régio, daria lugar a funcionários de carreira, verdadeiros professores, rigorosamente selecionados, que conhecessem em todos os pormenores o delicado funcionamento da alma infantil’.

<sup>74</sup> - In a conversation with João Montezuma, son of University of Coimbra Professor Joaquim de Carvalho, I discovered that he was in the possession of two letters by President Salazar to his father: one asking for a job and the other looking for connections and influence in order to evade military service on behalf of two of his protégées from the boarding school in which he worked as prefect between 1908 and 1910, the Colégio da Via Sacra. This is a curious beginning for a man who was later so keen on fighting corruption and privilege.

It remains unclear why Salazar abandoned his project to become a priest and eventually chose an academic career before entering active politics. However, there are some stories about his boarding school years that show varying degrees of disrespect for school rules and disobedience to masters, which are at odds with the man who later uttered the famous sentence ‘authority is never to be discussed’ (Távora 1936, 48). In every personality there is contradiction and disobedience is too much of a temptation even for the most disciplined mind.

solutions. The novel is about the scars left on a boy's soul by a system of education, which, because of its collective and repressive nature, is in conflict with the fulfilment of individual expectations and predispositions. It is also about the conflict between the individual and the group; the poetic soul against the vulgarity of the common folk; and the psychological as well as physical violence imposed upon those who want to stay apart. Those who, to their utmost horror, end up finding out that they had also become violent and that the influence of the school environment has changed them for the worse; that they can no longer keep a fitting distance from wrongdoing, dissimulation, deceit and, eventually, by the end of the narrative, carnal acts. *A Drop of Blood* derives its authenticity for not having pedagogical *parti pris*, i.e., for being not aimed at criticizing a specific schooling system or one school or, even, one given issue, like bullying or sexual harassment:

It is not so much about events that I'm curious, as about myself (Gide 1952).

*The Old House as Künstlerroman*

In a more fortunate passage of this review of Régio's *A Drop of Blood* and Simões' *Boarding School*, Lapa hints that

These works may reflect personal experiences and so the two protagonists are probably no other than their creators' more or less faithful portraits (Lapa 1947, 165).<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, Régio mentioned this clue of the reviewers to back up the assimilation of Lelito with himself. In order to deny the influence of Martin du Gard's character Jacquot, from *Les Thibault*, over Lelito, he wrote: 'Several reviewers, anyway, have noticed the deep personal roots [I resorted to] in [my] creation of Lelito'... (Régio 2004, 110).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> - 'É possível que se trate de uma experiência pessoal, e que os dois personagens centrais nada mais sejam afinal do que a imagem mais ou menos fiel dos próprios autores'.

<sup>76</sup> - 'Já vários críticos, de resto, notaram as profundas raízes pessoais na criação de Lelito'.

E. Lisboa later added that Régio's auto-fiction is even more than just factual autobiography:

Even if *The Blind Man's Bluff* and *The Old House* have a lot of autobiographical material (...) they are, fundamentally, intellectual and spiritual autobiographies (Lisboa 2000, 16).

What is known from Régio's other autobiographical writings reinforces the veracity of *A Drop of Blood* and the circumstances and settings in which the action narrated there had occurred. In any case, as we have seen, Régio was obsessed by confessionism, praising *sincerity* in literature (which is not exactly the same as 'truth'), and was committed to the merciless exposure of his own soul's deep abysses: 'my main vice is to speak about myself' (Régio 2001b, 198).

In his psychobiography, *The Adolescent*, Dostoyevsky points out the narcissist complex of artists as being the root of their art, particularly in the case of autobiographers and auto-fictionists. They are afflicted by an acute infatuation with their own characters or roles:

you have to be all too basely in love with yourself to write about yourself without shame (...) because something you value in yourself will quite possibly have no value in a stranger's eyes (Dostoevsky 2003, 5);

Nineteen year old Arkady Makarovich Dolgoruky, a freshly graduated high-schoolboy, delves deep into his narcissistic fervour:

I have now reread what I have just written, and I see that I'm much more intelligent than what I've written... (Dostoevsky, *ibid.* 6).

Though originating in such narcissistic tendencies, art provides its own way of sublimation for the artist's psychic disorder. As literary creators turn their love for themselves into art, they engage in writing autobiographical novels, which are undeniably a major exercise of exhibitionism, but can also be cathartic, helping them to get rid of their obsession with themselves.

The aim of recounting one's life events from the inner perspective is the major feature separating biography from autobiography. As was said in Chapter 2, when a writer's autobiography takes the auto-fictional form, we are dealing with a specific variety of *Bildung* called the *Künstlerroman*. In this genre we have an account of how the artist unfolds inside the individual, the way and process through which one becomes aware of being an artist and assumes one's artistic self, which separates such a person from the rest of mankind. That narrative is focused upon the 'learning years'; the formative period of the artist's life (Lisboa 2000, 16).

Régio's *A Drop of Blood* is a *Künstlerroman* where the process of separating himself from the rest of the school (and the rest of the world) is narrated. A series of life events seems to originate in his poetic urges and in his early love for literature and for fellow writers, causing him to feel different, and that difference makes him stand out from his peers, befriending certain colleagues and rejecting others. Difference is the basis of friendships and enmities.

In Simões novel, despite its differences from *A Drop of Blood*, the same motif can be found. It is because of his love for literature that Ramiro, the young schoolboy, becomes fatally dissociated from the vulgar, violent, distasteful and debased world of the school and the other schoolboys, who are concerned only with physical prowess, eluding the authorities' vigilance and, obsessively, pursuing their sexual targets. Ramiro is conscious of a difference that does not come from his being unable to find pleasure in any of these activities, which he adheres to, little by little, while suffering the influence of that milieu, in a debasement loosely similar to that of Lelito. It is because his identity has a plus and not a minus that he reaches self-revelation and final redemption: *he can be, and indeed he becomes, very much like all the others, however the others can never become like him*. Nothing is lacking in him of the components of 'expected boyhood'. From naïve childish

innocence he turns into a hyper-sexualized boy who pleasantly indulges himself by seducing others. He teams up with some of his comrades and he blatantly defies the authorities. Still, he holds the key to an escape from this treacherous world: his love for literature, his passage into a separate realm where others cannot enter, the unique artistry which one day will allow him to retell the terrible anguish of those distant boyhood years.

### *Diverse Boyhoods*

Ken Corbett appropriately reminds us that

Boyhood is a chaotic dynamism. The terms boyhood and masculinity signify our efforts to catalogue the experience of a group of people, in this case male children, from birth to full growth. Boyhood also strives to capture and categorize (...) the development of masculinity. Categorical speech, though, always fails; someone always falls out. No two boyhoods are the same. No one boy remains invariable. The challenge ahead is to capture boyhoods without dropping that -s; (...) to appreciate the affection of boys, while duly noting the aggression that may more often characterize their play; to recognize the femininity in masculinity; to grasp the condition known as boyhood but, at the same time, recognize the contingencies (social, racial, historical, economic, religious) that qualify that condition, making it plural (Corbett 2009, 3-4).

Diverse boyhoods is one of the main topics Régio explores in his boarding schoolboy novel. Much as with any other author of school novels, the plot relies on those elements that are more or less typical: affection is to certainly to be found in Régio's novel, as well as aggression between opposite kinds of boyhoods. Femininity is undoubtedly present in every boy and male but not 'in masculinity', as Corbett wrote by mistake, since these two are binary concepts.

As it was already canonical to the genre, Régio highlights *a certain type of boy*, actually his own type, who will never adhere to the group culture because he is sufficiently individualistic to be untameable and has a sound consciousness of his genius and difference; a difference he eventually channels through developing his art of writing. Since



the artistic soul tends to take residence in the bodies of ‘sensitive boys’, artists are doomed to become a mixture of precocious old men and perennial adolescents (Lisboa 2000, 16).

Many boarding schoolboy novels deal with the character of the ‘sensitive boy’; the Arthur of Thomas Hughes, the Ramiro of Simões, the Lelito of Régio, are all examples of these less ideally or conventionally masculine, but not necessarily feminine, souls. This type of boy, more than any other, has a highly vulnerable nature. Perhaps it is not advisable to provide for such a weakling an environment without threats and dangers because a fully sheltered life will never exist in spite of the obsession with a conformist, unadventurous and risk-free environment that drives the current ‘effeminising’ education: he has to experience injustice, fear, repression and violence in order to abhor them.

Sometimes families will display dissatisfaction at the sensitive and poetic boy’s lack of maleness, brutality, intellectual distinction or sporting prowess, all this being credited to his introspective nature and his self exclusion from the masculine society. Abusive parents will try to turn them into hyper-males without respect for their gentle personalities.

The poet António Nobre, so admired by Régio, was one of those boy-poets whose ‘difference’ was to cost him a lot at school; much the same price Régio was doomed to pay. Raúl Brandão, a friend of Nobre from youth, later wrote that

(H)e was a prince, a delicate flower, born aristocrat and childish. We knew he was special: extraordinary, simultaneously artificial and sincere. Apart from two or three people, nobody was able to understand him. Men can be divided in princes and plebeians. Plebeians can make verses but princes alone are poets. And this advantage is not to be forgiven. We feel immediately they are different and so do the other boarding schoolboys when a newcomer arrives. If he belongs to their kind, he is soon to be released but if he is a sensible being, born to dream and suffer, they spot him right away from afar and will turn his life into hell (Brandão 2000, 122).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> - ‘Era um príncipe. Era uma flor delicada. Tinha nascido aristocrata e infantil. Sentíamos-lo um ser à parte: extraordinário, artificial e sincero ao mesmo tempo. Fora de duas ou três pessoas, ninguém o devia compreender. Os homens dividem-se em príncipes e plebe. A plebe pode fazer versos, mas

As mentioned above, the question of the ‘sensitive boy’ was already present, as a central topic, in Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857), with its famous depiction of Arthur, the engaging character who is the embodiment of the archetypical intellectual, bookish, fragile, unmasculine boy and with whom the eponymous hero, the rather physical and courageous Tom, is to bond in a combined partnership of intellect and action (Puccio 1995). In the preface to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of his schoolboy novel, Hughes printed a letter from a friend who remarked that the frail and timid boy

... is entirely at the mercy of proverbially the roughest things in the universe – great schoolboys; and he is deprived of the protection which the weak have in civilized society; for he may not complain; if he does he is an outlaw... (Hughes 1911, xviii).

Hence the rule of silence that applies among those kept in schools, reformatories, prisons, etc. Hughes answered these remarks acknowledging the pedagogical importance of

...the question of how to adapt English public school education to nervous and sensitive boys – often the highest and noblest subjects which that education has to deal with... (Hughes, *ibidem*, xix).

implying that most of these ‘sensitive boys’ will turn into tomorrow’s poets, writers and artists and will, perhaps, later be willing to use their art of writing to denounce how much they had suffered during their inhumane school afflictions. This may be the reason why a number of extant autobiographical accounts of boarding school life tend to be negative in scope. They are almost always written with a cathartic purpose reflecting on past misfortunes, whereas the ‘satisfied’ boarding school pupil would possess little or no material that could be shaped into a novel.

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só os príncipes são poetas. E esta superioridade não lha podemos perdoar. Sentimos logo que são diferentes. Sentem-no os rapazes do colégio quando entra um novo. Se é um tipo da mesma casta, largam-no quase logo; se é um ser de outra sensibilidade, nascido para sonhar e sofrer, cheira-lhes ao longe e atormentam-lhe a vida’.

*The boarding school novel in Portuguese literature*

The school novel genre in Portuguese was born, already adult, in Brazil with Raúl Pompeia's *Ateneu* (1888). In accordance with the principles of the naturalist movement which stressed the concepts of decadence, corruption and social pathology, Pompeia wrote *Ateneu* in revenge for his school experiences, much like Hesse and Musil in the Germanic tradition of school novels, vilifying the 'complete education' system.

Clearly these authors had been, in their school years, pupils not meant to study under that system because of their nervous dispositions, susceptibility and oversensitivity, the same traits of character that later made of them accomplished artists of the written word. Inevitably, they had to clash with a system that praised sportsmanship, physical performance, absolute obeisance and 'emotional stoicism' and their individualistic leanings resented a forced cohabitation with boys who were so alien to their nature. For this type of ex-schoolboy, the novel was an exploration of the misery and solitude he has been through. Instead of crediting these to the troubles of their own character, they chose to blame it on the school, as in the case of Raúl Pompeia and his *Ateneu*.

Later, by the time the school novel genre had arrived in Portugal, *presença* and the psychologist literary movement were at their zenith. The presencistas invested strongly in novels. Other minor groups preferred poetry: the surrealists (who renewed the strong link with the visual Arts that had been a major component of Baroque and Symbolist literature); the saudosists and the nationalists; and the Neo-realists who, in spite of having a literary focus on the novel and on poor youth, were not interested in the school novel. The only equivalent to the presencistas' attention to school novels came from the 'official' writer, Aquilino Ribeiro, who, notwithstanding his varied political ideas (anarchist then Republican, Germanophile, and opponent to the New State) enjoyed great prestige and recognition across political families and was even President Salazar's preferred author.

Aquilino had a strong literary interest in auto-fiction, childhood and school memoirs, everything coming within his peculiar ruralist approach, and wrote *A Via Sinuosa* (1918), *Lápides Partidas* (1945) *Cinco Réis de Gente* (1948) and *Uma Luz ao Longe* (1948); his remarkable art of storytelling being imbued with the cultural and lexical peculiarities of Beira, his native region. While Aquilino's universe was strongly influenced by official Catholicism and his own resistance to it, Régio fancied popular religion, *völkisch* Catholicism (heterodox by nature), where he found some inspiration for his own heterodoxy.

The roots of Portuguese Neo-realism, as mentioned above, lie in the 'Nordestine' Brazilian regionalist novel, a movement active from the 1930's<sup>78</sup> onwards, and initially concerned with inequality on two levels: between Brazilian regions, the richer Centre and South vs. the impoverished Northeast, greatly afflicted by long and successive droughts, and the 'class divide' in the usual terms of oppressed vs. oppressors, i.e. the poor and exploited peasants (resorting sometimes to terror and violence with the occasional armed resistance – the 'cangaço'), vs. the big landowners (and the terror they imposed through their private militias of 'jagunços', hired gunmen).

Arriving in Portugal more than one decade later,<sup>79</sup> the Neo-realist movement turned its focus on the lives of the poor both in the urban peripheries, the social and territorial margins of society, neither really urban nor rural, and the marginality that co-existed in the cities, emphasising the 'ancient régime' type of social relations arguably still surviving in the Portuguese hinterland during the first half of the Twentieth Century.

When depicting adolescent subjects, the Neo-realists were more concerned with the hazardous lives of street boys – Jorge Amado (1912/2001) *Capitães da Areia* (1937) or

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<sup>78</sup> - José Américo de Almeida (1887-1980) published *A Bagaceira* in 1928, and is generally credited with the creation of the first Brazilian Neo-realist novel in the Regionalist movement of the 1930's.

<sup>79</sup> - Conventionally credited to Alves Redol (1911-1969) and his *Gaibéus* of 1939.

Carlos de Oliveira (1921-1981) *Casa na Duna* (1943) – than those of schoolboys, let alone boarding schoolboys, with the exception of Marmelo e Silva (1911/1991) – a dissident from this group –, author of *Adolescente Agrilhado* (1958) and Fernando Namora, *As Sete Partidas do Mundo* (1938, rewritten 1958).

Outside this group there was still another psychologist and ‘Freudian’ writer, Campos Pereira, who also wrote a boarding school story, *David Pascoal* (1950). These were the most significant contributions to this subgenre.

Unlike the Neo-realists, the ‘presencistas’ and, later, the Existentialists did not concentrate on social conflict but on the intimate, individual and inner struggles of their characters, which they deemed to be the principal subject for a novel, following in the grand tradition of Dostoyevsky’s explorations of the contradictions in the human mind and having some interest in the unconscious as well.

To the presencistas, for instance, ‘religious conflict’ was portrayed in the individual as the inner struggle between belief and disenchantment, saintly and demonic leanings, but had nothing to do with socio-political or anti-ecclesiastic agendas. The (allegedly negative) influence of priests over society (highlighted by Queiroz and Ortigão) is absent from Régio’s work. Simões plays on the inevitable clash between the supposed innocence, idealism and camaraderie of the early adolescent versus the priests’ cynicism and hypocrisy, but not in a Neo-realist, Manichaeic manner, since the narrator casts doubt on the certainty of the boy, insinuating that he could also have been wrong and unfair in his judgments.

Even without social class or economic implications, these fights mirrored the larger perplexities of the young facing the old, man challenging God, the hopeless struggle of innocence against corruption and the fatality of all ideals that have to come to terms with reality.

The auto-fictional schoolboy accounts by Régio *Uma Gota de Sangue* (1945), and João Gaspar Simões *Internato* (1946) were not, however, the only narratives about youth by the presencists. Adolfo Casais Monteiro (1908 Portugal/1972 Brazil), wrote *Adolescentes* (1945); Miguel Torga (1907 / 1995), a dissident from *presencism*, wrote *A Criação do Mundo* (1931) about his early years in Brazil; and, still related to the movement, António Tomás Botto (1897 Portugal/1959 Brazil), authored *Canções* (various editions from 1921 till 1956), a book of poetry centred in the hedonist exaltation of young male charms and translated into English by Fernando Pessoa in 1930. To the same generation belonged Tomaz Figueiredo, who wrote in 1950 his academic novel *The Untieable Knot*, – overlapping characters and subjects of Régio's own academic novels, *The Blind Man's Bluff* (1934) and *The Ominous Signs* (1953) –, having also revisited his childhood memories in *The Wolf's Cave* (1947, 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment 1952) in a style and manner far apart from Régio's and actually not as successful. Figueiredo was a contemporary of the presencistas in Coimbra but refused to join any group.

Finally, the existentialists came to enlist Vergílio Ferreira, a dissident from Neo-realism, and his already mentioned *Drowned Dawn* (1954), a rather tragic and loosely autobiographical novel about a seminarian boy.

Around the beginning of the 1960's, boarding schools were disappearing, together with single-sex education and most of the big seminaries run by the Church. Since day schools did not provide novelistic material of sufficient appeal because they no longer educated with immersion in a community of peers, prefects and masters, the school novel disappeared from the Lusophone world and only poetry and short stories based on school episodes survived.

For some time boarding schools were the only settings for nostalgic or distressing memoirs by old boys. Unlike schooling, adolescence had established itself as a major

literary subject and, at least from the 1980s, it could be found in novels involving picaresque plots in which the young would deal with a number of ‘new’ issues far more problematic than schooling ever was: drug abuse, gang culture and erratic night life.

It was a long way from nineteenth-century literature when the Romantics had depicted a youth full of promise and inherently beautiful. Certainly, some negative traits had been present in the picture but more as the perverse impact of families over the young. In the twentieth-century, the ‘adolescent’ entered Lusophone literature through conflict-ridden characters, who are not at ease with themselves, permanently unsure, hesitant, unsatisfied, disorientated and lost, if not stranded in the sort of unmapped island their world has come to resemble.

*‘Saudade’ in Régio’s novel*

As far as the novel was concerned, Régio revered a trinity formed by Dostoyevsky, Proust and Tolstoy (Régio 2001, 186). *The Blind Man’s Bluff* was written following Dostoyevskyan guidelines; the *Old House* reveals, from the middle of the narrative cycle (mostly the 3<sup>rd</sup> instalment), a strong Proustian influence in detail and pace; and his later life work *Confession* owes much to Tolstoy’s homonymous work, as shown below – besides, he had also written *The Flame-Coloured Dress* (1946) inspired by Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889). As for Proust, after an initial *faux pas* from Gide, he came to join the group of the *Nouvelle revue française*: ‘the NRF was for me a kind of a church’ (Proust, *apud* Cano 2003, 39), almost a literary sect to which belonged André Gide, Martin du Gard, la Rochelle, etc.; the *revue* and its literary aesthetics were the direct inspirers of *presença* and *presencism*. On the whole, Régio stated that ‘the foreign literature which has been

impressing me the most is doubtlessly the Russian'<sup>80</sup> (Régio 1984, 250) which he came to know through French translations and its early-20<sup>th</sup> century reception in France, and whose mystical leanings were so akin to its owns.

A lost and disorientated self: Régio's exploration of the boarding school novel is permeated by the Portuguese nostalgic ethos called *saudade*, from the Latin *solitudo*. While the Galician *morriña*, the Rumanian *dór* (from the Latin *dolor*), the Greek *nostalgia* and the German *Sehnsucht* can render *saudade* faithfully, in English the best equivalent would be 'homesickness', taking 'home' in a vague and metaphorical or anagogical sense – the longing for the lost heavenly home, the search for the path to '*homeself*', rather than to himself. This sentiment has been placed at the root of philosophy:

Derrida continues his reading of Heidegger, a 'nostalgia (*Sehnsucht*) for the lost σοφόν' (*nostalgie (Sehnsucht) du sophon perdu*). Heidegger's word for the search after the lost origin is *Sehnsucht*, Derrida uses the word *nostalgie* for this movement; nostalgia comes from the Greek *nostos*, which means 'return home' and *algos*, which means pain. The word consequently implies a painful longing to return home. About this word and the movement it implies, Derrida says: This nostalgia is the origin of philosophy (Schwieler 2003, 63).

*Saudade-Sehnsucht* is thus a painful, depressive and melancholic mood, persistent or recurrent, that inspires the poet regardless of specific and accidental life circumstances.

Rhythm and harmony are specific to each language. As regards prose and theatre Régio was permeated by influences from foreign literature, but as for poetry he establish his genealogy back to Portuguese models – mainly to António Nobre and Sá-Carneiro, the unfortunate Pessoa's companion.

The Portuguese had cultivated their own national contribution to world literature in the shape of the medieval *cantigas de amigo*, (the 'Lover's songs'). The melancholic subject of these male-authored and apparently localised poems (is not uncommon that they

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<sup>80</sup> - 'A literatura estrangeira que mais me tem impressionado é, sem dúvida, a russa'.



include names of places where the action unfolds), is the maiden's longing and yearning for an ever-absent Lover. Such literary compositions prevailed in Galician and Portuguese culture from the beginnings of their respective national literatures until the introduction of foreign romance themes (*cantigas de amor*, or courtly love) originating from the Provençal troubadours. Both lineages had roots in Arabian love poetry, the *ghazals*.

The Neo-platonic implications of the literary motif underlying the *cantigas de amigo* were rendered, poetically and mystically, as the soul's longing for God, the Supreme Lover, who is never attained and only perceived or caught in glimpses. Along with mystical traditions found in India and in Islamic Sufism, the thematic universe of these songs was, ultimately, the missing of the divine realm, the Father's Home that the Soul had inhabited previously, while still a pure being, before leaving it behind during the Fall – seen as the German *Verfall* (abasement), i.e. the falling-off into captivity within Matter:

The Fall leads to a longing for the original state, a desire to return home, in other words, a nostalgia in the original Greek sense of the word (Schwieler 2003, 117, n. 1).

The godly love sorrows or *coitas* were in accordance with the teachings of the Andalusian Sufis, and the greatest of them – Ibn Arabi, who preached that all types of love, including the sexual and marital, were simply lower degrees in the progress toward the supreme and highest love of God. The starting point of all of loves was common: an acknowledgment by the individual that one is never complete; *one is not even one* or any unity but a fraction of such, rather like Aristophanes' mythical explanation of sexual desire in Plato's *Symposium*.

The evolution of this motif in Portuguese literature and thought had the longing being detached from any specific object. It is no more the Loved One who is desired but Desire itself (in Arabic the poetry of 'love for love's sake'); *saudade* loses any object outside *saudade* itself, as poetess Florbela Espanca wrote: 'I long for the longings I don't

have' (Espanca 1923).<sup>81</sup> Incompleteness becomes obsessive and a permanent condition, yearning is now metaphysical and not grounded in human, terrestrial experience but, rather, in a pervasive state of the soul, which under the name *saudade*, the Portuguese kept refining for centuries.

Although Régio detached himself from the ultra-nationalistic leanings and the aesthetic principles of *saudosismo* of the poetic school led by poet Teixeira de Pascoaes, he nevertheless cultivated *saudade*, which can be interpreted as a pre-existentialist and diffuse angst suggesting the permanent dissatisfaction of the soul with life, with destiny and, sometimes, with God himself.

This feeling of uneasiness can also be found expressed in *fado* (>Latin *fatum*, Fate), which was, from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, the name of a type of Lisbon urban folk music based in sadness, mourning and lamentation. Later, a different variety appeared in Coimbra, in which the graduating student/poet expresses his sorrows for leaving the alma mater in the same way as the soul suffers when departing from the House of the Father. One of Régio's poetry collections is entitled *Fado* (1941), with compositions that were adapted into lyrics bringing renewed success to his poetical production, some of these being mainstreamed in recent Portuguese *fado* tubes.

### *The father question*

Beneath the text of Régio's *A Drop of Blood* underlies a subtext where the central question is a spiritual one: that of the Father and his powerful presence/absence. This topic was to be framed by a more general trend of the Portuguese mind, called by Rothwell in *A Canon of Empty Fathers* (2007), the 'Absent Father complex', which precludes the full growth of the adolescent boy. Mourão-Ferreira stressed that although 'adolescentism' was a major trait of

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<sup>81</sup> 'saudades de saudades que não tenho...'

the *presença* movement, it had deep roots in the perennial ‘immaturity’ of Portuguese culture (Mourão–Ferreira 1977, 55). The topic calls for an allegorical, mystagogical and anagogical reading of the text, with archetypal, religious and psychoanalytical keys. In *A Drop of Blood* we can follow the typical pattern of the initiation rites – parting from origins, rebirth through enduring probation and final reunion –; but this scheme, with a Neo-platonic interpretation, becomes a replica of the soul’s descent into the abyss of matter, its regeneration through suffering and its reunion with the painfully missed *Old House*.

On the other hand, the ‘Absent Father’ also had a social reading. In Portugal the destitute’s boarding schools were a mark of deficient fathering because of the lack of economic resources to take in charge the education of offspring, while the middle class ones catered for families where fathers (and mothers too) were too busy to care for their progeny or had died leaving their children at a young age, etc.

In the first group intended mostly for those in need, the boys who boarded were from the rural countryside or from the urban poor. The vast majority of these institutions were run by the Catholic Church, which acted as a surrogate or symbolic Mother,<sup>82</sup> compensating for the absence of parents. Such is the plot of Vergílio Ferreira’s *Drowned Down*, a novel by an author who himself was stranded in rural Portugal, while still a child, through his parents’ migration to the USA.

The cases of José Régio and Gaspar Simões were different. They had fathers who deliberately sent them to middle class boarding schools because they wanted them to acquire an early degree of autonomy; the former in order to become able to move on to the University of Coimbra and live there independently by himself, as convened and negotiated between father and son (we will come back to this agreement in further detail in Chapter 8).

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<sup>82</sup> - Cf. the expression ‘Santa Madre Igreja’, ‘Holy Mother Church’.

Arising as it did from a peculiar deal with his father, Régio's boarding school experience was nevertheless to remain within the general paradigm and the metaphorical consequence of the absent father. When his father visits him at school and at the end of the narrative Lelito seems to blame the overall failure on him, associating boarding as a sign of the father's emotional default.



**Figure 7: Régio and his father in later years**

Régio wrote a poem, which he was to insert in *Colheita da Tarde* (1968), that was dedicated to his father, probably shortly after the latter's death on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1957. It reveals much of the relationship between them:

You were simple, unpretentious,  
 Good, with flaws, joyful,  
 And so much attached to life,  
 That you, being already aged, couldn't believe it was over.  
 You lived for the things of this world,  
 A world that would have been better  
 If you could have made it fit your humour.  
 It is not for being your son that I am sad,  
 Devilish, angelic, different,  
 Discontented, neurotic and perverse.  
 But if something remains in me

Of humbly human,  
 Compliant with life  
 And its passing seasons...  
 To you I owe it, father!  
 To you I owe it that I was born,  
 And to you I owe it, if I am not dead.<sup>83</sup>

There is a poetical hint of his father's being a world-maker, or the potential maker of a better world for his son: 'A world that would have been better / If you could have made it fit your humour'. Other attributes, such as being life-giver and life-sustainer, also relate his father to divinity. Moreover, the father is not responsible for the son's sadness and his sorrowful disposition – on the contrary, it is precisely the portion of conformity that still lies in his heart, that 'simplicity' and feeling of happy resignation, that is the life-bearing legacy of his father.

As for Simões, he was sent to boarding school to avoid the excessive feminine presence at home (mother, grandmother, sisters, maids) that was perceived by his father as effeminising influences over a young boy (according to his daughter whom I interviewed in January 2011). Later in life, Simões failed to acknowledge the good results of his education but this was perhaps due to his being further embittered towards his father because of the latter's opposition to his early marriage, while he was still a student in Coimbra. In *Internato* (1947), the boarding school experiences made him reach a double conclusion: his father had deserted him, actuality both the natural father and the archetypal Father, God. At the end of his torment he turns his back on both of them and denies *family and religion* in revenge for their apparent withdrawal from his life and their alleged indifference towards his anxieties. Like Gide wrote in the *Fruits of the Earth*:

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<sup>83</sup> - Foste simples, banal, / Bom, com defeitos, jovial, / E tão pegado à vida, / Que ainda, velho, velho, a não podias crer vivida. / Viveste para as coisas deste mundo, / Que seria melhor / Se o pudesses fazer conforme o teu humor. / Não é por ser teu filho que sou triste, / Demoníaco, angélico, diferente, / Descontente, nevrótico, perverso. / Mas se algo, em mim, resiste / De humildemente humano, / Amigo de viver conforme vai / Vivendo a gente consoante o ano... / A ti o devo, pai! / A ti o devo, se nasci. / E a ti o devo, se inda não morri.

I hated homes, families, all places where the human being thinks he can find peace, the eternal feelings and the loyalty in love affairs, everything that compromises freedom. Families! I hate you: closed doors, exclusive happiness. I taught my soul to become a wanderer, finally happy to value its loneliness (Gide 1949, 58).

## Chapter 7: *A Drop of Blood*, 1945

The following pages present a synopsis of Régio's novel *A Drop of Blood*, which will allow further elaboration on some of its features and their interest as a paradigm of the school novel with a philosophical purpose.

As the novel is, as yet, unknown to an English-speaking audience, it will be presented in a systematic way; by introducing the main data, the title, the characters and a chapter by chapter digest with occasional commentaries.

*Data:*

1. **Title:** *A Velha Casa, 1: Uma Gota de Sangue (The Old House 1: A Drop of Blood)*.
2. **Author:** José Régio, pseudonym of José Maria dos Reis Pereira (1901-1969).
3. **Date of publication:** 1945, some parts pre-published in *presença* 46, 1935 and *Sol Nascente* 3, 1937; [José Régio (1943) Carta a Álvaro Salema, 24.11.43, *Correspondência*, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, 186].
4. **First edition:** Lisbon, Inquérito, 321.
5. **Other editions during the life of the author:** 2<sup>nd</sup> modified (1961) Lisbon, Portugalíia.
6. **Posthumous editions:** 3<sup>rd</sup> (1972) Oporto, Brasília; 4<sup>th</sup> (1981) Oporto, Brasília; 5<sup>th</sup> (1993) Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores; 6<sup>th</sup> (2002), Lisbon, INCM, 25-209 (quotations from this edition).
7. **Type:** roman-fleuve, being the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment of a planned tetralogy, then a heptalogy, never completed: the last volume to be published during the life of the Author was the 5<sup>th</sup>; parts of the 6<sup>th</sup> were left in draft form and published posthumously.
8. **Genre:** *Künstlerroman*, i.e., the autobiographical narrative of progressive self-awareness as artist.
9. **Subgenre:** School novel, of the subtype 'boarding schoolboy novel'.
10. **Literary School:** 'presencism' i.e., psychologism, introspection, inwardness, subjectivism, confessionalism.
11. **Tone:** slightly grim, however, attractive and pleasant; parts of Chap. Six are styled as farce.
12. **Source material:** autobiographical recollections from 2 years (1918-1920) spent at a boys' boarding school, the Escola Académica, in Oporto.

13. **Time / place of setting:** time unspecified; place, Oporto, Portugal.
14. **Subject:** bullying and mobbing vs. boys' friendships (canonical subject of the subgenre), plus sexual harassment, peer violence, sexual initiation and prostitution.
15. **Point of view:** omniscient narrator, external to the action.
16. **Focus:** thoughts and deeds of the hero-pupil.
17. **Institution type:** 'Colégio Familiar', all-boys, privately owned, non-religious boarding school for the middle and lower-middle classes.
18. **Previous works with the same subject:** the boarding schoolboy episode in Gustave Flaubert (1857) *Madame Bovary*; Thomas Hughes (1857) *Tom Brown's Schooldays*; Robert Musil's (1906) *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* [military boarding schoolboy novel]; Roger Martin du Gard (1922) *Les Thibault 1: Le Cahier Gris*; André Gide (1924) *Si le grain ne meurt* [boarding schoolboy memoirs], among many other possible sources.
19. **General appraisal:** the work is affiliated to the German/French tradition of the school novel of which the main exponent is Musil's *Törleß*. Régio adopts a critical stance towards school life but, according to presencist tenets, he is far more interested in a given individual than in any collective or social issues. His main concern is the education of the *artistic and sensitive boy* that Thomas Hughes had self-portrayed in the character of the bookish and frail Arthur. The artist-to-be is at serious risk of perishing in the vicinity of spiritually lower types of people; while boys' friendships act as a relief from the strains of a hostile environment, they are not enough to ensure survival to the ordeals of school life without the main character's self-assurance and consciousness of his difference – that is perceived and stigmatised as superiority; he manages to escape the school and emerges from his probation with a richer understanding of those human natures which are very different from his own and which eventually become a rich source material for his literary palette.
20. **Critical reviews, 1946:** 1) Álvaro SALEMA, Lisbon, *Vida Mundial Ilustrada* 248, 21.02; 2) R. V. MILLER, À volta da Velha Casa, Estudos - órgão do CADC, Coimbra Ano 23, fasc. 3 (March), n. 245, 157-160; 3) Luís SILVEIRA, *Ocidente*, Lisbon vol. 13, n. 98, abr., 280-281; 4) João Gaspar SIMÕES, José Régio, romancista, Lisbon, *O Mundo Literário* 2, 18.05, 3-5 [rep. in (1948) *Liberdade do Espírito*, Porto, Portugália 143-154 and counter-reviewed by José RÉGIO in his personal *Diary*, 28.02.1948: José RÉGIO (1948) *Páginas do Diário Íntimo*, (2004) Lisbon, INCM, 118]; 5) Armando Ventura FERREIRA, Livros – Uma gota de sangue (A Velha Casa) romance por José Régio, Lisbon, *Seara Nova* 1000-7, 26.10, 214-218 [counter-reviewed by José RÉGIO in his personal *Diary*, 29.10.1946: José RÉGIO (2004) *Páginas do Diário Íntimo*, Lisbon, INCM, 85]; **1947:** 1) Manuel Rodrigues LAPA, A propósito de dois romances da vida colegial, Lisbon, *Seara Nova* 1024, 15.03, 165-167.



*The title*

Perhaps the title ‘A Velha Casa’ should be translated more accurately as ‘*The House Old*’ to render the strangeness of the noun order adopted by Régio. The expected Portuguese title would be ‘A Casa Velha’ and that is why Régio’s choice was met with disapproval by Tomaz de Figueiredo, who twisted it into an interrogation, thus making a joke out of it: ‘is the old lady (finally) marrying?’. David Mourão-Ferreira was another writer and critic who thought that the title was a bad choice: ‘to which he gave the unfortunate title of *The Old House*’, (Mourão-Ferreira 1989, 11).<sup>84</sup> Inversions of this kind are common in poetry but less expected in prose.

However, coincidentally also in 1945, Natércia Freire published her short story collection book titled ‘*A Alma da Velha Casa*’ (*The Old House’s Soul*) with the same inversion in the noun-adjective order, while the correct order had been used, for instance, in a book published posthumously 2 years before, in 1943, by Machado de Assis (the Brazilian translator of *Oliver Twist*) to title his novel ‘Casa Velha’ which had been printed in fascicles in 1885-1886.

*Characters:*

***The hero:*** Lelito;

***The friends:*** Pedro Sarapintado, Olegário

***The master villain and Lelito’s suitor:*** Adélio;

***Other colleagues:*** Rodrigues (the boy-poet), Julião le Gros, Cabeça de Graxa (blackboy), japonês (Japanese), Valadas (from Adélio’s band), Pessegueiro.

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<sup>84</sup> - ‘A que deu o título pouco afortunado de *A Velha Casa*’.

***The prefects:*** Adalberto ‘Leva-Surras’ (accompanying the boys in their walk to the Liceu), Barroso (the villain, aka Carne Crua – Raw Meat), Caveira, Matos.

***The dining-hall master:*** Baptista.

***The headmaster and school owner:*** Santos Paiva Jr.

## *Chapter One*

### *Character and mood of Lelito*

In the beginning of the narrative we find Lelito, six days after his arrival at the boarding school, in the Latin language study room, pretending to study Cicero's *Catilinarias* which lies open on top of the front desk. However, he is unable to focus on his task since his mind has taken wing to ponder on recent events and what might still be to come: panic, homesickness and anxiety are his emotional response to what already has happened on the very first days of his school ordeal.

We leave the pensive Lelito absorbed in his thoughts to be introduced to the school routine touring it with the guidance of the narrator: the first setting is the large study room where the story has begun, the place where, in the afternoon, the boys gather after class to study under the supervision of a prefect (this function takes after the Jesuit system, denoting an adult exerting vigilance over the pupils, although in Portuguese schools it is a rather loose and relaxed vigilance...). The prefects were poorly educated men who took this underpaid job for a living but had no specific skills to deal with the emotions of boyhood, something criticized by Lapa (1947).

In England the elite boarding schools adopted the 'Arnoldian' style of prefects to solve this problem: a sixth form boy overseeing, protecting and disciplining the younger ones, in keeping with the institutionally blessed bonds of the mentor/mentored. The mentor was encouraged to display a personal, caring commitment towards the mentored and, somehow, the good influence could be reciprocal as illustrated by the pair Tom/Arthur of Thomas Hughes' famous novel in which the two systems are contrasted:

Neither have I room to speak of our private schools. What I have to say is about public schools – those much-abused and much-belauded institutions

peculiar to England. So we must hurry through Master Tom's year at a private school as fast as we can.

It was a fair average specimen, kept by a gentleman, with another gentleman as second master; but it was little enough of the real work they did – merely coming into school when lessons were prepared and all ready to be heard. The whole discipline of the school out of lesson hours was in the hands of the two ushers, one of whom was always with the boys in their playground, in the school, at meals – in fact, at all times and everywhere, till they were fairly in bed at night.

Now the theory of private schools is (or was) constant supervision out of school – therein differing fundamentally from that of public schools.

It may be right or wrong; but if right, this supervision surely ought to be the especial work of the head-master, the responsible person. The object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English boys, good future citizens; and by far the most important part of that work must be done, or not done, out of school hours. To leave it, therefore, in the hands of inferior men, is just giving up the highest and hardest part of the work of education. Were I a private school-master, I should say, Let who will hear the boys their lessons, but let me live with them when they are at play and rest (Hughes 1911, 59-60)

As Hughes says, the Portuguese prefects (he calls them ushers in English schools) were not (necessarily) bad, but they were culturally, socially and economically *inferior* to the pupils they were supposed to watch over, and this social and mental gap is deeply resented by Lelito:

The two ushers at Tom's first school were not gentlemen, and very poorly educated, and were only driving their poor trade of usher to get such living as they could out of it. They were not bad men, but had little heart for their work, and of course were bent on making it as easy as possible. One of the methods by which they endeavoured to accomplish this was by encouraging tale-bearing, which had become a frightfully common vice in the school in consequence, and had sapped all the foundations of school morality. Another was, by favouring grossly the biggest boys, who alone could have given them much trouble; whereby those young gentlemen became most abominable tyrants, oppressing the little boys in all the small mean ways which prevail in private schools (Hughes 1911, 60-61).

Continuing the tour of the school, we are taken to two yards, one for the older boys (around 16 years old, Lelito belonging to this group) and another for the younger boys.

Lelito can see the linden of his schoolyard through the window. The school is encircled by a high wall but, from the first floor, a glimpse of Oporto town can still be guess at from a distance.

The prefect's desk lies elevated on a podium and turned towards the small individual desks of the pupils. On the wall behind, there is a map of Portugal, two sayings about the advantages of obeying and working and the portrait of the school's founder, Santos Paiva Senior, the father of the current school owner and headmaster, Santos Paiva Jr. (official schools had state symbols instead and in Catholic school all classrooms had crucifixes on the front wall). The ambiance in the study room is heavy and feels somehow sinister to the vivacious minds of the boys and Lelito particularly has resented those words 'joyful working', 'command' and 'obeying' from the very beginning.

Then the narrator takes some time to explain the threefold categories of pupils: the school enrolled boarders, half-boarders and dayers. The borders live and study all day in the school. The second group, the half-boarders, are not to be taken here in the traditional sense of those who spend weekends at home: they are, in fact, like full-boarders, sleeping in the school but getting out daily during the morning to attend classes at the selective Liceu (an elite public high school) and afterwards studying in the college during the afternoon. The dayers come to the school only for classes, then head home. Communication with the outside world is kept through this final group, which is keen on trafficking tobacco, smuggling unverified correspondence into the school, selling movie and sports magazines with actresses or soccer player posters, along with obscene books and postcards.

So the half-boarders have to get out daily to the City High School under the surveillance of the prefect. Lelito has managed to persuade his strict and rigid father to let him be in this second group in order to enjoy relatively greater freedom than that allotted to full-boarders.

There are two dormitories divided by age/class – the younger and middle boys in one building and the big lads, aged 16 to 18, in the other. Lelito belongs to the older aged class.

The day starts for all at 6.30 am when the bell rings to wake everybody. They all have to shower and get dressed in a hurry before 07.00 am, when the bell rings again, this time indicating that they should line up and form a pair with their '*vis-à-vis*', i.e., the boy sleeping in the bed in front of their own and not the one next to them; subsequently, they climb the stairs to the study room on the upper floor. Following a study period of one hour it is time for breakfast and the bell rings again at 08.00 am. They go downstairs, lining up again and washing their hands in the entrance hall and then they enter the refectory where the younger and middle boys are already seated, since the dining hall is in the ground floor of their building. It is at the entrance of the refectory that Baptista, the dining hall master, about whom certain unfavourable things have been murmured to Lelito, is supervising the waiters and the service. He welcomes the arriving boys with great sympathy and high spirits, caressing the younger ones, saying witty things to the older ones and providing extra bread to his favourites.

After breakfast, at around 08.30 am, Lelito and the other half-boarders head for the Liceu, watched by prefect, Leva-Surras. They come back to the Colégio for lunch (taken in the presence of the Director) and return to the Liceu, from where they are expected to be back around 4.00 or 5.00 PM. From 5.30 until 7.00 PM they have a final period of study, after which dinner is served.

Lelito's biggest concern is the recreation period, spanning from the second return from the Liceu until the evening study session. To him that is the most feared period of the day and the one he would gladly exchange for more hours of study or sleep. Not because he is a hard worker but rather because he needs some time to wander in melancholy.

The first three days he is happy because it is raining and so nobody goes to the yard but on the fourth day he is forced to venture outside the dormitory and face his fellow pupils for almost one hour.

And on that fourth day we find Lelito anxiously looking for a quiet place to read a book by the Portuguese poet (of Irish ancestry) Almeida Garrett (1799-1854), the refounder of Portuguese national literature and an accomplished poet, dramaturge, novelist, journalist, traveller, educationalist and politician. After Garrett's exile in England and France he fell under the influence of Byron, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Schlegel, Walter Scott and M.me de Staël and, later, under that of Goethe, Schiller and Herder, introducing the Romantic movement to Portugal. Garrett was a dandy and an adventurer, somehow a mixture of a Byron with a Brummel, who had to face charges in a court case, like Catiline about whom Lelito was reading at the beginning of the chapter, that arose from the publication of his book of love poetry *O Retrato de Vénus (Venus' portrait)*, Coimbra, 1821, which was deemed to be immoral.

The bard was held in high esteem by the Neo-Romantic circle of poets, who also styled themselves as Neo-Garrettians, also called Neo-Lusitanists. Prominent members of this circle included the poets António Nobre, Correia de Oliveira, Afonso Lopes Vieira, Manuel da Silva Gaio and the essayist and memoirist Alberto de Oliveira, António Nobre's special friend, with whom he created the famous literary magazine *Boémia Nova* in Coimbra. The most direct model for Régio was Nobre, and since Nobre's model was Garrett, Lelito is here represented with Garrett's book in his hand, as a sort of identification with Régio/Nobre. As Girard (1961) has highlighted, literary personae often duplicate behaviour from other fictitious characters (Aeneas/Odysseus, Quixote/Amadis, etc.); in this episode we find a character replicating the passion of his author's real life model for another model, a double *mimesis*.

Lelito is divided in his spirits: he dislikes the games and play of the boys, but he has the need to make friends. The others, seeing snobbery and distance in what is only caution, timidity, sensibility and delicate manners, do not invite him to play along.

He tries to establish some contact with a few, namely another boy-poet called Rodrigues, but he prefers to watch the games of the younger ones, feeling pity for the absence of tenderness in their school lives.

When he is enjoying himself watching the recreation of the younger boys, his problems are about to begin. He is approached by the fearful prefect, Barroso, a man of bad spirit whose past, according to some boys, has included murder, a stay in a penal colony in Africa from which he had escaped and many other horrific tales that make him a creature of mystery and horror. Lelito immediately suspects his greenish eyes, his beastlike chin, his frightful voice and strong, athletic complexion.

It is at this point that the narrative really begins and is this scene that the famous artist, Bernardo Marques, chose to feature in the book's cover.

Only the dialogue itself can illustrate the tone and artistry of Régio:

Having approached Lelito, prefect Barroso said:

- 'You cannot sit here.'
- 'Why so?' said Lelito feeling embarrassed – and Barroso noticed the blushing on his face.
- 'It is the young boys yard.'
- 'But I am not in the young boys yard!'
- 'You are looking at it.'
- 'Looking at? Is there anything wrong with that?'
- 'You cannot! There are regulations to follow.'
- 'I don't see why they placed a bench here!' said Lelito, blushing even further and standing to leave. But Barroso blocked his way.
- 'Mister, you cannot dispute the commands being given to you.'

Lelito froze.

- '... nor can you read feuilletons here.'



At this point Lelito showed some superiority:

- ‘I don’t read feuilletons.’
- ‘Whatsoever!’
- ‘It is a book my teacher asked me to read. I don’t have time to read it during the study session.’

Against his principles, Lelito is lying: the teacher of Portuguese in the Liceu was still in the archaic period of Portuguese literature, not the Romantic authors, something the prefect could not know. But the boys going to Arts and Humanities are allowed to read in the Colégio various books assigned or recommended by the Liceu teachers. Only the full- and half-boarders of Sciences have no right to read other than schoolbooks, supplementing their assigned readings with clandestine pornography and crime fiction.

- ‘That teacher of you has no authority here in the Colégio. It is forbidden to read during the break.’

Lelito was trembling... After a great effort he tried to articulate:

- ‘So should I read in my bed? It is forbidden to read also in the dormitories.’

At that time he felt hate in the eyes of Barroso. He felt Barroso hated his status, his cultural background, his elegance, his childish smile and the luminosity of his face. The other was the opposite: strong but short, ugly and... invested with power.

- ‘So I will report to the Director that you are disrespectful towards the prefects.’
- ‘Disrespectful?’
- ‘Disrespectful. And why are you hiding away? Go play with the others, you are not above them!’

Some boys come over to see his trouble. Lelito understands that Barroso is trying to have them on his side against the newcomer. Slowly, with his face burning, he closes Garrett’s book that is still open in his trembling hand and puts it in the pocket of his jacket. Then he leaves looking at the linden to avoid the eyes of the bystanders. When he is about to restart his nostalgic walk through the trees, he hears a voice beside him:

- ‘So the *girl* reads romances...’

These words come from a red haired lad of fifteen to eighteen years of age, a lot stronger than Lelito, and looking at him with a defiant attitude. Lelito immediately likes him, attracted by his bright eyes and teeth shining in a sarcastic mood. But to his own dismay he has a new enemy, who has humiliated him by calling him *girl*.

- ‘What do you want?’ he said finally, with the voice struggling to get out of his throat. — ‘And don’t call me *girl!* I am not *girl!*’
- ‘Oh yes?’ — said the other showing some doubt in his words. And started examining him, touching his body, looking for muscles in his arms and kicking him.

Lelito, totally blushed, asked then, venturing a smile:

- ‘Do you want to have proof?’

He immediately regretted his daring... the other answered:

- ‘Hey guys, we have a physical exam to make here ...’

### *The mobbing*

Lelito is subjected to a violent physical examination by strange, unknown faces, – one of them looks Japanese; another is a black boy who ‘had come as a little child, paid twice the others, was the servant of all and had to adapt to Colégio as a lamb to its enclosure’. About this black pupil it is said that once there had been the chance for him to leave but he refused to live out of Colégio. His nickname is Cabeça de Graxa (*Shoepolishhead*), his true name being Zezu (meaning Jesus) but nobody calls him that – the boys always use the nickname and the prefects address him as Mr. Malgueira.

It is worth noting here the respectful treatment used by the adults towards all the boys, nowadays something totally outmoded: regardless of age and race they receive a ‘Mr.’ before their family names, just as in Dickens and in English schoolboy novels. ‘Tu’, the familiar and intimate treatment for younger people that is nowadays universal in Portuguese schools, was then only used as reprimand by adults towards the young and by the pupils to address their peers. The narrator stresses that only the Director, abusively, enjoys addressing the boys with ‘tu’. Since there is no Portuguese equivalent to ‘Sir’ to address a person of higher status or age, the boys called the adults, eg. the prefects, ‘Mr.’ also. To complete strangers who were not in a position to command they would use the treatment ‘você’, showing less respect.

To adapt is the main skill developed by the pupils. The narrator says that those adolescents look brutal, deceivers and sarcastic. The mobbing is lead by Pedro, the boy Lelito likes. When Lelito suggests he might inform the adults, Pedro imposes a law of silence in the most ruthless way.

Barroso pretends to check the situation but quickly leaves, abandoning Lelito to the boys. The ordeal is announced with great formality: the newcomer needs to be checked for the size of his member in order to allow him to come into the older boys yard. Then, next day, he must deliver a speech on the adequate way to treat the 'beasts', i. e., the prefects.

During the ordeal Pedro continues to fascinate Lelito with his command of language and situations. On the other hand, Adélio, in whom he detects an obscene sensuality, causes him increasing repugnance.

Lelito thinks to himself that anyone else would endure all that humiliation with no trouble but to him this is not an option. He is too fragile to be superior to events. However, he thinks also that he has been made to suffer; he was born a martyr and some masochistic pleasure is to be derived from the situation. They throw mud at his penis and spit on it, after which Pedro asks for his complete name and uses it in the proclamation of his full entry into the Society of the Older Boys Yard.

When all have left because the class bell has rung, only Pedro waits for him, to the big surprise of Lelito. Seeing the boy frightened, Pedro says that he really is a *girl* because he took that play all so seriously. It was just fun, he will later understand. After some advice on the school rules he warns him to be cautious of Adélio. Lelito once again feels that he likes Pedro.

They arrive late. The Director is waiting in the classroom and slaps Pedro on the face. Lelito assumes responsibility for the delay saying that Pedro had been helping him.

Pedro stresses loyally that the fault is his, to the added fury of the Director. A feeling of comradeship is born between the two boys.

### *Chapter Two*

We go back to the beginning of the narrative: Lelito is nervous about the recreation period in the yard because he has to deliver his mock speech.

Amidst his sufferings Lelito turns his thoughts to the Old House and how he felt safe and happy at home during infancy. He recalls the ambiance of his childhood, exactly in the same way Régio will later recall it in his memoirs (*Confissões*)... The Old House and its pious, feminine atmosphere is remembered with endearment and ironically he remembers that when he was at home he dreamed about living a college life.

Finally he fails to address the group during the intermission in the yard and once again Pedro saves him from further trouble, while Adélio becomes more and more abusive, physically harassing him.

### *Chapter Three*

Lelito is able to enjoy the yard now that the boys consider him as being apart from them. It is wintertime and lamps in the linden light the yard. He is dreaming about living outside, when he, as an artist of the word, will bewitch women and his fellow companions with his distinction, eloquence and charm. These dreams are a compensation for his present frustrations.

Barroso continues to condemn him for his keeping apart from the others but from his distant viewpoint he watches the two groups into which the schoolyard is divided: Pedro's companions and those of Adélio. A third natural leader, the husky Julião, has no

followers, so he takes part alternately in the two groups offering the weight of the pre-eminent role his strong build ascribed to him.

Pedro's group plays the most differently from the aggressive running, shouting and swearing of Adélio's boys. Their games are like playing theatrical roles, such as a duel, a kidnapping, a love proposal, a riot, a speech, an argument with a superior or inferior, etc. Through these mockeries, which Pedro stages with artistry, Lelito gets to know better the personalities of many of the school teachers and prefects of whom he has so far had only a glimpse. The list of characters is broadened by movie stars or adventure heroes and popular types like the seducer, the charmer, the nice outlaw, the brave boyfriend and the clever detective. As no one is willing to play the feminine roles, they use the linden as the maidens; completely silent and passive as those roles are conceived.

Lelito becomes fond of these plays, which he finds much more childish and innocent than his more complex, precocious and 'impure' dreams.

It should be noted here that there is some identification of Pedro with the father figure because Régio's father, a man conservative in ideas and attitudes but with strong artistic leanings, used to organize local staging of plays. That passion for theatre led Régio to write a number of plays that became landmarks in the history of Portuguese dramatic literature.

Around this time he is approached by Olegário who is commonly accepted as being the Alter-Ego of Régio's literary companion João Gaspar Simões, also the author of a schoolboy novel but who was never actually his classmate since they were to meet at the University of Coimbra where they launched their famous literary magazine *presence* and where Régio studied language and humanities and Simões law.

While Adélio occasionally chooses him to be his pair in the form, neither of them expects that he will approach them during their talks and, while they are simply checking

their affinities, backgrounds and dispositions Adélio comes over just to make some dirty innuendos that leave both boys in the most unpleasant situation.

#### *Chapter Four*

During the night scene in the dormitory, while Lelito cannot get to sleep, he finds out that Barroso, who is supposed to be sleeping at the entrance of the dormitory to 'guard' the boys, is, in reality, sometimes leaving the place late at night, followed by three of the boys. So, contrary to the regulations, the supposed guard is from time to time absent, leaving the place unguarded, and some boys are taking advantage of it after he leaves.

At night, Lelito's thoughts drift again towards his childhood and the terrors children feel in bed. One day, he thinks, his present discomfort will seem so ridiculous, as will all the terrors of his childhood but he feels that these unpleasant feelings are due to the dormitory being an oppressive space, too austere and unfamiliar.

Thinking about the injustices and corruption in the Colégio, Lelito is afraid that more indignities may arise in the schoolyard and he is revolted by the depravity of Barroso, who perhaps has taken the three boys who left after him to the same suspicious place where he was going, perhaps a brothel. But what Lelito is afraid of most is becoming just like them, corrupted, hateful and hypocritical, tendencies that he feels he should grow inside his character in order to survive.

#### *Chapter Five*

Lelito cannot find the self-assurance to share his world with Pedro. He finds Pedro to have solid common sense but not intellectual ambition or other inquisitiveness. He is afraid of losing him if he seeks to bring him into his own world. Probably the other would find him crazy or unbalanced... '— Why was he so precocious?' — he regrets.

But perhaps the other boy is not so normal as he seems to be. There is no such thing as an 'issueless boy'. Still, he ventures to think that his own introspective leanings are never going to be experienced by his friend. His intimate world is so delicate, so extravagant that he concedes that richness is to be hinted by others but never shared, since this would actually ruin his inner world. We have here a parallel with the pair Tonio/Hans as depicted by Thomas Mann in the eponymous novel *Tonio Kröger*.

But Pedro is attentive and little by little their talks become more general, more philosophical and even personal, about prospective or future girlfriends. He is tender, righteous, natural and spontaneous and this difference is the most attractive side of his character. Instead, in Olegário his speculations are better received and matched, but the communication never runs so fluently, perhaps because of Lelito's intricacies. When Lelito succeeds in approaching him with more intimacy, Olegário is more than willing to share his intimate thoughts for he too is in need of that lovingness. But the innuendos of Adélio remain such a shadow over their friendship that both are afraid of making it dirty and repugnant.

Finally, he notes that Pedro does not like Olegário and asks him why. Pedro says that, since the two boys have their literary and philosophical complicities, it is okay for them to be friends but not with him.

However, Lelito feels that Pedro is not so alien to the literary world and, anyway, as an actor he could also become an author...

Suddenly, Pedro reveals to him that Adélio, a long time ago, was inseparable from Olegário, when the latter was just a small kid and had entered the Colégio. The elder (now in his twenties) befriended the much younger boy and then they split apart, but Adélio kept abusing Olegário both verbally and emotionally. Lelito is shocked both by these revelations and by the intuition he has had of them.

From that moment onwards, Lelito regards Olegário with some repulsion but also with curiosity and sympathy. He needs him because he wants someone to admire him, intellectually, and Olegário is taking that submissive role. They are so different in detail and at the same time so similar in interests. Olegário begins sharing his literary compositions with Lelito, who still has nothing to reciprocate; these are one act of a play, fragments of a lyric poem about the love of the author for a certain almost mythical maiden of the type of Beatrix, Laura or Natércia (beloved of Portuguese poet Camoens), and the first three chapters of an introspective novel (Gaspar Simões was one of the Portuguese forerunners of the psychological, Freudian branch of novel).

It comes about that this maiden is no other than a poor seamstress of undergarments who frequented the house of Olegário's uncle, in which the boy used to spend a month of his summer holidays; and during the most recent ones, after completely failing to seduce the kid, she sexually molested him ... To all this, Olegário's alludes in his eloquent literary piece written in decasyllabic verse, in a very dignified manner and using highly stylized metaphors. But the real story of his rape is told by Olegário to his friend, mixing quotations from his grandiloquent poem with vulgarities that displease Lelito. Still, he prefers these manifestations of Olegário's first virility with that woman, his first 'fall' so to speak, to the intimacies he has had with Adélio.

However, Lelito is unable to reciprocate these confidences and tells nothing intimate to his friend. The narrator reveals the highlights of Lelito's emotional past: a violent platonic passion for a girl two years older than him, when he was twelve. This passion lasted for three years until the girl exchanged him for an idiotic army officer. Lelito also has turned his love story into poetry that he deems superior to that of Olegário.



There is nothing more in his past love life. A fellow pupil from the Junior High School introduced him to the pleasures of masturbation, which he felt inadequate. Apart from that, his body is pure: almost eighteen and still a virgin.

### *Chapter Six*

This chapter presents Prefect Bento Adalberto, who will be of more importance in the second instalment of the novel. Adalberto feels the attraction of philosophy which he studies in not so good books intended for the general reader. The narrator presents the Liceu (Humanistic High School, as opposed to Technical and Commercial), where the half-boarders are attending classes. However some manage to escape, and since the district is a very bad one, they venture into brothels or houses of prostitutes nearby. One of the pupils, Pessegueiro, has done it already and is trying to take Lelito, who feels he has not the courage to be in such a situation, along with him,.

At a given point Lelito and Adalberto start having philosophical conversations, much to the interest of the latter.

The narrator continues to flesh out Adalberto, a man probably in his fifties and also a wounded character, much above the level of the people he has to deal with. Lelito becomes sympathetic towards him.

### *Chapter Seven*

Lelito becomes more daring. He loses faith in the divinity of Jesus through the covert reading of the *Life of Jesus* by Renan. At the same time he questions the very existence of God but in a far less assertive way. He just wants to dare, dare for the pleasure of daring. He also plans to go to a bordello with his colleague, Pessegueiro.

The end of his faith has made him a kind of miserable orphan, lost after his Father's death. He is aware of the torment he is about to endure because of this loss. He will never recover from it. At the same time there is guilt – he has killed his Father inside his conscience – and sorrow, for perceiving within himself a certain demonism, since all these feelings are demonic. Why he cannot be pure, joyful and morally healthy? Perhaps that filthy Colégio life has simply made his morbid tendencies, already present from childhood, surface?

He also has the urgent need to express himself and, if not by writing, how can he do it? But he shows his first attempts to nobody. Anyway, if he is later to write he has to be sincere and convey his 'terrible inner adventures', his doubts, his 'painful knowledge and cruel experiences'.

With all these stimuli he resumes intense masturbation, in the way another pupil had previously taught him, a vice that he now sees also as a revolt against God; against the heavenly Father and against the earthly one as well since he furiously restarted this practice on the day his father had paid him a furtive visit in the Liceu.

Parents are not welcome at the Colégio – the director once argued that after visits by relatives the pupils became irritable and nervous. It was agreed that Lelito would only visit home at Christmas time and the family had to sever all links, especially in the adaptation period. So his father chose to visit him at the Liceu and Lelito, who was willing to disclose to him his sufferings, didn't find the courage to do it or recognize his father's disposition to hear him. He had had to postpone the issue to Christmas and became ever more anxious after this frustrated attempt to escape the Colégio.

He resents his father for being such a moral person, so austere, simple and dignified, an ideal that is unattainable to him, lying in the darkness of the abased world of the Colégio.

*Chapter Eight*

The narrator describes the Sunday walks of the boys through the city of Oporto. Lelito has tried to escape such excursions because of his migraines and headaches (Régio suffered all his lifetime from migraines) but the Director says that this is a girl's thing and he doesn't tolerate people who want to be different.

It is not the first time that he has been called *girl* (we remember the initial approach by Pedro), but Lelito knows he is a man – ‘and that a real man is the most delicate being in the creation’,<sup>85</sup> the one most at peril in the labyrinths of identity.

On one of these mornings, before they go to Sunday mass, Adélio approaches Lelito and clearly discloses his libidinous intents. Lelito is not unaware of all this but with his shock and repugnance at these propositions he resorts to violent aggression and puts up a fight against his suitor.

Adélio is older and stronger but, taken by surprise, loses the advantage and Lelito wins. By the end, however, Lelito has struck his opponent's head against a stone or pointed edge on two occasions, the first by mistake, the second deliberately, and *a drop of blood* has stained one of his fingers.

Barroso, the prefect who has been his enemy from the very beginning, rejoices in the situation. Lelito is sure that the man knows how and why everything has happened. While Adélio is taken to the nursery to the mortification of Lelito, who is afraid he might be dead, Barroso seizes him and takes the boy to an isolation room within the School, a place to calm down difficult boys, and to which has been given the name of ‘Purgatory’.

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<sup>85</sup> - ‘[U]m homem a valer é o ser mais delicado da criação’, p. 115.

*Chapter Nine*

Lelito panics. Inside the jail he loses control and has an attack of hysterics. Why he is not like all the others? Why he is such a complex and complicated a person?

Without knowing what has happened to Adélio, he feels some pleasure in being a criminal, a murderer and, at the same time, he feels polluted.

A servant enters with some food, watched by Caveira. When the servant leaves Lelito inquires about Adélio. At this point Caveira discloses some confidences: he doesn't like Adélio. He asks if the boys consider him to be crazy – Lelito acknowledges this and Caveira explains he has lost a son, an extremely delicate boy, both beautiful and intelligent, who died at about Lelito's age and he leaves saying that someone is surrounding the Purgatory.

To the surprise of Lelito, Caveira himself brings Pedro to see him. From him, Lelito learns that Adélio is alive and not so badly hurt. He explains that injury with the pointed stone was an accident and he had not had any intention to seriously injure the other boy. However, Lelito feels unable to tell the whole story to his friend.

As they are leaving, Barroso comes to bring Lelito to the presence of the Director. Lelito thinks about running away but finds himself being led into the Director's office, where Adélio and Adalberto are waiting for him. Adélio is wearing a linen turban to protect his wound and is lying down on a sofa. He fixes a frozen look upon Lelito who thinks about making peace with him, afraid of Adélio's future animosity but, at this point, the other doesn't give him a chance.

Then Lelito set eyes upon Adalberto and feels his solidarity. He finally looks at the Director.

Lelito fears expulsion and the shame at home. He understands that Adélio is not as well as Pedro has said he was. The Director is harsh and is furious because the incident has

spoiled his Sunday. So he asks why Lelito had wanted to kill his fellow pupil and why he has such murderous instincts.

Lelito states that he had not had any intention of killing Adélio but the Director, furious, does not allow Lelito to contradict him. He points to the miserable condition of Adélio, who hypocritically pretends to be in great suffering and exhibiting resignation.

Lelito still tries to say that injury with the pointed stone was an unfortunate accident and that Adélio had offended him first. — ‘He is lying’, said Adélio. ‘He approached me to...’

Lelito then understands that Adélio is about to accuse him of what he had himself done and interrupts Adélio stating: — ‘I am telling the truth. He aggravated me several times with proposals... indecent proposals’.

‘What??!’ — said the Director. ‘Who made proposals to you? Who suggested indecent things? That has never been heard of in this School. You want to tarnish the reputation of my School?’

Lelito knows the Director is lying because he has heard about a case in the yard of the middle aged boys that had reached the Director of the School. Adélio tries to speak but the Director tells him to wait his turn. Still Adélio says that it is Lelito who has brought bad customs with him.

At this point Lelito tells everything: the persistence of his suitor and the way he suggested the complicity of Barroso — who immediately takes this chance to accuse Lelito of unruly behaviour, right from the beginning of the school year.

At this point the Director asks prefect Adalberto about Lelito’s character. If he has taken him everyday to the Liceu he has to have an opinion about his nature. — Because, — as the Director now stresses, — Lelito has not only seriously hurt his mate but moreover he has now made serious accusations about his victim, to the discredit of a School he barely

knows yet. The pupil Adélio has been here for a long time and there is nothing, until today, to say about his character —.

Adalberto feels troubled by the situation. The case appears to be already tried and sentence pronounced but he feels sympathy for Lelito and provides the best possible reference for the accused insinuating that, in contrast, Adélio's behaviour has not been that irreproachable.

To this, Lelito's enemy Barroso states the opposite and the Director asks Adalberto why he always has opinions contrary to all the other prefects... perhaps he wants to stand out, to feel superior, to look intellectual... The poor man feels humiliated in front of the two pupils and a fellow prefect.

At the end of the trial Adélio is, after all, not interrogated and the Director only says that further enquires will be made from which he expects Adélio will emerge to be innocent. Although having to consult first with his father, the founder of the Colégio, he provisionally sentences Lelito to remain in the Purgatory during daytime and sleep in a separate, empty dormitory, under the guard of a prefect.

### *Chapter Ten*

Lelito is taken to the Purgatory. On his way he tries to dissipate Adélio's hate by suggesting making peace with him but on hearing what the other boy understands by peace he withdraws his offering with repulsion.

He then takes his belongings, which are very few and include a novel by the writer Camilo Castelo-Branco and a notebook where he has written his poems and some small, unfinished pieces of prose.

Before entering the Purgatory, Lelito has a brief talk with his friend Olegário who is fearful of his friend's expulsion, an outcome Lelito declares he wishes.

Adalberto, the friendly prefect, changes duties in order to become his guard and in this chapter, somehow an excursus from the main plot, Lelito comes to know him better through some confidences the man entrusts to him, including his impending marriage. He had been a pupil in a catholic Seminar but has given up any call to priesthood. There, he says, the same envy and animosity against those with intellectual ambition was common.

Adalberto wishes Lelito to remain in the Colégio and he is sad at hearing that the boy wants to leave.

Lelito feels that God has abandoned him. — ‘Why have you abandoned me? Why do you persecute me?’ — inverting Jesus’ intimation to Saul of Tarsus.

Lelito asks himself if the bad characters he is forced to live with are after all guilty of all their wickedness. He himself had been vicious for an instant, when he was aware that Adélio’s head had been hurt by the stone and yet still he had forced it down once more, with a dreadful outpouring of blood. How could he judge others?

### *Chapter Eleven*

Lelito’s father comes to the Colégio. The boy finds him ominously seated on the same sofa where Adélio had been seated two days before. The father looks distant, his attitude cold, a mixture of the army officer and the monk.

Lelito has sent a secret telegram calling for his father because he wants to meet him in private not in the Director’s office. The Director further criticizes the pupil, saying that it had been better if his father had not been informed of the events, or, in any case, he could have written a letter openly calling for him because doing it in a covert manner was a new fault.

His father wants to know why Lelito seems not to regret what he has done and why he wants to talk to him, other than to give a satisfactory explanation. He is prepared to hear

him, but in public, for he trusts the Director of the School to whom he had entrusted the education of his son.

At this time the hypocritical Director wants to avoid Lelito's version being heard because he fears for his School's reputation. So he extemporizes: the facts have not been fully investigated but what is important is for Lelito to show repentance and regret, something he didn't do during the hearings. Then everything can be forgotten including the heated defence he presented with a degree of invention.

Lelito understands that the Director wants to buy his silence. However, his father insists on knowing everything that was said in that office two days before.

Lelito tries to explain his motivations vaguely, including the offences and humiliations he has endured from Adélio, but at this point his father asks him to be more precise about the type of humiliations and offences he has been subjected to.

Lelito raised to him his beautiful eyes, now misted with tears. He wanted his father to understand everything from those eyes. Because he didn't know how to mention to that austere man, his father, something that only by remembering it he felt soiled and defiled at his own eyes, even if he had nothing to do with that dirt?

He already feels some rebelliousness against his father but he still loves him as an example of purity and integrity. How could he tell him the things he had said to the Director? That sordid stuff which Adélio had dragged him into? No, that was not possible. And who could say that his father would believe him?

Seeing that shame and prudency have prevented Lelito from speaking overtly about the events, the Director, happy with the course things are taking, dismisses the offences and says that perhaps not even the victim remembers now of what they consisted. Lelito feels that a sort of silent pact between him and the Director has been signed.



Still, Lelito finds the courage to say that he wants to talk privately to his father because he cannot remain at the Colégio. He cannot be forced into socializing with incompatible characters.

The father invokes the story of another of his sons, the first one, who after being spoiled by the women of the House had engaged in perilous behaviour and abandoned the family:

— ‘So many dangers surround a boy these days when the best uses and principles are no longer respected’.

Lelito argues then that the problem is not with the Colégio but with him. That he is not suited to that sort of collective living with people so different from him is clearly visible.

The father leaves and Lelito feels like he wants to die.

When Pedro seems to detect his despair, after he has joined his fellow pupils in the yard, he is very tough on his suicidal ideas.

— ‘Yes, they say they want to make a man out of me — and then they bring me here! Do you know? I think I am much more of a man than most of them!’

But he bursts into tears and, remembering his first meeting with Pedro, who had then called him *girl*, he said:

— ‘I will always be the girl, won’t I? The girl that reads romances...’

— ‘Sometimes’, says Pedro, ‘men should cry too’...

### *Chapter Twelve*

Now Lelito is spending the nights in the separate dormitory having for company only prefect Adalberto. It is better this way: the dormitory and its moods have been one of his ordeals right from his arrival.

But he has a frightful nightmare in which Adélio is seated on a chair at his Old House, apparently hurt and alive but, in reality, dead, smiling at him in the most dreadful way. When he wakes he is terrorized by the memory of this vision.

He then remembers the four boys that used to get away during the night and the idea of escaping takes shape in his mind. He looks for them and, succeeding in finding the group, he joins them to escape to freedom, not without some tension and struggle because these boys belong to Adélio's band.

He regrets that Adalberto will be admonished by the Director but if he is fired that will be better for him. And, of course, he guesses that his friends Pedro and Olegário will miss him but he has to escape, even if he is less than sure about the way his father will receive him.

### *Chapter Thirteen*

Lelito walks around Oporto at night. In the dark night he sees some drunkards being expelled from one of the dens... in panic he recognizes the prefect, Caveira, but the man is so drunk that, apparently, he does not recognize him.

He wanders through the bad districts thinking about the Old House he is about to return to: the comfort and cosiness, the protection from the many statues of saints, the old beds and their linen passing down through the generations...

But what he sees in the city is only vice, disease, imprecations from the windows, cries. He has an intimation of all the miseries of the world, of human society. He understands how much higher he is now than these miserable people but at the same time he recalls, how in another life, having been one of those too.

As the nocturnal adventure is unfolding he is getting scared. He starts appealing to God, the same God he looked upon so philosophically... He thinks of himself as being ridiculous...

He tries to catch a taxi to take him home, feeling sure that his father will pay the driver, but none appears.

At some point, a prostitute he has already passed by tries to seduce him again. He feels repulsion for this kind of woman but curiosity and attraction too. He is too exhausted not to accept a bed, and finally he allows himself to be led by the prostitute to a cheap room, feeling the sense of a motherly touch in her body and voice. Régio explores this episode again in a poem he includes in his book *A Chaga do Lado* (1954), as well as featuring the troubles of a prostitute's life in another of his poetry books published in 1946, *Fado (Fate)*, in a sympathetic and at times also brutal composition, ironically called 'Fado das Mulheres de Vida Fácil' (*The Fate of the Easy Life Women*), as they were derogatorily called.

*Chapter Fourteen and the last (novel to be continued out of school)*

Finally Lelito reaches the Old House, sick with a fever. The family is greatly shocked by his return. He wants his mother to promise he will not be sent back to Colégio again. He is put to bed and he has a sensation that 'the man' (his father), who has been out looking for a Doctor, is returning to the house.

And, at this point, the schoolboy story is over and the next instalment follows Lelito recovering from a nervous breakdown in the Old House up until his departure for university.

Régio actually never really left his father's home: he kept returning there during his lifetime and he died there in 1969. So, he exemplified the case of those obsessed by the

relationship with their families and their past childhood, longing to return to a lost paradise. He dealt with this feeling of loss in terms of metaphysics, poetry and literary creation: the man expelled from a safe haven and thrust into a hostile world, the deposed king incarcerated in a prison, the boy boarded at a school against his wishes, etc., are various versions of the uprooting paradigm that Régio used in order to developed the nostalgic '*saudade*' as the longing for a former shelter and the wish to return to whatever past could present a kind of solution.

The value of just one soul is greater than any single thing upon this earth. For there can be nothing greater than raising a child in preparation for that journey back to where he came from, a place where his immortal father lives, a place known as heaven, a place called home (Pelzer 2005, 262).

## Chapter 8: An Educational Analysis of *A Drop of Blood*

### *Internarrativity, historical and literary allusions*

The *Catilinarias* at the beginning of *A Drop of Blood* are an ominous reference. They recount how the brilliant and socially-conscious aristocrat, *Lucius Sergius Catilina* (108 BC-62 BC), was accused of rebellion against the oligarchic rule of the greedy and unscrupulous Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC – 43 BC), which led to the former's eventual eviction and suicide. These famous speeches recount the poisonous accusations that Cicero brought to the Senate, in 63 BC, in order to have Catiline condemned and executed for conspiracy against the old social order, which was controlled by the interests of the oligarchy. Moving from initial naiveté, Catiline ends up by losing his innocence and, eventually, his life, even though he shows the courage and bravery of a hero in his final moments. '*Quem ad finem sese effrenata iactabit audacia?* When is there to be an end of this unbridled audacity of yours?' asks the treacherous Cicero, maliciously playing the role of victim with the utmost perfidy and hypocrisy and obsessed with his intent: to annihilate his opponent morally and physically.

As Catiline's story goes, heroism, bravery, justice and ideals are of little use when confronted with hypocrisy, outright lies and brutality. The fate of Catiline is a moral tale – its disastrous outcome showing how an idealistic and generous soul can be mercilessly crushed by dishonesty and the use of vicious aggression and disproportionate might. Cicero is the ultimate sycophant, an ambitious, corrupt newcomer and an unscrupulous politician, he is also an opportunist who sells his soul to the establishment in order to gain power and then to exert it in the most atrocious manner; in contrast, Catiline has remained, ever

afterwards, a model of political commitment to the poor and the embodiment of the Romantic hero:

Gorgeous, solitary, renegade, lovable even when – or probably exactly because – he is accused of being an ‘adulterer, extortioner, profligate, bankrupt, assassin, suspected wife-killer, broken-down patrician, demagogue, thug’... to my mind, Catiline was not only a hero – he was me (Santos 2008).

This series of vicious accusations became the glory of Catiline not because they are false – or true – but because they are ill-intentioned. The narrative’s reference to another narrative, the story of Catiline inside the narrative of Lelito, becomes a *prolepsis* of what is also about to occur to the second hero.

In spite of his undeniable virtues, which were at least as impressive as the vices he was credited with, Catiline’s epic transgression and bold challenge to the political status quo and social system ended in the most tragic and unfair way. The lesson that can be learned here is that when *your version of the story* is not told you risk becoming not the hero but the villain and this idea is fundamental to the motivation of Régio’s narrative.

#### *Autobiographical elements*

In his spiritual autobiography, *Confession of a Religious Man*, Régio explains how his stay at boarding school between the years 1918-1920, when he was 17 to 19 years old, was negotiated with his father, who intended to send him to the recently created Oporto Arts Faculty, close to Régio’s paternal house and birthplace, Vila do Conde.

He argues in his memoirs that, although he had close friends among the Oporto University students (Adolfo Casais Monteiro, José Marinho, Delfim Santos, Álvaro Ribeiro), he was unreceptive to the seduction and guidance of the founder and one time director of the institution, Leonardo Coimbra, whom Marinho and other disciples revered as ‘the master’. So he proposed a deal with his father: to finish high-school in Liceu

Rodrigues de Freitas, in Oporto, while staying at *Escola Académica do Porto* boarding school as half-boarder (formerly known as *Instituto Escolar de S. Domingos*) and where, significantly, António Nobre and his friend Justino de Montalvão had also boarded), and then to be allowed to head for the traditional University of Coimbra of which he romanticized for being the alma mater of his idolatrized model poet, António Nobre, whom he was trying to emulate in inspiration, in his melancholic tone and, partly, in life:

Instead (of Oporto University) I rather wanted to go to Coimbra, I dreamed with my Coimbra of António Nobre (Régio 2001a, 79).<sup>86</sup>

Régio's idolatry of the narcissistic and masochistic poetry of António Nobre, who had said about his own book, *Só (Lonely)* (1892), that it was the most sorrowful ever written in Portugal, could point to his sharing of Nobre's depressive mood. Nobre had grown up in Leça, not far from Vila do Conde. After failing his Law studies in Coimbra he headed for Paris, France, but died 'at the age of Christ' (33 years old) from tuberculosis. In contrast, Régio graduated in French and Portuguese literature from Coimbra while never visiting Paris – indeed, he almost never left Portugal except for short visits to the Spanish border towns – and was fortunate to survive his own tuberculosis crisis, which had required his internment in a Sanatorium in Lisbon.

Probably the young Régio was eager to enjoy greater freedom far from the close vigilance of his family, so he headed for boarding school with his younger brother, Julio, under the supervision of a prefect who also slept in their big dormitory and was entrusted with the mission of keeping a close eye on the two boys. Régio writes in his *Confession* that in order to learn what his boarding school years were like, one had to read *A Drop of Blood* (Régio 2001a, 78). One can imagine how difficult must have been to him to decide to write about these events. He had to let pass 27 years before he was able to publish the

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<sup>86</sup> - 'Eu porém queria ir para Coimbra! Sonhava com a minha Coimbra de António Nobre'.

account of the ordeal, that is, twenty more years than the seven years he had taken to put into novel form his Coimbra years, in *The Blind Man's Bluff* (1934).

Why such a lapse in time? Obviously the entire matter had obsessed him for a long time and he felt compelled to write about it, but he could not do so while the wound was still open:

This is a moment in which an intense, personal matter is transformed into a literary work. The two exist in a tense relationship with each other, one threatening to overcome the other (Ilett 2006, 78).

One may conclude that, as with Rilke,

The literary theme of the boarding school proves too close for [him], both because of the similarity to his own experiences and the danger of being engulfed in the process of depicting it (Ilett 2006, 79).

The climax of the narrative is when Adélio is bleeding from his head and, for a moment, Lelito believes that he has become a killer. Losing his previous state of innocence (of non-killing, Latin *in+nocens*), he finds out that he, too, is capable of aggression, of wounding, of lying and of damaging (since in the succession of events that follows he deceives and dissimulates his intentions) and in that sense *A Drop of Blood* is also in itself a long confession belonging to the Catholic tradition of confessional literature that is chiefly based on guilt, shame and repentance.





**Figure 8: Bernardo Marques depiction of the first scene of *A Drop of Blood***

*Illustration for the first edition, 1945: Lelito in seated and reading in the schoolyard bench under the lindens, when prefect Barroso arrives to bully him.*

### *Régio's perceptions of 'other spaces'*

As has already been mentioned in Chapter 2, in the schoolboy novel the schoolyard episodes and those in other non-learning areas, such as the refectory, the dormitory and the toilets, are focal settings in the plot that take prominence at the expense of the study room, the classroom, the gymnasium and other learning spaces. These pedagogic spaces, proper, may, in turn, figure in a more noticeable way in the school short story (as in the opening sentence of Rilke's *Die Turnstunde* (1902): '*In der Militärschule zu Sankt Severin. Turnsaal*'). This may point to the fact that in the novels' extended narratives the recreational times and activities are, psychologically, the most significant moments of school life.

All these ‘layers of allotopia’ in a space that is already ‘other’ (see Chapter 3) are overcharged with meaning: the refectory represents shared conviviality, the dormitory, shared intimacy, the gym class forced exposure and the toilets the secret refuge. Raúl Brandão reminds

...the darkness of the dormitory, the greasy smell of the refectory, the study rooms full of ink stains, the charming refuge of the toilets where the pupils went to smoke, sticking their heads into the holes to prevent the smell from being detected by the prefects (Brandão 1999, 179).<sup>87</sup>

As for the sport fields, although in Brazil football was of paramount importance to most young men, in Portuguese schools matches and sports did not assume the prominence they had in the English educational system, namely in the elite ‘public schools’ (in the UK now called ‘independent schools’). However, the gym class, a space of risk, exposure and possible ridicule, was a noted place of danger (see Rilke 1902).

#### *Lelito’s rituals of initiation at Colégio*

The status of Lelito as a poet, a reader of poetry and admirer of famous poets makes him an immediate target for derision by his fellow pupils, as Brandão had warned (2000, 122), see Chapter 6. Poetry was, or is, considered unmanly, in spite of the fact many great poets of the past having been notable men of action and even, like Camões, Garrett and so many others, soldiers and adventurers. The lyrical mode in literature is concerned with publicly expressing inner feelings, thus conflicting with the ideal of repressing emotions, masculine self-restraint and the social presumption of the male’s ‘emotional deficit’: ‘Moderation, self-restraint and self-control all shaped the dimensions of masculinity...’ (Neal 2008, 58).

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<sup>87</sup> - ‘Fiquei com uma impressão de negrume, que nunca mais me passou, do dormitório, do refeitório a cheirar a gordura, das salas de estudo cheias de tinta, do refúgio cheio de encanto das retretes, onde os mais velhos iam fumar metendo a cabeça no buraco, para os prefectos não sentirem o fumo. Fiquei transido. Há quem tenha saudades do colégio: eu sonho às vezes com ele e acordo sempre passado de terror...’.

In fact, there is no emotional deficit in boys or men. The problem lies in a cultural deficit in the *expression* of these emotions, at least in certain societies. It is expression that tends to be highly restrictive, excluding sentimentalism and sensitivity, and Régio, feeling himself at odds with that cold and careless pattern of behaviour, went as far as to claim that in his youth he was ‘hysteric’.

Fiction is a suitable escape from reality making the boy reader of poetry uncomfortable with the different types of boisterous boys and unable to fit into a micro-society ruled by fear, conformity, brutality and the strong power relations that drive the school group:

It doesn't make your life good to sit down at recess and read rather than play... (Wilkins 2009, 349).

Goffman uses the concept of the moral career and debasement to render the humiliation felt by the newcomer, where nakedness, as a symbolic renunciation both of the past life and of any possible protection, and the willingness to assume a new identity, is featured in *A Drop of Blood* as the public exposure of Lelito’s genitalia:

Upon entrance [the newcomer...] begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified. He begins some radical shifts in his moral career (Goffman 1961,14).

The threshold is the initiation ceremony when the newcomer is made similar to those who are already in:

Admission procedures and obedience tests may be elaborated into a form of initiation that has been called ‘the welcome’, where staff or inmates, or both, go out of their way to give the recruit a clear notion of his plight. As part of this rite of passage he may be called by a term such as ‘fish’ or ‘swab’, which tells him that he is merely an inmate, and, what is more, that he has a special low status even in this low group. (...) The admission procedure can be characterized as a leaving off and taking on, with the midpoint marked by physical nakedness (Goffman 1961, 18).

The boys in *A Drop of Blood* receive nicknames which are imposed on them and the use of the full name is reserved for admonishment by the school authorities:

Perhaps the most important of [the possessions he is dispossessed of] is (...) one's full name; whatever one is thereafter called, loss of one's name can be a great curtailment of the self.

School beatings are likewise intended to make the pupils 'feel that they are in an environment that does not guarantee their physical integrity' (Goffman 1961, 21). Ultimately that sense of being in need, of non-safety, is intended to make them accept and rely on the repressive authorities as the 'lesser evil'.

Finally, vigilance as Goffman mentions it,

These beds must be frequently inspected by the Abbot (Goffman 1961, 19).

is perfected by the confession, the painful stripping bare of the soul, an important mechanism for power to assert its way. It assumes a paramount importance in the plot of Simões' *Boarding School* and, though absent in *A Drop of Blood*, was nevertheless important to Régio because, at the beginning of his *Confession of a Religious Man*, he describes one awkward instance of it, when still a young boy, as being an extreme humiliation. The exposure of something that was nothing more than an abuse of his ignorance and innocence turns into the recognition of shame, guilt and acceptance of correction.

### *'Fags' and Prefects*

It should be mentioned that in Portugal, and consequently in Régio's *A Drop of Blood*, prefects are substantially different school roles from those found in the British system and novels. In the English Public School, prefects, who were also called 'monitors' and 'praepostors', were senior boys who acted like bosses to 'fags', their unpaid servants, that

is, junior boys to whom all menial tasks were allotted (Nash 1961). ‘Fags’ were as much aristocrats as prefects but they had to learn first to obey before they could become rulers during their last years at school (the sixth form) and, later, in the administration of the Empire. This system of age classes being led by an older boy followed the *agogic* Spartan tradition and this influence by the classics in British nineteenth-century public schools may have played some part, also, in the introduction of team sports, reminiscent of the Spartan *agoge*.

The prefect-fagging system evolved for two main reasons: the absence of the masters from the dormitories in spite of the need for discipline in these unruly spaces and the commanding drive of aristocrat pupils, who could take a share in the overseeing of the schools, have personal servants as was their wont and inflict punishments, sometimes sadistic, in their training to becoming colonial masters. The system was criticized every now and then in different echelons of power and in the press but, remarkably survived for centuries, under different guises, until it was abolished in English schools in the 1980s.

Fagging was designed to sell protection to youngsters but instead was sometimes very close to bullying. The many small tasks imposed on small boys provided abundant opportunities for delay or failure, so punishment was always at hand, sometimes in the form of flogging. Masters were not able to protect the weaker and younger because a code of silence applied among the pupils and the fear of even harsher treatment was always present if complaints were voiced. This rule of silence over denouncing others, which was ever-present in jails and other close-knit microsocieties, such as sects, applied also to the voicing of emotions and feelings, especially fear. In *Internato*, Gaspar Simões depicts instances of these netherworld rules, insisting on the idea that silence is at the core of male identity; what you say makes you a boy and what you choose be silent about turns you into a man.

In the English system adults were not accepted in the pupils' dormitories, which were the only space that the boys ruled by themselves. Contrarily, in the Portuguese and Brazilian system, an adult had always to be present as a 'vigilant' and so fagging never existed there.

### *Pairing boys*

With or without fagging, the protective bond between a senior and a junior pupil was universal:

Take care with the Headmaster. When you least expect it, he puts you in discipline. And one of the prefects is a bastard. The boys are great, of course. But you will need the protecting wing of a bold lad cast over you, for your protection. That is the most important: protection (Namora 1990, 119).<sup>88</sup>

According to Arnold's system, friendship, or sublimated love would lead the stronger to assume fatherly and responsible, protective duties. There were a number of ways of acquiring or selling protection. Boys of the creative and intellectual type, who were always at risk of being bullied, could help another fellow, who was manly and athletic, to focus more on studying and on reading (Hughes 1957, Mann 1903). They could have a softening influence over the other's tempestuous and aggressive leanings and these relationships could be established even among two contrasting boys in the same age group.

The bond between Lelito and Pedro Sarapintado has something to do with this trading of protection but it goes much further. It is a bond between two characters who are mutually attracted and, emotionally, it proves more powerful than the one Lelito establishes

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<sup>88</sup> - 'Acautela-te com o diretor. Quando menos o esperas, põe-te a pão e laranjas. E um dos prefeitos é sacrista. A malta, claro, fixe. O que precisas é da asa de um matulão, que te defenda as canelas. É o mais importante: um tipo que proteja'.

with the more like-minded Olegário. Sometimes the relationship would arise from the infatuation of the younger/weaker one and his desire to be like his admired idol:

[Tonio] loved him (...) because he saw him as his own counterpart and opposite in all respects, (...) a first-class rider and gymnast and swimmer who enjoyed universal popularity (...) ladies and gentlemen stopped him in the street... (Mann 1999, 5).

Tonio does not recognise any personal merit in Hans. It is his ‘blue eyes’ and ‘flaxen blond hair’ that put him in favour in the eyes of mankind and though ‘he made no attempt to become like Hans Hansen’ he does venture to make Hans Hansen like him, through the failed attempt to share his own literary tastes. The truth is that if Hans Hansen were like him he wouldn’t love him at all. His love for the beauty of Hans is as much a love of beauty itself as the result of self-rejection.

### *The mark of Cain*

Régio’s generation was the last for which religion was a major cultural divider, either as a presence in or as an absence from the lives of people. In his *Confession* there is a chapter titled ‘The loss of faith’ (II – A Ausência da Fé), an event Régio links to memories of actual confessions to priests; Tolstoy, too, in his own *Confession* (1884), had written a chapter about the same loss:

I was baptized and educated in the Orthodox Christian faith. Even as a child and throughout my adolescence and youth I was schooled in the Orthodox beliefs. But when, at the age of eighteen, I left my second year of studies at the university, I had lost all belief in what I had been taught. Judging from what I can remember, I never really had a serious belief. I simply trusted in what I had been taught and in the things my elders adhered to. But even this trust was very shaky (Tolstoy 1983, 13).

The life journey of both writers was to turn into a quest for reconnection to the divine – and that was their originality. Memoirs and autobiographies in which the loss of

faith is featured kept being written for long after Tolstoy's or Régio's *Confession*, since, after all, that was a common event:

My break with faith occurred in me as it did and still does among people of our social and cultural type; Thus it has happened and continues to happen, I believe, with the great majority of people. I am referring to people of our social and cultural type, people who are honest with themselves (Tolstoy 1983, 14; 16).

But Tolstoy followed his narrative by words Régio could definitely call his owns:

I ceased to believe in what had been instilled in me since childhood, yet I did believe in something, though I could not say what. I even believed in God – or rather I did not deny God-but what kind of God I could not say (Tolstoy 1983, 16).

Even if such impoverishment 'has happened and continues to happen', none of the narratives written in Portuguese literature after Régio was ever to display that same determination to recover at whatever cost what had been so unfortunately lost.

The presence/absence of the sacred was at the core of the major cultural and spiritual crisis of pre-revolutionary Russia, as much as at the time of angst and perplexity in the 1930's, when the individual was losing space for oppressive mass movements, authoritarian subjugation and democratic universalisation and was threatened by 'the masses, misled today by irresponsible concepts both of freedom and of authority'<sup>89</sup> (Jorge de Sena, *apud* Santos 2013, 24). The *presença* literary school heralded the rebirth of the individual and restored the importance of personal experience and of the uniqueness of the individual worldview, moreover that of the artist, resulting from the intersection of character with circumstance. So, it had to honour the autobiographical narrative, pervasive in presencist poetry, fiction and drama.

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<sup>89</sup> - '...nas massas possessas, hoje, de irresponsáveis conceitos quer de liberdade quer de autoridade'.



Régio elaborated on a type of ‘chosen ones’ that were those elected to suffer. In this ‘anti-salvation’ narrative, he named them the ‘different’ or the ‘marked ones’. Régio calls these sort of characters ‘difficult men’, or complex personalities – they are not easily defined or categorized and certainly not reducible to a couple of traits because their most striking features are intricacy and density. They suffer for mankind, in a sort of *imitation of Christ*. Each one of them is

...the man set apart from the masses as a gloomy exception, marked in the community as the representative of ‘*Geist*’ and ‘*Kunst*’ and as such altogether dependent on his own performance and accomplishment, longed to be relieved from the curse resting upon him (Burkhard 1928, 566).

‘Marked men’ were those bound to be hurt, since they will fail in worldly accomplishments, social expectations and group adjustment, as in the case of King Alphonso VI of Portugal:

Those men marked by God never become lions on Earth; nor roosters, nor champion horses, nor premium greyhounds! They are miserable, do you understand? They are truly miserable. Even if they ignore it, if they don’t show it, or nobody sees it... (Régio 2005a, 166).<sup>90</sup>

But sometimes they do show it, as in Régio’s Prince Leonel character from *The Prince with Donkey Ears* (1942). In this case, the ‘difference’ of Leonel is made visible by a mark, which is most spectacular, his donkey ears that are a sign of imperfection and maladjustment and is a call for protection as the Biblical stamp:

...and so God places a mark on Cain for protection (*Gen.* 4:14).

The ‘Mark of Cain’ was designed to indicate to the world Cain’s divinely protected status and was not, as is commonly thought, a mark of low status (Carroll 1977, 670). All

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<sup>90</sup> - ‘Os homens que Deus marca nunca chegam a ser leões na Terra; nem galos pimpões, nem cavalos de corridas, nem galgos de luxo! São miseráveis, entendes? Verdaderamente miseráveis. Nem que o não saibam, o não mostrem, o não veja ninguém...’.

Régio's main characters bear some type of mark and, reminiscent of that belonging to Régio himself, the 'archiprotagonist' of all his narratives, these characters affirm their difference and individuality and all have stopped short of becoming adults, i.e., fathers.

They are childless and childlike; tormented and perennial adolescents who have never quite made their way to accomplished *manliness*, like King Sebastian of Portugal, who inspired Régio's play *King Sebastian* in 1948:

A fine young man, handsome, brave... marked with fire by Destiny  
(Régio 2005b, 71).<sup>91</sup>

This type of young man is looking for a father figure. For instance, the paternal narrative embedded in Régio's *A Drop of Blood* includes Lelito lending to his much-admired colleague, Pedro Sarapintado, some features of Régio's own father, such as cold blooded, self-control and... staging plays. Sociable and dominant Pedro is not only an esteemed, stronger boy (a Tom Brown to an Arthur/Lelito) but, also, a full father figure to his protégé, who turns to him for attention, protection and advice. Even when Pedro humiliates Lelito, these humiliations are taken by him as something ultimately beneficial and he accepts them as legitimate teasing or punishment from a father.

### *The psychic Masochism of José Régio*

Although Régio was an author who spoke in his *Diary* about his own sexual life with a candidness and sincerity that, even today, disarms his reader, he was also among those whose sexual life remains largely unknown. He never got married. He was a solitary, who, in some passages of his oeuvre, shows discomfort and dissatisfaction with sexual urges. During his adolescence all his first contacts with the opposite sex were with prostitutes to avoid violating the virginity of bourgeois girls. Consequently, it was difficult to hold sex in

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<sup>91</sup> - 'Um homem jovem, formoso, valente... marcado a fogo pelo Destino'.

high consideration or see it as something respectable. To be esteemed, women needed to be the opposite of lovers. They had to belong to the non-sexual categories of mothers, virgins or, even better, immaculate virgin-mothers, as in Régio's play *Benilde or the Virgin-Mother* (1947), which he wrote in the year of his mother's death in celebration of mystical motherhood.

Régio longed for solitude and isolation not only in order to build his body of work (an option that was chosen by a number of other writers, notably Hermann Hesse in Montagnola, Tecino), but perhaps, even more, to suffer more intensely, for he knew that blood and art go hand in hand:

Certainly that dishonour, misery, infamy, disgrace, renunciation, pain, – muddy sources that inspired so many masterworks (...) if by one side [they] cannot be redeemed but by chanting themselves and being adorned with aureoles, even if sinister, (...) by another, they provide some advantages, even if bought at an unfair price... (Régio 1964, 141).<sup>92</sup>

Masochistic tendencies are present in narratives by prominent Portuguese authors. Psychic masochism, which is alien to sexual masochism is traceable to, besides José Régio, Bernardim Ribeiro, Uriel da Costa, Mariana Alcoforado (see Aguiar 1924) and Florbela Espanca.

Régio's tendency towards melancholy or what might be called sub-clinical depression originated in a schizoid split of personality, a hesitation between the 'devilish and the angelic' that is so Nietzschean and Gidean too.

To this split, another was added: that of the two opposite temperaments he was heir to, his father's — simple, issueless, well-balanced and, at times, careless — and the unbalanced, hysterical nature of his mother's anxieties, fears and maladjustments, with their

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<sup>92</sup> - 'O certo é que a desonra, a miséria, a infâmia, a desgraça, a renúncia, a dor – fontes inspiradoras, embora turvas, de muitas obras-primas (...) por um lado não têm outro meio de se redimirem senão cantando-se e nimbando-se elas próprias nem que de sinistras auréolas (...), por outro lado têm, também, as suas *vantagens*, aliás compradas caro...?'

overemotional sentimentality and syrupy manifestations. He constantly felt the struggle inside him of these two tendencies.

### *Régio versus Nietzsche*

So extensive was Nietzsche's influence over Régio that Jorge de Sena called him 'the Nietzsche of Portalegre' (Sena / Castilho 1981, 101). In a way their oeuvres follow similar lines: both were poets (Nietzsche wrote poems and prose poems such as *Zarathustra*); both paid close attention to myths, old and new; and both wrote autobiographies, reviewed contemporary literature and thought, engaged in polemics and had an interest in the theatre (and music for Nietzsche). Like Nietzsche, Régio suffered from dreadful headaches, hypochondria and a variable disposition (E. Lisboa 1986, 79) that made social life very difficult for them both. Both had attended boarding school. And Régio recognized in Nietzsche strong affinities of character and ideas: the same melancholic fate of being at odds with their own times, pronounced mystical tendencies, an aristocratic taste for solitude and disdain for the herd; paying homage to the lone soul of Engadine, he opened his second book of poetry, *Biografia* (1929), with an epigraph from Nietzsche: '*Man muß Flügel haben, wenn man den Abgrund liebt*'.<sup>93</sup> But what really set them most apart from other thinkers was the intensity and passion of their common obsession with religious matters.

What Régio could not accept was that Nietzsche, having rightly noticed God's absence from the world through the mouth of Zarathustra, had then come, especially in his late period, to overtly rejoice over His proclaimed death. So Régio engaged in a critical dialogue with Nietzsche in his *Confession*, where he replies to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's

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<sup>93</sup> - 'Quando se ama o abismo, é preciso ter asas'; a verse from 'Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!', first published in *Zarathustra* part IV, then in *Dionysus-Dithyramben*.

*Künstlersautobiographie*, and refutes *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche's manifesto for the non-believer, both from 1888.

Régio's project was no small task since he aimed at a fusion of his own *Künstlersautobiographie* with a reply to *The Antichrist*. He refers explicitly to Nietzsche's views in a large number of instances in his *Confession* and on many other pages he has his interlocutor in mind without naming him. He agrees with Nietzsche that Jesus was not divine and, like Nietzsche, tries to measure himself against such a human standard. But, where Nietzsche seems to despise Jesus, Régio praises the Nazarene, displaying a fraternal feeling and a companionship with Jesus, together with a mixed feeling of identification with/rejection of Nietzsche.

As Régio explains throughout his *Confession*, both he and Nietzsche are a mix of the 'religious man' and the 'aesthetic man' in Spranger's (1928) famous six psychological types (aesthetic – looking for sensations –, religious – longing to unite with the transcendent –, theoretical – looking for knowledge –, economic – focused on usefulness –, social – driven towards the collective – and political – possessing will power). In the difficult combination of these two components lies the inner drama of Régio (and Nietzsche) where one prevails and one must give way to the other? Leaving unanswered the question of Nietzsche's prevailing character type, finally, after some hesitation, he chooses the religious, mystical type, as the dominant in his own personality. So the *Confession* is that of a 'religious man', not of an artist. He enunciates this longing for fusion with God, until he becomes one with the Father:

My God? When I will be You? (Régio 1956, 157).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> - 'Meu Deus!, quando serei Tu?'

The French self-narrative, due to the secular practices of the Catholic confession, was marked by a peculiar attraction for ‘true’ self-exposure that oscillated between the extremes of a deep interiorized sense of shame and humiliation with obvious masochistic leanings and, conversely, a taste for the shocking and scandal that sprang from an exhibitionist drive. Unlike Mishima’s *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), Régio did not adopt a confessional tone for his boarding school novel because he had planned to write his separate *Confession of a Religious Man*, which was to become his most philosophical work but was only published posthumously in 1971.

*Régio’s night walk in the gardens of Desire*

‘When will you understand, superficial, light man, that I am Desire and Desire desires everything?’ (Moravia 1971, 229).

Desire is broader than sex or love and precedes and supersedes physical attraction or any emotional or erotic feelings. Desire (Gr. *thelos*) is the will, the wish, the core and the nucleus of the Self. It is what makes beings individual, as the Monothelite controversy in Christian theology assumed clearly: the innermost unity of the subject is its own will. And is also what is at the core and foundation of any narrative, in fact of every human speech: ‘At the origin of Narrative, desire’ (Barthes 2002, 88).

If, like Moravia says, Desire desires everything, it becomes an important topic in Literature when it concerns the male desire for malehood and for its presence in other males, and may take the form of emulation, rivalry and association – friendship. Here we are not concerned for the rivalry, which is another expression of Desire (to possess what the rival owns, until the annihilation of the rival(ry)). We will be dealing with the association impulse, under the name of ‘friendship’. The subject of male friendships, popular at all times and in all literary genres, was presented in a series of mythical and historical

paradigms of bonding – Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Achilles and Patroclus, David and Jonathan, Alexander and Hephaestion, Galaaz and Parsifal, Roland and Oliver; followed, in Portuguese literature, by the emotional pairing of writers such as Queiroz and João Penha, Queiroz and the Count of Resende and, to a certain extent, Queiroz and Ramalho; Cesário Verde and Silva Pinto; António Nobre and Alberto d’Oliveira; Fernando Pessoa and Mário de Sá-Carneiro; – prompts the question of its limits. Where does friendship start and where does it end? Should it include any intimacy other than psychic? Such questions have haunted a number of thinkers and writers since antiquity. To the Ancients, love (eros) was a part of friendship (*philia*), according to the theory of friendship enunciated, among others, by Plutarch, and which encompassed four instances:

...there are four sorts of friendships, according to the determination of the ancients,—the first, say they, is spontaneous [comradeship], the next is that of kindred and relations [blood], the third is that of associates and acquaintances [hospitality], and the last is that of lovers (Plutarch, *Amatorius*, 16).<sup>95</sup>

Even if, to the ancients, friendship did not exclude romance and passion, Plutarch is keen on warning about the dangerous nature of love to friends:

– if three of these have their several tutelary Deities, under the names of *the patron of friendship* [comradeship], *the patron of hospitality*, and *he who knits affection between those of the same race and family*; while only amorous affection, as if it were unhallowed and under interdiction, is left without any guardian or protector, [being] indeed [the one] that requires the greatest care and command above all the rest? (Plutarch, *ibidem*).

What is noticeable here is that all sorts of *philia* come from desire: desire for company, for protection, for benefit and for union.

What position did Régio take in this debate? *A Drop of Blood* is grounded in the theory of adolescence, enunciated by Spranger in a systematic way, in his *The Psychology of Youth* (1924), as being the lifespan when sexual desires are severed from affective

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<sup>95</sup> - On this generous categorization of *philia* relationships see Konstan 1997, esp. 2-3.

attachments. The maturity of adult age arrives with the harmonious combination of both dimensions. When this does not happen, the youth is stranded in a perennial state of immaturity, platonically loving some unattainable object, while falling deeply into abject behaviour with another, generally by resorting to prostitution.

The terms of this equation can be made more complex by issues of sexual orientation: the boy who idolizes a girl who is sexually inaccessible, at the same time looks for sexual partners among the same sex; these are generally younger and submissive so that they do not stand comparison with the idealised girl. On the other hand, he can have an inflamed passion for a 'best friend', a romance that all sorts of taboos (including social) prevents him from living fully, and so he looks for sexual gratification with female prostitutes and other women he will not love, so that he is not betraying the sacred feelings for his loved one. It is not uncommon that boys who are mutually in love together visit prostitutes or bordellos and on those occasions they admire the bodies and performance of each other and get to touch each other's bodies, all without having a sexual relationship that both would definitely avoid as posing a threat to their mutual good feelings.

This complex situation is present in *A Drop of Blood*. Lelito refuses Adélio, among other reasons (unpleasant looks and the past abuse of Olegário) principally because Pedro Sarapintado enchants and fascinates him and he wants to keep this special friendship as unpolluted as possible. At the moment of his running away from school, Lelito feels sorry that he will be parted from the consolation he was getting from this bond (the classic pairing of the intellectual and introverted with the winner type) and so he decides to lose his virginity with a filthy woman he finds in the red light district of the old town. At the same time he both betrays and he does not. He has physical intimacy with another person but leaves this relationship untouched because he cannot have any thoughts other than pity for such a degraded person. Since he has to renounce someone he respects and loves, he can



only have sex with someone with whom he is emotionally uncommitted. This solution suits his masochism since, while debasing himself by having mercenary sex, he keeps untouched a romantic, impossible attachment and thus he deepens his emotional split.

This pattern of sexual initiation was the most common then: Lelito, as most boys of his age, doesn't have any sexual mentoring, namely from his father. Fathers and families paid little if any attention to the sexual misadventures of sons. Mothers, obviously, had to strictly stay away, as we saw in Chapter 4. To this matter, bourgeois families have been passing from 8 to 80. Nowa

After the initial encounter with the prostitute in the author's life, the story proceeds throughout his poetry: the poet who is the subject in Régio's poetry becomes addicted to the sex trade. In more, later instances he depicts encounters with prostitutes, notably in a poem he was to publish in *A Chaga do Lado* (1954), entitled 'Encontro Noturno' 'Night encounter'. It ends like this:

Poor woman, you will have a friend for a couple of hours,  
While me, I will keep entire my solitude.<sup>96</sup>

This could be the epitaph for his never fulfilled love life. He remained in solitude. His passions, whatever they may have been, were kept secret though his encounters with female prostitutes were well known to the public.

Another instance of Régio's troubled split is depicted in terms of the angelic ideal that Gaspar Simões illustrated so well in his novel *Sincere Friends*. The blondish slim and elegant 15-year-old protagonist (p. 17), at a certain point in the narrative, is confronted by the misery of sex and reacts in shame:

I could never imagine that what people were saying was true. I thought the world was so different! What a dreadful thing to imagine that all men and all women... My father with my mother!... Yes, doctor, even my

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<sup>96</sup> - 'Terás, pobre mulher, por umas horas, um amigo, / Embora eu continue solitário'.

father and my mother! It is dreadful! It is monstrous! (Simões 1962, 78-79).<sup>97</sup>

As a remnant of Augustinian ideas on original sin, the boy charges his parents with offending his decorum by the act from which he was born. He craves for a state of asexuality because of his initial repugnance at the corporeal urge for mating and sharing bodies, which seems to hurt his individualistic and solitary propensities. In his revolt he shows that he, too, is doomed to the same abject state.

In *Lysias*, Plato alluded to the chaste, sexually neutral ideal. However, the most powerful metaphor for the sexually-freed boy comes from Persian religion. The ideal of angelism, which was later to be embodied in the Persian figure of the ‘angel’ and the important role he was to take, from his timid appearances in Pharisaic Judaism until being raised to a prominent stand in Christian, Manichaean and Islamic theologies and art, overriding guardian spirits, genii and other non-Christian figures, was the intermediary between the human and the divine realms. A glimpse of them was like a glimpse of heaven, according to the theological worshiping of male youth, and though angels were sexually non-performing entities, ambiguous in appearance and nature – being neither human nor divine, neither fully corporeal nor purely spiritual – they were unambiguously male according to their onomastic. They personified and sublimated the pure, exquisitely beautiful and dubiously masculine youngster and their iconography was inspired by post-pubescent boys who were seen like a kind of their own, neither men nor women, neither children nor adults, but with the potential to perform any possible role, from which, however, they had to abstain.

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<sup>97</sup> - ‘Nunca imaginei que fosse verdade o que ouvia dizer. Julgava o mundo tão diferente! Que horror pensar que todos os homens e todas as mulheres... O meu pai e a minha mãe!... Sim, senhor doutor, até o meu pai e a minha mãe! É horrível! É monstruoso!’.

If they did not, they would ‘fall’ – i.e., would turn devilish and thus, in that condition of abject materiality, they would perform any sexual act and be top or bottom, penetrator or penetrated and that is the exact meaning of the names the devils were called: *incubus* (penetrator) and *succubus* (he who lies underneath). These sexual roles were interchangeable. In fact, the incubus vs. succubus difference is not based on gender identity since both words are *masculine in gender* but in a functional opposition alien to the identification of devils as ‘male’ or ‘female’, that is why the personal names of the devils were all masculine too.

The angelic condition has been seen, at least from Christian times onwards, as the *ideal* condition for the proper boy. He should charm the world with his exquisite prettiness that is half-human, half-heavenly but he must be unattainable and incorruptible, as much as the husband featured in Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) hoped that his wife could have remained so. These were, in short, the main tenets of the angelic ideal that Régio alludes to in some of his poems: to resist debasement, to keep one’s body and soul pure, in the same way as Lelito resists Adélio. The poetic voice of the subject in Régio’s poetry acknowledges his angelic potential but also his demonic urges, like poet António Nobre before him: ‘(I was) an angel, the Devil, the *crazy one*’ (1921, 12).<sup>98</sup> Thus, Régio’s views on Desire blend his acknowledged demonic-angelism combined with Platonic purity and Neoplatonic spiritualistic and anti-corporeal views: to him, the supreme manifestation of Desire is a longing for the immaterial, incorporeal Beloved One, God – whom he calls ‘...lover or father...’.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> - ‘...um anjo, o Diabo, o *lua*’.

<sup>99</sup> - ‘Chamar-Te amante ou pai...’ (Régio 1929); ‘the Lord, the Father, the friend or all-powerful foe, the capricious supreme Lover...’ – ‘o Senhor, o Pai, o Amigo ou Inimigo todo-poderoso, o caprichoso Amante Supremo’ – (Régio 2001, 90); ‘the father and the lover’ - ‘o pai e o amante’ – (Régio 2001, 123).

## Chapter 9: Conclusions

The question of boarding is seen by novelists such as Walpole, who had a positive appreciation of this educational model, as freeing the boarder from family constrictions and emancipating him from parental interference. Other writers may see it as the exchanging of one prison for another, while to Régio (1945) and Simões (1946) a big share of the boarding ordeal is homesickness, where ‘home’ stands for a mythical paradise lost at the end of infancy.

While some writers preferred to concentrate on the school as an oppressive micro-society with its tyrannical prefects, masters and headmaster, a despotism relieved only by the friendships between pupils, as in some English boarding school novels and also in Peyrefitte (1944) and Simões (1946), another group of novelists resented more the underground society of boys left to ‘naturally’ (perhaps ‘savagely’) replicate domination, discipline and punishment among themselves and by themselves (Hughes 1857, Régio 1945).

The boarding experience was a remarkable challenge and failure to cope with it could point to anti-social tendencies from early youth, melancholic and evasive leanings, and a dissatisfaction with the self – all the mark of the true artist anyway. The experience was seen as too radical and too drastic and the mild compromise of half-education in day schools has prevailed, for now. This seems to be a consequence of massification with more people being educated with a lesser ‘dose’ of education. As for the schooled subject, some boys better fit boarding, others day schools and even others home-schooling, although, today as in the past, they are seldom in the situation of deciding for themselves.

Lelito would probably have better fitted into an *artistically orientated* day school or perhaps even into some sort of home schooling. Régio was a man with a rare relationship

with ‘home’ and an obsessive, radical and all-pervading feeling of attachment to his roots and past. When he was placed in Portalegre, he even thought of suicide, as he recounts in his famous ‘Toada de Portalegre’ (*Fado*, 1941), because the place was so distant and different from home. Later he succeeded in adapting to the southern milieu but after retirement he was to return to the paternal nest. This represents the anxiety of the soul: always feeling far from home, knowing it does not belong to this world and desperately seeking re-union with God; the return to the House of the Father – the celestial abode which is the archetype of the terrestrial *Old House*. What in Nobre was a powerful death drive,<sup>100</sup> in Régio becomes turned into the painful longing for the Return.

Over his bed in the room where Régio died there was the image of the Saint of his name, St. Joseph, the elusive father, the father non-father, an ambiguity present in his life. Not only had Régio fathered a child who died at birth, making of him a father non-father but he also became a father figure to an entire generation of young poets and writers, perhaps even more so to those who did not see him as their father or were trying to ‘kill the father’ by opposing his impressive literary legacy and his philosophy of art. One literary critic later wrote that ‘he was the light of his generation’ (Vasconcelos 1987, 23).<sup>101</sup>

Régio’s post-school life, solitary and individualistic as it was to be, for he never married nor lived with another person and only sought occasional, detached encounters with prostitutes, was not the result of his running away from school but, rather, the opposite. He ran away because, with frightening acuteness, he perceived and scrutinized mankind too well. He was too sensitive to human imperfection, both his own and others’, and he most feared becoming *vulgar, ordinary, cynical, cruel*, in the way he found others to

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<sup>100</sup> - ‘...an irresistible death drive’. Queirós 2008, 23.

<sup>101</sup> - ‘foi luz da sua geração’.

be. He was forever attached to the pristine purity of his past amidst his religious, small town family, out of which he made a personal myth.

He showed some uneasiness and disquiet at his own nonconformity with the many restrictions on his social life and, most of all, for having lost his childhood pristine faith. Not being able, chronologically, to return to that state of thrust and confidence in others, he spent most of his life returning to it in the form of poems, plays and novels and, refusing categorically confinement in a hospital, he went back to the Old House to die. In so doing he completed a perfect (i.e., *divine*) cycle: the archetypal return of the Soul to the Father, to the House of the Father, at the end of the tribulations of his incarnation.

#### *Régio's stand on Portuguese culture*

The place of Régio's oeuvre in Portuguese culture is complex. He is not, and will never be, an author for the masses; – instead, he is idolized by a section of the public that has mature and select tastes. Neither is he an author for the young because the problems he addresses are not today's problems and schools, as well as other institutions, have undergone deep transformations. *Presença*, in its heyday conveyed a potentially subversive message to the literature of the twenties and thirties but Régio became more conservative in latter years when the magazine was converted into a sort of institution and was attacked by envious newcomers. He was not afraid to be revolutionary in some questions and in others a reactionary, as he himself admitted on a number of occasions. On the other hand, even though the revival of his Centennial Year (2001) passed long ago and he is now somewhat out of the limelight, today, Régio remains a brand name in Portuguese culture: the street where he lived has been renamed after him, as have other streets and schools nationwide. There is even an airplane bearing his name in the fleet of the Portuguese flag carrier, TAP.

Régio remained faithful to his lifelong commitment to literature and to the exploration of its almost limitless possibilities to inquire human experience.

Religiously-orientated people keep engaging with Régio's central concern with the relationship between Man and God, even though he was eminently heretical in his formulation of this quest, assuming in his time, when the Church still had a profound influence over Portuguese society, the tendency for a personal mystical bond with the transcendent through religion and art alike, over more institutionalized and social forms of religious expression. He was never ready or willing to renounce the numinous. Here, too, the contemporary religious experience strives to find personal and creative ways of reconvening with the divine, in Portugal as much as elsewhere, as in NZ (Gilling 1999), so a religious reading of Régio's oeuvre will probably remain popular.

Aesthetically orientated people are charmed by his firm command of rhythm and musicality evident when reading some of his poems in the original Portuguese.

His books remain in print 45 years after his death and his manuscripts, when sold at auction, reach a high price. Many early editions are highly sought-after collectors' items on the second-hand book market today and are hunted down by many fervent collectors. A simple dedicatory signed by Régio to an unknown person in one of these copies can multiply its value by ten times. In his hometown of Vila do Conde, his memory is evoked with respect, love and pride. His poetry is present in pop hits, in musicals and in movies because it is not hermetic, obscure or hard to recite and, indeed, many actors have made public recordings of his most famous poems, in both Portugal and Brazil. Literary critics cite his insights on Portuguese literature, recognising him as the subtle interpreter and fine-tuned critic of the national literary tradition and PhD students regularly study his oeuvre in Portugal and Brazil.

When Régio died, a Member of Parliament attended his funeral and the House paid solemn homage to his memory, celebrating ‘the glorious poet, the novelist of *The Old House*, the critic, the essayist, the pedagogue and the thinker’. One speaker said that whatever ‘his religious or political ideals might have been’ (because they were not those of the Government), the House acknowledged his love for the humble people and his passion for folk art and for other expressions of the *Volksgeist*, including both the mystical and the popular (*völkisch*) forms of poetry.<sup>102</sup>

Régio’s personality is easy to engage with. He was cautious in his judgements, moderate in his criticism, honest and nuanced in his arguments and never malicious to others in his personal interactions. At a time when prominent writers launched mutual vicious attacks, he became the target of many of them but he endured these unfair assaults without answering with bitterness but, on the contrary, winning his critics over with his sense of fair play and personal sympathy. In spite of being self-tortured, split and at odds with himself, he was tolerant, fair, kind and open-minded, and succeeded in being balanced towards his contemporaries, fitting the ideal of the harmonious *schöne Seele*.

Régio’s body of work has the potential to survive tastes and times, even though, or precisely because, it was well rooted in the moment of cultural crisis in which he lived; a crisis of identity for the Portuguese nation, torn between the traps of both Quixotic nationalism and foreign cultural colonization; a crisis of literature after the Modernist turmoil; a crisis of faith, in God and in Man alike, in a Godless era; and a crisis of values in the quick transition of what was, in many aspects, a traditional society to the current ‘post-modernity’.

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<sup>102</sup> - [largodoscorreios.wordpress.com/2013/04/22/jose-regio-dois-discursos-in-memoriám/](http://largodoscorreios.wordpress.com/2013/04/22/jose-regio-dois-discursos-in-memoriám/)



*The contribution of Régio's novel to the educational debate*

All schooling processes, in whatever historical time or society, are about *leaving home*. The fact that Lelito ultimately shows that he is not willing or prepared to leave home makes of him a complex subject for any schooling venture. And that challenge accounts for the originality of Régio's analysis of Lelito's complex personality in *A Drop of Blood* and makes this narrative worth studying from the literary, educational and philosophical perspective.

The story line is apparently simple. Lelito is forced to stay at boarding school while longing for his paternal home, so he takes refuge in poetry books to escape distress. He feels that he does not fit in with the other boys' turbulent atmosphere. Conflict arises with some groups and, especially, with the vicious Adélio. In the process, he tries his best to befriend Pedro, an athletic, strong and winner-like model, and accepts the friendship of Olegário, another would-be writer who admires and respects him. The climax is reached when Adélio makes indecent proposals to him. After resorting to physical aggression he repents when, following the physical confrontation, he sees a drop of blood (the book's title) oozing from his foe's head. He is disturbed by the thought that he might have killed him and, moreover, by the way evil has surfaced in him. He experiences a confused mixture of feelings: the sensation of having overreacted against Adélio; frustration over his impossible loving friendship for Pedro; disgust for the way the headmaster deals hypocritically with the issue; and revulsion for the opportunistic attacks by a disaffected prefect, whilst another one tries to defend him but shows to be too weak and submissive to turn events in Lelito's favour. As the only possible outcome, Lelito escapes one night, wanders in the poor quarter of the town and finds refuge with a matronly prostitute. After this unfortunate series of events he returns, almost moribund, to the Old House where he is sheltered by the old maids and his mother. His father is criticized for having sent him to the

school and the novel goes on to the next instalment, the second of a future tetralogy and, then, heptalogy: out of the boarding school, Lelito then tries to recover from his nervous breakdown and get ready to head off to college.

Beneath the apparent simplicity of the narrative there is a rich subtext on the emotional underworld of boys in general and those boarding during their school years in particular. It has been argued that boarding school novels are among the main sources for psychological investigation in this sphere, which has rich implications for educational studies.

The current research started by focussing on the variety of historical and cultural expressions of schooling and boarding, their historical elitist and welfare connections and their clash with current egalitarian, all-inclusive, anti-segregation, family-orientated (instead of society-orientated) educational paradigms. Secondly, it went on to discuss the nature of the *Bildungsroman* and why this category has been, in many instances, applied without rigour or accuracy and has been jumbled with the Youth novel and the Formative novel.

Next, this research moved on to inquiring what makes boarding schools 'special'. It proceeded from Foucault's conference about 'special places' and his insights on clashes between time/space dyads and power relations. The allotopic and 'achronian' nature of the 'holes' found in a given social fabric helped to illuminate why the boarding school myth was so powerful and appealing to a wide range of cultural expressions, from popular culture to the Modernist novel. To Foucault, power is a determinant in characterizing those different layers of time/space, the *chronotopes*. Foucault and others considered the audacious experiment of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century boarding school to be an example not only of complete education, but also of an utopian (better said 'protopian', since co-existing in a different space (allotopia) and time (allochronia) with other social realities) endeavour of

youth self-governance in secretive and hidden layers of time/space within the school – namely the dormitory at night or other spaces exclusive for pupils – adding meaning over meaning in places already overcharged with strong significations.

The boarding educational experiment generated the peculiar institution of fagging and the Arnoldian pairing of champions with frail boys. The potential for these bonding feelings was so high that educationalists did not hesitate to call them ‘love’: ‘It is a real love and often marked by the vital enthusiasm of love, and not just “marking time” while getting ready for love’ (Galloway 2009, 37). Much of this social (and sexual) engineering was perhaps inspired in the *mores* of Antiquity or in the camaraderie of customary monosexual *milieus*, such as the army, and was based on a philosophy of male friendship heralded by the most outspoken masculinist writers of the time, such as Kipling and Ortigão. It was also to feature conspicuously in novels by such writers as Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann, and it was a most seductive topic for educationalists of the time, like it is still today:

Male-male friendships may initially appear more superficial, but I believe this is probably a reflection of their subtlety. Boys are more likely to speak indirectly and abstractly (...) about shared interests (Bainbridge 2012, 28).

The masculinist 19<sup>th</sup> Century not only favoured boarding but also esteemed single-sex education as an even more imperative dogma. After some republican experiments of co-education were abandoned by the triumph of the New State of President Salazar, it remained undisputed until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal. Concepts like those of Clarke were at the core of mainstream conceptions of education:

Appropriate education of the two sexes, carried as far as possible, is a consummation most devoutly to be desired; identical education of the two sexes is a crime before God and humanity, that physiology protests against and that experience weeps over. (...) Identical education or identical co-education of the sexes defrauds one sex or the other, or perhaps both. (...) [A]ll this, that toughens a girl and makes a woman of

her, will emasculate a lad. (...) It would give a fair chance neither to a boy nor a girl. Of all compromises, such a physiological one is the worst. It cultivates mediocrity (...) [i]t emasculates boys, stunts girls; makes semi-eunuchs of one sex, and agenes of the other (Clarke 1884, 127-129).

Indeed, not much discussion on co-education was taking place. Educators agreed that it was better for boys to be more frank and authentic; in the presence of girls, they were considered to show off and pretend to be what they were not. As for boarding, to the masculinist thinkers and writers dependency on families and especially on their female members was judged to be highly detrimental to boys, so the apogee of the boarding school paradigm was hailed as the solution to foster the autonomy of the young male. Others, inside and outside this current opinion, became very critical of school altogether and contemplated other ways of departing from homely weakening by flirting with de-schooling and non-schooling discourses (Verne, Kipling, Hesse, etc.) through literary constructions that anticipated criticism and proposals and which were later enunciated by Ivan Illich and the libertarian educationalists. However, both complete education and non-education models were overwhelmed by the enforced supremacy of the day school, for reasons credited to both the increase in family interference in schooling matters and the added influence of mothers within families.

Around the 1960s, when this influence was winning its battle against boarding, single-sex education also came under attack and co-education, which had become fashionable in the Western World, started being imposed in Portugal from the outside. Again, this replacement happened without serious discussion among educators. It was based on moralistic claims, like those of Lapa (1947) and other 'progressive', most left-wing educators, that single-sex schooling and all-male environments, moreover in private spaces outside strict state control, triggered 'unnatural' passions, thus making it difficult to enforce bourgeois sexual normality upon the pupils. The fact that the boarding school subculture was mainstreaming and legitimating, or perhaps even propagating same sex

desire within the walls of those theoretically respectable institutions was a scandal to the advocates of the public, co-educational, egalitarian and day school models who indulged in the elaboration of the ‘horrors’ of the all-male dormitories, toilets, showers, rites of initiation in fraternities, etc. There was, towards boarding schools, as well as towards private schools, confessional schools, etc., a political and conceptual unease with the ‘difference’ or the ‘alternative’ paradigm that was being extended to the sexual as well, since to these critics of the sexuality segregated education ‘the fears concerning same sex desire [we]re connected to the idea of the dangers of sexual difference and otherness’, (Quinlivan 2002, 220) or simply said, to *the danger of otherness*.

It was another instance of the obsession with surveillance and control of behaviour that is embedded in the genetic code of all schooling attempts, as highlighted by Foucault (Chapter 3).

Even so, the currently predominant preference for ‘half-education’ that keeps the young under family control for an ever longer period has been considered controversial and has attracted criticism from those who accuse it of overlooking the psychosocial and evolutionary function of adolescence:

Striving from psychological autonomy from one’s parents is an essential (...) part of being a teenager. Over the course of adolescence, humans must extricate themselves from the complex bonds and dependencies they have established with their parents, and a degree of active, sometimes violent rejection is often part of this process (Bainbridge 2012, 27).

Clearly, the debates around single-sex education and around boarding are not closed and will continually reappear, since every solution is always provisional and subject to different fortunes across time, societies, places and cultures.

The research turned then to focus on the boarding school novel, which flourished at a time of the prevalence of the masculinist ideology in pedagogy, literature and the arts, either as an apology for the model, mostly by propagandists of the excellence of excellence

of the English schools, or by way of a critical voice and counter current, mainly in Germany and later in France.

We outlined the ideas of the movement called *presencism*, that José Régio launched and inspired in Portugal, since he was to be one critic of his own experience. When he took on the task of writing his boarding schoolboy novel the institution displayed some wear, for reasons indicated above. The bourgeois, mainstream, secular, civilian boarding school was not to last much longer in Portugal but his motivation was certainly not the defence of co-education or even day schooling. It was something more radical and far-reaching being a critique of all education in the name of the individual who finds his tendencies challenged by social (and nowadays economic) agendas.

The *presença* generation of writers had taken inspiration from the psychologism of Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche; the explorations of consciousness developed by Freud; the vitalist philosophy of Bergson; and the European streams of anti-positivism and modernism. They defended subjectivity and authenticity in all expressions of art. The human being was not an objective reality but a unique and unrepeatable occurrence, in a given circumstance of time, place, company and mood, and related to an individual past. Artists should convey their own personal conflicts, since each human being is in a unique struggle, not so much with others but with him/herself. One privileged battlefield in this combat was adolescence. The boarding school novel highlighted that place where the adolescent boy was 'on his own', free from family neuroses and in a more authentic environment (while another free environment was being explored by the Robinsonades and related literary experiments in non-schooling). Freud's insistence on the centrality of sexual Desire in human life opened the door to sexual explicitness in novels in the lineage of Musil's *Törleß* (1906).

Certainly *A Drop of Blood* (1945) by José Régio owes something to that lineage. It was an auto-fictional production addressing the issue of the formation of the artist: how can young men with literary urges and poetic dispositions be accommodated in a mainstream curriculum (if they can be ‘accommodated’ at all...)? How and when should the system detach pupils from their ordinary colleagues in order, properly, to foster artistic abilities such as musical, literary, performative and scientific? How can the young pursue their goals when society, with all its hypocrisy and violence, tries to divert and alienate them from their ideals and values? What room is left for their most authentic ambitions?

Régio’s novel was not written to provide any solution to the *school question*. It rather illustrates the benefits and pitfalls of any system conceived to the many, when it comes to applying it to the individual. Education cannot overlook the importance of the individual pupil and must find a middle way between socialization, which is not to be considered as being perfect social adjustment, and the surprising potential hidden in every subject undergoing the schooling process. At the heart of society lies the school as its reproduction device. It is there, Régio shows us, that disrespect for the individual begins, in name of goals presented as ‘common’ and ‘universal’. But are they *ours*? *Should* they be ours?

In addition to these philosophical questions, other topics covered in Régio’s novel are canonical to the genre: bullying, mobbing, harassment; and boarding issues such as longing, solitude, homesickness, parents’ inauspicious interference, etc.

Probably in all lives the most important lessons, those that we will never forget, are learned out of school or, as in *A Drop of Blood*, out of the classroom. According to Socratic/Platonic philosophy and to Régio’s novel, the most important achievement for us is to get to know ourselves. How we reach that knowledge is a process that is unplanned, apparently accidental, but always necessary and it must occur inevitably one way or

another. Lelito discovers bad feelings inside himself and is shocked at losing his previous innocence but he is reminded, through the outcome of that revealing episode, of the universal injustice of life, of social relations and of the way people interact with one another in general. After all is he different? Is he any better? Must he be like the others? What is the mechanism of character formation?

As for schools, the teacher Régio wanted to humble them. They are not there to produce perfect individuals, to ensure they will later succeed in life or to make them immune to the blows and accidents of survival. Schools may provide some measure of knowledge and training that is essential for social integration but they do not have the exclusive rights to these. If the pupil expects too much from school, such expectations will be an obvious source of frustration. In *A Drop of Blood* we are reminded that we must be prepared to unschool ourselves as part of our *Entwicklung*: to resist learning and lessons learned; to oppose acquired knowledge; and to find elsewhere, maybe, in our inner life and in spite of school, or against school, *our* true meaning for our lives, lives that are, as Goethe wanted, a permanent and ever-surprising *apprenticeship*.

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Boarding school novels have already received some degree of attention in the Portuguese-speaking world from educationalists and literary scholars, mostly in Brazil where the foundational *Atheneu* by R. Pompeia (1888) has long been considered to be a major component of the national literary canon. In other countries new contributions to the study of the boarding schoolboy novel came from other academic fields, such as Queer Studies (Ilett 2006), while new approaches and inputs beyond literary analysis are expected from



anthropologists, psychologists and philosophers of education. This research is affiliated to the last of these disciplines.

Régio's novel, grounded in the individualist and vitalist philosophical tradition of Nietzsche and Bergson and enriched by the aesthetics of the *Nouvelle revue française*, offers interesting material for the philosophy of education. The sociologist and the psychologist of education will appreciate its realistic portrayal of the ways boys interact when they are together, how they carefully construct their masculinity and aspire for manliness, and the many instances of active resistance against the institutional culture of the school. Based on what can be called the *presencist* ideology, the novel is a manifestation of the individual against the social, of man against group, citizen against the mob and conscience against collective alienation. It is no surprise that the biggest opposition to Régio came from those who proposed an art exclusively, and poorly, 'social'. During the 1940's everybody seemed committed, on one side or another, to collective struggles, national combats and apocalyptical wars. It was definitely one of the most awkward times to affirm that, in spite of the apparent urgency of these combats, the individual *still mattered*, and had always to matter, in whatever time or historical circumstance. Régio wanted his individuality to be the individuality of us all because we are all different and unique. We should not lose sight of *our own* combats and *our own* goals against all forms of education and pressure from the collective.

In this aspect the artist is, according to Romantic tenets, someone better placed to resist alienation. Artists have a complex relationship with their societies. They live in time/spaces of their own and never really fit in and, in many cases, they do not want to fit in either. In Régio, the mystic complemented his artistic personality and he channelled much of his thought to the timeless anguish of a mankind deserted by the divine.

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I have ventured to answer to the research question *How can the study of school fiction and memoirs contribute to educational theory and practice?* by exemplifying the many ways in which these sources can be studied. These multiple approaches embrace not only pedagogical implications but also questions of a philosophical, biographical, historical, ideological, educational, anthropological, psychological and sociological nature, just to name a few.

In this research I have had to limit the scope of the investigation to one author and one novel by that author. Future research could compile an exhaustive bibliography and corpus, arranged by language, of autobiographical renderings of the school experience, which would be beneficial to subsequent studies that could take the form of a comparative analysis of two or more texts, both from the same national canon and from different ones.

An effort could be made to enlarge the corpus and include short stories and even poetry. Even if these sources are more episodic and anecdotal and do not convey school life as deeply and thoroughly as novels can do, they can nevertheless complement the material found in novels. Minor episodes of school life, although exceptional as they probably are, can equally well introduce the reader to the atmosphere of different practices of schooling across societies and times.

Régio in his own right deserves more study. The author of the present work will now be dealing with his epistolography since that is, as yet, a largely unknown and intimate territory of his life.

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*Appendix A: a glossary of specific terms used:*

**Masculinism** - The masculinist theories found their origins in the Greek concept of *andreia* which, although already present in Homer, was further theorized by Plato in his *Republic* and by Aristotle in *Rhetoric*. It had its apogee in European culture during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when most of its theorizers lived and wrote about *manliness*, drawing inspiration in the 'new man' as a post-French revolution ideal of man leading to the warrior or the soldier.

The concepts of *growth* and *transformation* are considered essential to manliness, and so 'man' is built as the opposite of 'child': where the latter is selfish, weak, coward, unable to restrain itself, greedy, useless to the community, lacks endurance, is impressionable, dependent, dissimulate, incautious, unreliable, uncontrolled, cruel, liar, ignorant and irresponsible, acquiring manhood is defined as a process of becoming its exact contrary: becoming responsible, strong (physical, of will, and moral, of character) independent, courageous, firm, determinate, self-controlled, steady, reliable, with self-restraint and endowed with a sense of duty and obligation rather than rights, prone to heroism, willing to serve family, community, civilization and even mankind.

Nevertheless, the child's deficiencies are not its own fault but are due to its lack of proper moral judgement; and sometimes even masculinist thinkers uphold the ideal for men to become childlike, like Nietzsche in *Zarathustra*, when 'child' is not taken as the not-yet-accomplished or 'imperfect man', a sort of a caterpillar to a butterfly, but the natural and instinctive human being, unrestrained by social and moral conventions.

**Masculinism and Youth** - The impact of masculinism in the Youth Movement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was enormous: first it fuelled the gymnastics movement; then the Boy Scouts, the *Wandervögel* and in the Anglo-Saxon world the sex-segregated boarding schools with their elite team sports (sports are still an arena faithful to masculinism); and all

sorts of *Männerbunde*, down even to the *Hitlerjugend*; it hold the soldier or warrior (*Krieger, Beamte*), as the *Idealtyp*, and prepared for the new national armies made of all male citizens at a time that saw the progress of general draft and the growth of mass education; masculinism declined after the II World War, mainly due to the spreading of egalitarian ideas, sacralisation of childhood, the ‘rights-culture’, and the movements towards co-education and half-education (day schooling).

**Masculinism and Education** - Inspired by, among others, Heinrich Schurtz, modern and contemporary masculinist theorists will oppose to co-education – as being contrary to the interests of boys – and to the bourgeois family – as being a female-centred environment. It was through military exercise or gymnastics (*Turngesellschaften*) that the male body could aspire to beauty so the new way of educating boys included social skills and physical training to overcome weakness (*Verweichlichung*). Major works by masculinist educators include the extremely influential Joachim Heinrich Campe, (1783) *Theophron oder der erfahrene Rathgeber für die unerfahrene Jugend*; Johann Christian Siede (1797) *Versuch eines Leitfadens für Anstand, Solidität, Würde und männliche Schönheit der aufwachsenden männlichen Jugend geweiht* (Dessau: Heinrich Ränger); Johann Christian Friedrich Guts Muths (1804) *Gymnastik für die Jugend, enthaltend eine praktische Anleitung zu Leibesübungen*, (Schnepfenthal: Buchhandlung der Erziehungsanstalt), a book that attests the increasing success of the physical education movement; Johann Ludwig Ewald (1807) *Der gute Jüngling, gute Gatte und Vater oder Mittel um es zu werden* (Frankfurt/Main: n.p.); Friedrich Ehrenberg (1808) *Der Charakter und die Bestimmung des Mannes* (Leipzig: Heinrich Buschler); and again by Christian Friedrich Guts Muths, (1817) *Turnbuch für die Sohne des Vaterlandes* (Frankfurt/Main: Gebrüder Willmanns).

*Appendix B: a short canon of Bildung and Künstlerroman:*

There are not undisputed canons of *Bildungsromane*; every inclusion can be challenged. So here I propose a *personal* elenchus, according to lines drawn above in Chapter 2:

### **Bildungsromane**

#### **Indian**

Valmiki (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC) *Bala Kanda (The Book of Youth or Boyhood of Rama)*, the first of the Seven Books of *Ramayan*.

#### **Greek**

Xenophon (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC) *Cyropedia*.

#### **Roman**

Petronius (1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD) *Satyricon*.

#### **German**

- Wolfram von Eschenbach (1200-1210) *Parzival*.
- Grimmelshausen (1668) *Simplicissimus*.
- Wieland (1766–1767) *Geschichte des Agathon*.<sup>103</sup>
- Jean Paul (1795) *Hesperus*.<sup>104</sup>
- J. C. Wezel (1780) *Hermann und Ulrike*.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1795-1796) *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.
- Ludwig Tieck (1795-1796) *William Lovell*.
- Ludwig Tieck (1798) *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen*.
- Jean Paul (1800) *Titan*.
- Jean Paul (1805) *Flegeljahre*.

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<sup>103</sup> - 'Under the guise of a Greek fiction, Wieland described his own spiritual and intellectual growth. This work, which Lessing recommended as "a novel of classic taste", marks an epoch in the development of the modern psychological novel' – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christoph\\_Martin\\_Wieland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christoph_Martin_Wieland).

<sup>104</sup> - Jean Paul was one of the biggest influences in Hermann Hesse.

- Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1815) *Ahnung und Gegenwart*.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1821-1829) *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*.
- Gustav Freytag (1855) *Soll und Haben [Debit and credit]*.
- Adalbert Stifter (1857) *Nachsommer [Indian Summer]*.
- Wilhelm Raabe (1862) *Leute aus dem Walde [Forest Folks]*.
- Wilhelm Raabe (1864) *Hungerpastor*.
- Adalbert Stifter (1865-1867) *Witiko*.
- Wilhelm Raabe (1882-1883) *Prinzessin Fisch*.
- Hermann Hesse (1904) *Peter Camenzind*.
- Hermann Hesse (1919) *Demian*.
- Hermann Hesse (1922) *Siddharta*.
- Alfred Döblin (1920) *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.
- Thomas Mann (1924) *The Magic Mountain*.
- Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1930) *Andreas oder die Vereinigten [Andreas or The Partners]*.
- Robert Musil (1930-1943) *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften [The Man Without Qualities]*.
- Thomas Mann (1934) *Der junge Joseph [The young Joseph]*.
- Hermann Hesse (1943) *Das Glasperlenspiel [The Glass Bead Game]*.

#### **Schulromane (together with shorter types of school narratives)**

##### **German**

- Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz (1772) *Der Hofmeister oder Vorteile der Privaterziehung*.
- Johann Heinrich Jung (1777) *Heinrich Stillings Jugend (Heinrich Stilling's Youth)*.
- Clemens Brentano (1805/1811) *Das Märchen von dem Schulmeister Klopstock und seinen fünf Söhnen (short story)*.
- Jeremias Gotthelf (1838-1839) *Leiden und Freuden eines Schulmeisters (school story)*.

- Peter Rosegger (1877) *Waldheimat, dort 'Als wir zur Schulprüfung geführt wurden'* [*The land of our birth, or how we were taken to sit tests*].
- Frank Wedekind (1881) *Frühlings Erwachen, Eine Kindertragödie in drei Akten* [*Spring's Awakening, theatre*].
- Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1883) *Das Leiden eines Knaben* [*The Sorrows of a Boy*].
- Theodor Fontane (1894) *Meine Kinderjahre - häuslicher Unterricht durch den Vater und durch Hauslehrer*.
- Thomas Mann (1901) *Die Buddenbrooks (Schulepisode) (has a school episode about young Henno)*.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria (1902) *Die Turnstunde (The Gym Class)*.
- Heinrich Mann (1905) *Professor Unrat oder das Ende eines Tyrannen (adapted by Josef von Sternberg to 1930 Der blaue Engel famous movie)*.
- Heinrich Mann (1906) *Abdankung (Novelle), 'die perverse Tragödie des Genies als Schulknabengeschichte', novella*.
- Hermann Hesse (1906) *Unterm Rad [The School Prodigy]*.
- Robert Musil (1906) *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless (The confusions of the pupil Törless)*, adapted by Volker Schlöndorff to the 1966 movie *Der junge Törless*.
- Robert Walser (1909) *Jakob von Gunten*.
- Stefan Zweig (1927) *Verwirrung der Gefühle (Confusion of Feelings)*.
- Hermann Ungar (1927) *Die Klasse*.
- Franz Werfel (1928) *Der Abituriententag. Die Geschichte einer Jugendschuld* [*The final examination or the story of a peché de jeunesse*].
- Friedrich Torberg (1930) *Der Schüler Gerber hat absolviert* – had a new edition in 1954 and was adapted by Wolfgang Glück to the 1981 movie of the same name.
- Heinrich Spoerl (1933) *Die Feuerzangenbowle: Eine Lausbüberei in der Kleinstadt* (adapted to cinema in 1934, 1944, 1970).
- Ödön von Horvath (1937) *Jugend ohne Gott*.
- Ödön von Horvath (1938) *Ein Kind unsere Zeit*.
- Elisabeth Langgässer (1949) *Der Schulausflug (Erzählung) [The School trip, short story]*.

- Alexander Spoerl (1950) *Memoiren eines mittelmäßigen Schülers* [*Memoirs of an average student*].