

OVERCOMING THE INFLUENCE OF BERGSON AND HUSSERL ON THE THINKING OF CAMIL PETRESCU AND JOSÉ RÉGIO

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Abstract: *The Romanian Camil Petrescu (1894-1957) and the Portuguese José Régio (1901-1969) are contemporary writers, representative of European interwar modernism. Without having known each other, they wrote exceptional novels (The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War; The Bed of Procrustes; Jogo da cabra-cega), where they in no way imitate Proustianism, but participate in the creation of the radical modernist spirit of European urban culture in the first part of the 20th century, precisely anticipating the major crisis of aesthetic-philosophical modernity and its obvious failure in the current forms of posthumanism. It is particularly significant for all modernist novel thinking to observe in their novels the way in which they expressed the nihilism of their European generation. Both, in novels as different in narrative detail as they are similar in their ultimate messages, revealed, from pure artistic intuition, the anti-human energy of the humanisms of modernity. Camil Petrescu and José Régio start from Bergsonian theses and then from those of Husserl's phenomenology – nuclear theses of the modernism of the time – but they do not remain anchored in them, but quickly come to see their limits, while they project, even through the prism of this philosophical meditation moved into the field of literature, another inner man than the Christian one, different or opposite to the pre-Christian one – Socratic or Platonic. Camil Petrescu and José Régio situate themselves, like the entire generation, in the middle of a serious philosophical-aesthetic contradiction, which best describes the crisis of artistic modernity in the first half of the 20th century. Camil Petrescu and José Régio are part of the generation of post-1919 Proustian writers decisively influenced by the Bergsonian position on the subject. Literature and philosophy are placed at the service, if not subordinated, of a unitary problematic, arising from psychology, affectivity, emotivity, sensation – therefore from the internal dynamics of the subject. As Bergson suggests as early as 1889, the social self – the exteriority of the subject – is seen only as a projection of the deep, interior self.*

Keywords: *novel, modernism, psychologism, knowledge, humanism.*

Introduction

The Romanian Camil Petrescu (1894-1957) and the Portuguese José Régio (1901-1969) are contemporary writers, representative of European interwar modernism. Without having known each other, they wrote exceptional novels (*Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război/The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War; Patul lui Procrust/The Bed of Procrustes; Jogo da cabra-cega The Game of the Blind Goat*), where they in no way imitate Proustianism, but participate in the creation of the radical modernist spirit of European urban culture in the first part of the 20th century, precisely anticipating the major crisis of aesthetic-philosophical modernity and its obvious failure in the current forms of posthumanism. It is particularly significant for all modernist novel thinking to observe in their novels the way in which they expressed the nihilism of their European generation. Both, in novels as different in narrative detail as they are similar in their ultimate messages, have revealed, from pure artistic intuition, the anti-human energy of modernity's humanisms. Camil Petrescu and José Régio start from Bergsonian theses and then from those of Husserl's phenomenology – nuclear theses of the modernism of the time – but they do not remain anchored in them, quickly come to see their limits, while they project, precisely through the prism of this philosophical meditation moved into the field of literature, another inner man than the Christian one, different or opposite to the pre-Christian one – Socratic or Platonic.

Camil Petrescu and José Régio recognize themselves, like the entire generation, in the middle of a serious philosophical-aesthetic contradiction, which best describes the crisis of artistic modernity in the former half of the 20th century. They are part of the great family of modernist novelists, represented by Thomas Mann, in *The Magic Mountain*; Dos Passos, in *Manhattan Transfer*; J. Joyce, in *Ulysses*; Knut Hamsun, in *Chapter End*; A. Huxley, in *Point and Counterpoint*; W. Faulkner, in *The Sound and the Fury*; V. Woolf, in *The Waves*; L.-F. Céline, in *Journey to the End of the Night*; Dino Buzzati, in *The Tartar Desert*; A. Malraux, in *The Human Condition*; Herman Hesse, in *The Glass Bead Game*; R. Musil, in *The Man Without Qualities*; A. Camus, in *The Stranger* and *The Plague*. They make it quite clear that the denial of knowledge prior to modernity is sterile. But, on the other hand, they sincerely recognize themselves in novels incapable of producing another knowledge. Their nihilism, camouflaged in various discursive or philosophical formulas, nevertheless makes possible a strongly creative artistic mentality in the environment of European intellectuals, with specific attitudes and existential scenarios. Why? Their nihilism has a type of hypnotic energy. Its pseudo-enigmatic and evil causality remains to this day, or especially in our days, to be studied.

Therefore, not surprisingly, the nihilism of the modernists, to whom Camil Petrescu and José Régio belong, soon proves, in the very living course of the birth of their works, totally powerless to lead to new, convincing truths. It is especially deceptive in all the dynamics of its experimental languages, which can seduce both the creative and the receptive consciousness to the point of hypnosis, without giving them, however, any moral value generating love of life, trust in people, love of neighbour, knowledge of Divinity. However, the rigid self-limitation through which nihilism expresses its non-negotiable diktat does not lead it to abandon it, on the contrary, most of them experience it, we would say frantically, in their novel stories, especially through all its inner consequences. This is how the strange heroes of these novelists are born, true anti-heroes impossible to forget, even after a single reading of the books – the brilliantly intelligent, seductive and

suicidal men, together with their equally contradictory women. Through an unexpected effect, the strangeness of their heroes, associated with the hyper-realism and simplicity of the stories created by the novelists, shatters any temptation of thesis, but gathers a moral in the fibre of the text. And the moral of the heroes of Camil Petrescu and José Régio is, in fact, in all the splendour of its discursive originality, an anti-moral, which says forcefully to the reader's consciousness: there is no encounter between beings; there is no love; there is no communication; there is no knowledge; there is no clear approach to the truth of existence; there are no certainties, etc.

Gilles Deleuze later comments on this type of moral attitude: "... modern thought is born from the bankruptcy of representation, as well as from the loss of identities and from the discovery of all the forces that act under the representation of the identical. The modern world is the world of simulacra, in which man does not survive God, the identity of the subject does not survive the identity of substance. All identities are only simulated, produced as an optical "effect", through a deeper play, that of difference and repetition. We want to think difference in itself, and the relationship of the different with the different, independently of the forms of representation that bring them back to the Same and pass them through the negative..." (Deleuze: 7-8.)

The inner man of the heroes of Camil Petrescu and José Régio is fragile, dark and confused, although he carries with great stubborn naturalness the burden of his sadness and inner anarchy. His banner is pride and dignified solitude. From him a silent and tragic cry rises towards the reader, which does not accept, however, pity or solidarity. We navigate, here, through these heroes in the black ocean of the modern man's inability to be happy and to love life. We travel in full nihilistic agnosticism, which, without building any certainty, devaluing and demystifying, subjects the reader to a significant experience: it demonstrates to him what the inner assumption of (post)modernity can mean and what kind of inner shaping it can produce. Camil Petrescu and José Régio are situated in the ultimate horizon of the European novelist of the era, who saw himself as a heroic traveller, but hopelessly lost in the arid desert of his mind stubborn to reinvent knowledge on his own, as energetic in growing luxuriant fantasies, precisely in the form of his hallucinatingly realistic and disarming stories.

1. The generation of post-1919 Proustian writers

Camil Petrescu and José Régio are part of the generation of post-1919 Proustian writers decisively influenced by the Bergsonian position on the subject. Literature and philosophy are placed at the service, if not subordinated, of a unitary problematic, arising from psychology, affectivity, emotivity, sensation – therefore from the internal dynamics of the subject. As Bergson suggests as early as 1889, the social self – the exteriority of the subject – is seen only as a projection of the deep, interior self. The shift of attention from the object to the subject and the concentration of almost all projects, philosophical and literary scenarios on interiority represent the obsessive constants of European modernism. Such an epistemological mutation is the consequence of the crisis of the Kantian model of knowledge based on reason. For Camil Petrescu and José Régio, the self is a dynamic corpus whose main quality is the interdependence of its elements and the impossibility of their separation without affecting the very nature of the whole. Every sensation, the path of every perception, the birth of a representation irreversibly influences the entire life of the ego. It is not a static, self-sufficient unit, its relations with the world, with other entities,

permanently transform and nourish it; sensations are not superficial and peripheral waves of the ego's life, they can change not only the data of the present stage, but also the entire configuration of psycho-affective memory.

The concept is obviously Bergsonian; Bergson's ideas become a common good of science, philosophy and literature of the modernist generations. Camil Petrescu realizes and analyses the birth of an alternative model of knowledge, in which his heroes also participate – fictional beings implanted by the writer in an evolutionary autonomy where the consequences of the epistemological revolution on human consciousness, its capacity for adaptation and positive reaction can be observed. Henri Bergson, in *Matière et mémoire* (1896), shows that the subject's perception depends on his cerebral activity, and this in turn depends on the rest of the universe. However, he also notices the paradox that is reached in the analysis of perception: the universe itself, in fact, seems to depend on the internal movements of the cerebral substance, seems to change as they vary and seems to dissipate when they are liquidated. According to Bergson, to perceive does not mean first of all to know, but to communicate through one's own body with matter and with the internal reality of one's own subjectivity.

Camil Petrescu believes that Bergson is only expressing a pressing philosophical attitude after the failure of classical philosophies. Under these conditions, from the fanaticism of objective neutrality and causal finalism, specific to realistic and naturalistic aesthetics, one moves quickly to another extreme, of the mobile hypothetical and methodical uncertainty, from which the obvious kinship of the new model of knowledge with artistic discourse arises. It is a reality from which the special communication between literature and philosophy in the 20th century will be nourished. Camil Petrescu and José Régio are perfectly aware of the hypothetical character of fiction, in its relations with reality, and they nourish the closest possible kinship between the two parallel worlds, the world of the real and the proposed – fictional world, by systematically cultivating the authenticity of the narrative. Authentic means possible in reality.

Camil Petrescu, like José Régio, projects a fictional self in order to participate in the psychic life of his fictional beings and witness imaginary events "as a kind of member without voting rights". Prohibiting the right to vote would mean this time refraining from any intervention in the natural, authentic evolution of the characters. Bergsonian concepts, psychologism, irrationalism, methods of knowledge through the investigation of the individual psychic concrete, self-referentiality and self-reflexivity are implemented in the texture of fictional lives and left to work autonomously. Similarly, Camil, together with the Portuguese novelist, sends his fictional self to investigate the territory of his novels, the territory of the fictional existence of the characters he created, with the order to report on the effects the alternative model of knowing the self has on them. The report is negative. José Régio and Camil Petrescu observe the degradation of concepts, their dissolution in the matter of the fictional concrete and especially their ineffectiveness and lack of credibility. That is why psychologism is transformed into anti-psychologism.

2. The epistemological model and the spectacle of the Self

There is therefore also a second time of the novel as a spectacle of the Self inhabited by the new philosophical-scientific structure, a theatre of the experiments of a novelist who wants to extract philosophical teaching from aesthetic experiences. This second time of the narrative is an ascending one. The text, with its fictional heroes, with its

more or less sophisticated intrigues of subjectivity, digests the philosophical scaffolding, the subtextual approaches and frees itself from the pressure of the philosophical. The text imposes itself, swallows the concepts, gives primacy to the Human. The creator, philosopher and novelist, allows himself to be surpassed by creation, precisely because he forbids himself *the right to vote*... The philosopher dressed in the Novelist's work clothes or even disguised as the Narrator, as the Character, withdraws from the text (sceptical, defeated, revolted?) and simply lets the novel exist. The battle of concepts applied to the fictional psyche offers no solutions – neither ontological nor epistemological. Rather, it shatters the illusion of any immediate solution. The philosophical scheme does not work in the novel text and, implicitly, in the space of the ego – which, however, they theorize. The European novelists of interwar modernism take up the epistemological model specific to scientific knowledge of the entire 20th century, based on analytical thinking and applied in two stages: there would be a first stage of observing particular facts, after which, in the next stage, the inductive leap from the particular to the general should be made, in order to formulate the norm, the universal law.

The epistemological model based on the exploitation of particular facts is specific to Camil Petrescu's novels and follows a specific behaviour. The particular fact on which the writer relies is the psychic fact, because the objective pursued is the knowledge of what he himself calls "psychological reality". On the recommendation of Bergsonian philosophy, a good part of the post-Proustian writers, among them Camil Petrescu and José Régio, privilege the psychic self in the knowledge of the self and use introspection as a general method of psychology for putting the psyche into the forms of language. Introspection functions according to a generous but unsettling axiom: the experience of consciousness represents by itself a science of consciousness. Such an axiom presupposes sincerity and total transparency of consciousness towards itself. The psychic fact must be known in detail, in all its particularity. The novelist engages in a true science of the particular. A conclusion emerges from studying the dynamics of particular facts. The *Bed of Procrustes* is a demonstration of the crisis of the sign in modern culture, a crisis specific to the new philosophical-scientific structure and explosively assimilated into the mechanisms of aesthetics. Camil Petrescu is aware of the essence of the process and laboriously imagines a "file of existence" capable of expressing it, of problematizing it, without explaining it in any way, but only taking note of a fundamental reality, but still troubled in 1933, then theorized and intensely debated in the last decades of the 20th century.

The literality of the text in the Balzacian or naturalist novel, for example, means the deposit of the author's intentionality and of a true, definitive meaning that resists all interpretations and, moreover, authoritatively defines the rules of an eternal reading. This textual reality is in agreement with the metaphysics of truth, from Plato to Kant, which consecrates confidence in the existence of the unique integrating meaning. The ante-Nietzschean truth resides in the sign and uses it to communicate itself in immutable forms. The truth and the sign mutually legitimize each other, placing themselves above existence and being with reassuring superiority. Post-Nietzschean philosophy also means the history of a metaphysics, not always glorious, but obsessive, of meaning and its relations with the sign. The multiplication of contradictory hypotheses on truth and their compromise, often simultaneous even with the discourse of affirmation, generates the radical change in the textual behaviour of the sign. The subject no longer has the beautiful unity of ego-cogito,

escapes Cartesian logic and dramatically doubles itself, trying to recover its identity by summing up self-representations and possible images from the perspective of Alterity.

3. The Bergsonian psychologism and the Hysserlian utopia

The process of enunciating the text acquires a disconcerting instability: the creative subject multiplies, the enunciation is always made under the gaze, that is, in the discourse of the Other – whether by the other we mean another autonomous psychological self or another being. The insufficiency of Bergsonian psychologism in the knowledge of subjectivity determines the rapid affirmation in full modernism of phenomenology. The influence of Husserlian utopia of the knowledge of the original essence from which the self and the identity of the being emanate is reflected in the novels *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega*. Camil Petrescu and José Régio aim to find out what exists beyond the psyche and the frustrating instability of its manifestations. However, replacing psychological introspection with phenomenological reflection not in philosophical discourse but in the novel is really difficult, an undertaking of extreme stylistic temerity for which the entire modernist novel was barely preparing in 1930. José Régio and Camil Petrescu know that they cannot, in fact, effectively give up introspection and then resort to a narrative strategy in which they want to reconcile introspection with reflection in favour of phenomenological objectives. Therefore, in the text, as a rule, the existence of the hero is reflected through the texts left by him (letters, poems, articles). It is a first level of reflection and the most important.

Unmodified, authentic and sincere texts should fix the sure outline of the original inner phenomena from which he was nourished and which participated in the absolute essence of the self. The texts are not interpreted, no hypotheses are issued on them, following the imperative recommendation of the Husserlian method. The conciliatory instrumentation of reflection and introspection, with the progressive reduction of psychologizing interpretations, touches on another central problem of Husserlian thought, namely the relationship between interiority and exteriority, legitimized by a primordial question: how do objects outside of it exist for the self?

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Camil Petrescu figures more convincingly and expressively in his novels than Husserl in the philosophical text, the phenomenological idea of interiority in communication with exteriority. The ego objectifies itself maximally by spatializing consciousness in the movement of exteriority, and the world subjectifies itself maximally by concentrating in the space of a single individual ego. No hero says his last word and we do not know whether that content of the pure ego can enter into possession of a language. If the true meaning of existence is also the object of suspicion of all the subjects involved in the novel (the narrator heroes, the author, the reader) and if the same meaning seems at crucial moments only the gateway to an existential absurdity, then we must not pass over the climax of the demonstration: Camil Petrescu's heroes do not openly opt for the meaning or nonsense of life, but their final act of freedom definitively signifies their own existence and encloses it in a kind of magic circle, through which the writer responds to the phenomenological mechanism from which he draws his narrative strategy, casually but also with much premeditation.

The content of the pure self cannot be verbalized by either philosophy or literature, Camil Petrescu and José Régio want to say, the being remains mysterious, but the utopia of absolute knowledge is always just as fascinating. And the journey of the self in the world is maximum pain, precisely when the world is recreated by consciousness in every moment of existence. Consciousness is not saviour if at the end of the road it offers only the freedom to die. But the freedom of consciousness also brings the supreme magic, otherwise impossible: the vision of another world, the perpetual creation and recreation of superworlds – possible only beyond phenomena, imagined from their infinite matter. From the perspective of structural linguistics, modernism is a process in several times, the end of which cannot be foreseen. The mechanism of modernism could be based on a particular consciousness of time: in any temporal sequence, a previous moment is retained in certain

of its data and simultaneously a later moment is stimulated to occur. Such a model of interpretation of modernism can use the notion of isotopy, a concept introduced by Greimas, starting with the work *Sémantique structurale* (Paris, 1966).

4. The machine of modernism

According to the principle of isotopy, we can imagine modernism with all its literature and philosophy as a huge text in several times. The times are different from each other, but also similar, in a special way, which ensures the coherence and development of the text. The cohesion of the times of modernism is given by the conservation or resumption of certain identifying characteristics, from time 1, in time 2. The characteristics of time 1, present in time 2, are undermined, destructured, as other affirmed identifying characteristics prepare their own migration towards a time 3... The succession of avant-garde, modernism, postmodernism allows it to be interpreted in this way as well. And the identifying characteristics can be thematic, stylistic, but also epistemological, showing the instruments and methods of knowledge of existence and being. The machine of modernism visualizes a process in which each temporal unit is defined by categorically distinct elements and by elements categorically identical to the temporal units between which it is located. To see modernism as a never-ending story means to take note of the relativity and instability of meaning in modern culture, of the transformation of the hypothetical and the provisional into stable-structural elements, intimate to the modern notion.

The valorisation of the principle of isotopy then allows the revelation of the dominant attitude in modern creativity: the focus on the simultaneity and identity between the act of enunciation and the process of consciousness. Literature, the novel becomes a space where the author's consciousness is projected into fictional consciousnesses, following the capacity of language to spontaneously retain and reveal the world of the self and the world of self-consciousness; the author is always attentive to the forms of alteration and recovery of the authenticity of experience through the textualization of existence. Camil Petrescu's two novels from the interwar period, *Ultima noapte de dragoste.../ The Last Night of Love*, *The First Night of War* (1930) and *The Bed of Procrustes* (1933), together with the Portuguese novel *Jogo da Cabra Cega* (1934), can also be imagined as a dynamic structure in two periods, telling fragments of the great text of modernism. There is thus a Camil Petrescu-type modernism, followed by another Camil Petrescu-type modernism, in a changed form. Writers burn very quickly and on their own – the novels appear in 1930 and 1933/1934 – two important periods of European modernism. They experimentally program the novels as possible synchronizations in the new structure of modern culture. Camil Petrescu and his Portuguese contemporary know that the novels are only stages in an ongoing process and that he is only a provisional director of a scene in the spectacle of modernity.

The first novel, the confession of Ștefan Gheorghidui, is the time of analytical psychologism and post-Bergsonian introspection. *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* are the time of reflexive anti-psychologism and phenomenological consciousness. *The Last Night of Love*, *The First Night of War* contains the elements of a moderate modernism, hesitant in revolutionizing the discourse and hybrid by mixing forms taken from the 19th century French novel with new post-Proustian forms. This type of modernism claims more from vision than from the renewal of discourse. Novelists experiment with the efficiency of introspection in knowing and affirming the psychological self. Gheorghidui

engages in identifying the self by recalling and interpreting his psycho-affective history. Otherness is nothing but a falsifying mirror of the Self, in which he cannot stop his narcissistic immersion until too late.

The second novel belongs to radical modernism, as a profound revolution of concepts, fictional beings, but also in the construction of discourse and an original narrative strategy. Attentive to the functioning of the principle of isotopy, we note the resumption of psychologism in *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega*, already in a major epistemological impasse at the end of the novel *The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War*. Psychologism is compromised and destructured with its own weapons, in a plenary anti-psychological approach, of which the tactical plan also includes the inhibition of analytical introspection, taken from *The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War*, by experimenting with phenomenologically inspired reflection. The individual self no longer allows itself to be altered by Alterity, but makes it its twin, in a world of Intersubjectivity born of consciousness and thought, which dramatically seeks its expression in language. The true self, the authentic self, is another identifying characteristic, migrating from one novel to another. If in the first novel the authenticity of the self is sought in the psychic duration of the individual, in *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* the psyche is surpassed towards the ante-rational brought to consciousness by processes with phenomenological charge. The man in *The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War* is the “inner man”; there are large spaces of interiority in *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega*, but the being tends to become a “phenomenological animal”, consciousness of transcendence, in fluid communication with the substance of the concrete. Authenticity, as an aesthetic function of discourse, participates differently, from one novel to another, in two narrative projects that aim at an extra-aesthetic solution: the ontological solution, sniffed out, assumed, hunted in the intratextual mechanisms of some gnoseological models inspired by philosophy and theories of scientific knowledge. Obscurity and ambiguity, major negative categories of modernity’s discourse on the world, are still fragily constituted, in a secondary plan of the novel *The Last Night of Love...* and become dominant dimensions in *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega*, an intertextual construction based on dissonance and paradox. The dynamics of particular facts still ensure in the first novel a superficial installation of the self in the real world. *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* emphasize the meticulousness of reflecting the real world precisely in order to deny it any contribution to the existence of consciousness and the ultimate self – the true self.

Conclusions

The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War is a first variant of the dynamic structure experimented by Camil Petrescu, a monosemantic structure and obsessively directed towards the overdimensioning of an individual subjectivity: a single point of view, a single voice, a unique vision of the world, but with its internal evolution. *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* multiply the voices, perspectives and subjectivities, becoming a polysemantic structure. In *The Last Night of Love, The First Night of War* there is a single text – an introspective analytical confession specific to the modernism of the 1920s-1930s. *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* combine and juxtapose, interpose and superimpose several texts, describing in pieces an unfinished mosaic, from which many pieces are missing.

The association of the tragic with the grotesque, the theatricalization of narrative discourse, the projection of the world as a spectacle and of life as a tragic, absurd or magical game, in an association of contradictory plans, the excessive demonstrative use of paradox and ambiguity, but also the conception of the novel as an open text – make *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* novels of late modernism, which already prepare the identifying characteristics of existentialism and postmodernism. The egoistic subjectivity, the absolute individualism with paranoid projection onto the world in *The Last Night of Love*, *The First Night of War* is followed by Intersubjectivity woven from multiple subjectivities, as twin as they are lonely in relation to each other, in *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega*. The ego is no longer the centre of the world, but projects itself schizoidly as a space inhabited by the real world and the world transcending the real, at the same time withdrawn and assimilated to the universal flow. In solidarity with the intrinsic principle of isotropy, the narrative discourse in *The Bed of Procrustes* and *Jogo da Cabra Cega* / *The Game of the Blind Goat* is critical of the narrative discourse of the novel of subjectivity and self-critical at the same time, because it contains its own negation, its own deconstruction.

The subtle critique of psychologism with the weapons of phenomenology does not hesitate to identify the failure of phenomenological consciousness in knowing the self, as well as the essential failure of any modern epistemological project. *The Bed of Procrustes* and *The Game of the Blind Goat* is structured in the chaining of texts and destinies, simultaneously destructing itself – reality and fantasy of the sign that forgets the origin of the unifying meaning and duplicates, pluralizes the meanings, transforming the text into a labyrinthine journey from which we can only escape by soaring like Icarus in a contemplative flight. The answers are missing, instead there remain the interrogations in which a lot of art has been put into keeping the conscience awake and the blood of thought alive, inexhaustible. It is the only way, Camil Petrescu and José Régio would say together, of assimilating and surpassing the philosophical in the diaphanous flesh of fictional beings. No language can speak the mystery of existence, but the languages of literature have the gift of transcending their self-sufficiency, freeing the virtual being, the shadow of the real being, from being frozen in their own scenarios – philosophical, aesthetic, existential, hermeneutical.

Later, after World War II, Deleuze is one of the philosophers who extremely radicalizes this type of nihilism that anticipates posthumanism: “Our modern life is such that, faced with the most mechanical, most stereotypical repetitions, outside and inside us, we never cease for a moment to extract from them small differences, variants and modifications. And conversely, secret, disguised and unknown repetitions, animated by the perpetual displacement of a difference, restore empty, mechanical, stereotypical repetitions in us and outside us. In the simulacrum, repetition already has repetitions as its object, and difference already has differences as its object. Repetitions are repeated, and the differentiated differentiates. The task of life consists in allowing all repetitions to coexist in the space of distribution of difference...” (Deleuze 1995: 8)

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