

Regionalisms and Resistance: Region and Ideology in the Twentieth-Century Portuguese Novel

PETER HAYSOM
M.A., B.A. (Hons.)

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Abstract

This thesis constitutes a re-interpretation of regional spaces, landscapes and geographical dynamics in the twentieth-century Portuguese novel, through an ideological lens. Adopting politicised and spatialised understandings of the *region*, of *regionalism*, of *ideology* and of *resistance*, the study encompasses narratives published at different moments in the previous century, focusing on different regions of continental Portugal, and articulating distinct ideological projects. Chapter I conducts a diachronic overview of regional inequalities, divisions and tensions in Portuguese politics from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first, followed by an outline of regionalism's ideological significance in narrative fiction over the same period.

Subsequent chapters of the thesis are then dedicated to the ideological role performed by regionalism in six novels by four different authors. Chapter II concentrates on two novels by Aquilino Ribeiro that offer explicit and implicit ideological readings, both of which can be interpreted as *oppositional* and *conservative* in different ways. Chapter III examines the complex and often ambivalent articulation of regionalist discourse with sexual politics, in a well-known narrative by Agustina Bessa-Luís and another by Lídia Jorge. Finally, Chapter IV highlights the role of regionalist dynamics in two novels by the Communist, Nobel Prize-winning author José Saramago, which can be described as engaging in a productive form of 'militant particularism'. These chapters, while constituting separate analyses of narrative fiction, are united by their insistence on regionalism's central role in the wider ideological objectives espoused within Portuguese literary texts.

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Introduction: politicising the region, resisting through the rustic

O tempo é outro tempo nas terras pequenas
[...]
As árvores são novas e no adro em rodas contra a cal e contra o frio
há gente

Ruy Belo

On the morning of the 24th June 2016, my attention was immediately drawn not only to the United Kingdom's unexpected decision to exit the European Union, but also to the immense gulf between London and England's north-eastern counties that emerged in the "remain" *vs*. "leave" areas of the electoral map, signalling intense "spatial inequality" that had hitherto remained undetected by Westminster-based policy makers (Hague 2020). Four months later, my sleep was curtailed by Donald Trump's surprise election as U.S. President, which reflected similar geographical divisions and would later be associated with the "left behind" of "small-town America", which seemed to have been abandoned to irrevocable decline (Wuthnow 2018: 1). Over the past decade, such sentiments of regional marginalisation have been linked to the rise of right-wing populist movements in numerous European nations, through the concept of "the geography of discontent" (Madeira/Silva/Malheiros 2021: 475-476) or, in Portuguese, "a geografia do ressentimento" (Ferrão 2021: 435). Obviously, such political developments cannot be attributed to regional differentiation *alone* – indeed, as intersectional theory emphasises, one factor of identity reveals only a partial truth – but the emergence of an increasingly oppositional and acrimonious ideological landscape begs the question: what lessons can be drawn from Portugal, a relatively small nation with a "sociocultural heterogeneity [that] is today widely acknowledged" (Feijó 1989: 39)? More specifically, how can narrative fiction – as opposed to the rather blunt instrument of party-political propaganda – illuminate the diverse, complex and

often conflicting ways in which regional geographies and spatial dynamics can contribute to broader ideological discourses?

Literary criticism on 'regionalist literature' in other national contexts is rather mixed: while some texts interpret 'regional' tropes in a rather simplistic manner, others hold considerable relevance for a more political analysis. Upon reading Phyllis Bentley's *The English Regional Novel* (1941), for instance, one is immediately motivated to search beyond the "brilliant illuminations of English landscape" and the "extent and variety" that Bentley highlights as regional literature's virtues (1941: 45). Similarly, Willis Knapp Jones's notes on 'regionalist' Spanish literature ("Regionalism: advantage or handicap" [1953]) reveal an extremely superficial understanding of the concept: "Background merely adds a bit of interest and color. That is about all that regionalism can do for a novel" (1953: 430-431). Research on French literature, however, offers a more perceptive and politicised interpretation of regionalist narratives, as indicated by Anne-Marie Thiesse's *Écrire la France: le mouvement littéraire régionaliste de langue française entre la belle époque et la libération* (1991): "[Le régionalisme] devient le langage symbolique dans lequel peut se traduire toute relation duelle ou hiérarchique: entre dominants et dominés, entre ville et campagne, entre culture et nature, entre appartenance internationale et identité nationale" (1991: 10). In addition, scholars have highlighted the long-standing 'tradition' of Brazilian literary regionalism (cf. Almeida 1981), while Brazil's 'Northeastern novel' of the 1930s has been associated with contemporary socio-economic concerns and with overriding 'political' objectives (cf. Ellison 1954: 35).

Concentrating specifically on Portugal, and without without wishing to pre-empt my outline of Portuguese literature's "secret history of regionalisms",[1] it is important to highlight that while considerable critical attention has been paid to the role of 'rurality' and 'rural spaces' in nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction, the ideological (or ideologically subversive) potential of such narratives has often been overlooked or wilfully neglected. A case in point is António Álvaro Dória's 1950 monograph *A vida rural no romance português*, which is largely an overview of provincial / agricultural lifestyles, activities and tropes

[1] In I.2.

(such as "[s]uperstições, crenças e usanças" [1950: 46]), insofar as they appear throughout various time periods, authors and works. Further, the study has obvious temporal limitations (only covering novels up to the late 1940s), and displays a disinterest in politically transgressive narratives, either due to a threat of censorship by the prevailing dictatorship, or on account of the scholar's *agreement* with that regime's reactionary doctrine. A second study of note is Evelina Verdelho's *Linguagem regional e linguagem popular no romance regionalista português* (1982), which offers an admirably comprehensive overview of the political and cultural logics behind regionalism's emergence in late nineteenth-century Portugal (cf. 1982: 9-27). Nonetheless, this text restricts its literary analysis to the first decades of the twentieth century and, as its title suggests, to the role of 'regional' and 'popular' language in the Portuguese novel, affirming that literature is only 'regionalist' if "as realidades regionais, designadamente os modos particulares de expressão das populações provinciais" are represented therein (*idem*: 32).

It can be argued, then, that politically charged interpretations of regional space in Portuguese narratives only truly begin with Carlos Reis's *O discurso ideológico do neo-realismo português* (1983), which insists on the centrality of poverty-stricken / exploited areas to neo-realist fiction (cf. 1983: 16), and on that cultural movement's "motivações ideológicas […] que obrigam a repensar a problemática do *regionalismo* na criação literária" (*idem*: 168-169). Reis's arguments regarding regionalism are hampered, though, by his focus on this chronologically limited literary movement, and, by extension, on literature affiliated with or inspired by Marxist political philosophy. Another relevant text is Maria Alzira Seixo's "Escrever a terra – sobre a inscrição do espaço no romance português contemporâneo" (1986), in which post-1974 Portuguese narratives are described as 're-organising' and re-configuring prior renderings of "a terra" [land] in Portuguese fiction, in order to posit "[o] espaço da terra como centro de radiação do universo romanesco", and to produce new symbolic meanings: "a terra como paisagem, a terra como sociedade, a terra como lugar do humano, a terra como espaço do drama político, a terra descentrada […] a terra como exterior" (1986: 72). Seixo potentially errs, though, in her implication that novels published before the Carnation Revolution treated regional spaces in a comparatively simplistic manner, while the chronological

window of her corpus (1974-1982) is too narrow for her to make such sweeping assumptions. Historical limitations also plague Ana Maria Costa Lopes's *O conto regional na imprensa periódica de 1875 a 1930* (1990) – which adeptly charts the enduring legacy of the *conto rústico*, but seldom evokes the political potential of regionalist short fiction –, while the conference proceedings of *Nacionalismo e regionalismo nas literaturas lusófonas* (1997), despite covering a wide range of texts, lack a cohesive understanding of regionalism capable of uniting the disparate literary studies contained therein. Conversely, Óscar Lopes's "Regionalistas e panfletários" (2002) strives to be comprehensive in the authors covered (from the early decades of the twentieth century), but falls into a somewhat reductive understanding of regionalism as a purely geographical notion, according to which authors evoking specific regions can be 'labelled' or 'mapped' by their areas of choice, through such epithets as "meridionais", "beirão" and "minhoto" (Lopes 2002: 145, 151, 159). Ana Maria de Costa Lopes's "Diferenças regionais e os seus reflexos na literatura" (2008), while injecting some much-needed emphasis on longevity and ideological diversity into the 'regionalist literature' debate (cf. Lopes 2008: 160]), repeats Óscar Lopes's 'mapping' schematic, and fails to mention key novelists such as José Saramago that, as I shall seek to evidence, weaponise spatial dynamics in a politically radical manner.

Two further significant studies published over the past five years are the following: Ana Isabel Queiroz's "Landscapes of Portugal in Two Hundred Years of Narratives" (2017), which is chronologically comprehensive and primarily concerned with the novel, although its references to individual narratives are extremely fleeting and almost completely devoid of close analysis; and Alda Correia's *Narrative and Space: Across Short Story Landscapes and Regional Places* (2017). Correia's monograph is strikingly detailed and articulate in its conceptual understanding of regional space, although her inclusion of the Nazi-affiliated philosopher Martin Heidegger within her theoretical framework (cf. 2017: 11) threatens to obscure her readings of politically progressive short fiction in twentieth-century Portugal. Moreover, while the scholar makes original and incisive comments on the multiple ideological uses of regional landscapes ("landscape marked by idealisation, […] decadence, […] oppression and aggression/rebellion" [*idem*: 172]), an analysis

of numerous twentieth-century novels reveals that these 'landscape markers' are not mutually exclusive, even with regards to the same author or narrative, nor are they the only relevant criteria for assessing the ideological significance of regionalist fiction.

With these precedents in mind, my thesis will focus solely on regionalism within the *novel*, a literary form that, according to Lennard Davis, is "heavily oriented towards the ideological" (2014: 12), and which is often capable of developing and sustaining more complex and intricate political dynamics than a short story can. In selecting my corpus, I sought regional diversity where possible and appropriate, although this has not been an overriding concern; indeed, one of the narratives examined has *no* specific geographical setting, with its strategic problematisation of abstract spatial concepts making it eligible for inclusion. A range of publication dates throughout the twentieth century was judged to be essential, in order to coincide with multiple governmental regimes in modern Portugal, and to conclude with a narrative that is roughly contemporaneous to the country's 1998 'Regionalisation' referendum. Regarding the authors chosen, it was necessary to include ideological outlooks that are *distinct* and *complimentary*, while maintaining a targeted focus on the specific *texts* under examination rather than on each author's entire *oeuvre*.

Before I address the structures of this thesis's subsequent chapters, it will be important to outline the theoretical framework that allows regionalisms in Portuguese novelistic fiction to be interpreted as ideological projects. It seems appropriate to begin with the "spatial turn" that has occurred in a number of academic disciplines (Wharf/Arias 2009: 1); there is some uncertainty as to the precise moment when this tendency emerged after WWII, but it has been widely associated with international 'spatial thinkers' of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (cf. Tally Jr. 2013: 3). A pioneering text linking geographical discourse to other humanities-based disciplines was David Lowenthal's "Geography, Experience and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology" (1961), which argues for understandings of human existence based on local particularities: "The surface of the earth is shaped for each person by refraction through cultural and personal lenses of custom and fancy" (1961: 260). Following this, Henri Lefebvre's assertion in 1974 that "social space" is (ideologically and

systematically) "produced" (Lefebvre 1991: 11, 27) was instrumental in destabilising perceptions of *natural* and *immutable* geographies, as was the cultural theorist Raymond Williams's widely renowned *The Country and the City* (1973), which traces the historical evolution of England's rural and urban environments (and literary responses to these changes) along the lines of capitalist development. Williams signalled a particularly significant paradigm shift in his rejection of (idyllic) countryside *vs.* (threatening) city dichotomies, and his claim that one should concentrate on contrasts "between forms of settlement and forms of exploitation", rather than on "the more conventional contrast between agricultural and industrial development: the country as cooperation with nature, the city and industry as overriding and transforming it" (2016: 421). Simultaneously, cultural geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan sought to cultivate notions of "topophilia" (1974), and to contrast "places" ("fields of care" imbued with meaning) with ("abstract" and geometric) "spaces" (1979: 387-427). By the final decades of the twentieth century, Michel Foucault was openly speaking of an "epoch of space", in reference to his concept of "heterotopias" (1986: 22, 24), while this new-found unification of geographical language and broader cultural discourses was being associated with "postmodernist" tendencies (Soja 2003: 12-13, 62), with sexual politics (Massey 1994: 177) and with postcolonial literary analysis (Said 1994: 7). Forays into 'spatial' analysis of literary works – as epitomised by Franco Moretti's claim that "*geography shapes the narrative structure of the European novel*" (2016: 8) – have continued in earnest into the twenty-first century, through Bertrand Westphal's concept of *géocritique* (2007), Michel Collot's *géographie littéraire* (2014) and the research of Robert T. Tally Jr. (2019). The "spatial turn", then, has enjoyed a somewhat prolonged presence within cultural and social theory.

With this theoretical background in mind, it will now be important to develop working definitions of the key terms within my title (*region*; *regionalism*; *ideology*; *resistance*), each of which shall be fundamental to my subsequent analysis of the Portuguese context. First, one must consider the *region* – a somewhat problematic and ambivalent concept –, which has been alternately classed as a 'natural' configuration (cf. Juillard 1961: 109), as a "fiscal, administrative, military notion" (Foucault 2007: 176), or as a regressive political construct, in line with Heidegger's insistence on a 'provincial',

'authentic' and 'pure' localised existence (cf. Miller 1995: 252-253). Three other important considerations when defining the scope of a "region" are the following: that the "etymology of the word 'region' does not suggest any connection to 'natural' or geographical boundaries" (Fetterly/Pryse 2003: 5), in English or in Portuguese; that "the concept of a region itself – […] of an observable uniformity of certain cultural attitudes, behaviors, and artifacts in a socially and naturally defined place and time – is itself an assertion of power" (Mahoney/Katz 2008: XI); and that certain geographical areas are more likely than others to be regarded as "regions", often due to economic and social prejudices (cf. Williams 1982: 59-60). Accordingly, a useful overview of this notion is Armond Frémont's description of "un espace moyen, moins éntendue que la nation ou le grand espace de civilisation, plus vaste que l'espace social d'un groupe et *a fortiori* d'un lieu" (1976: 8); despite this outline's ambivalence (cf. Dainotto 2000: 8), it provides the scholar with enough elasticity and malleability to apply the epithet in distinct spatial contexts within a single nation state. To Frémont's comments, though, it is essential to attach the caveats that regions are often (but not exclusively) viewed as "subordinate areas" (Williams 1982: 60), and that the apparently 'natural' relationship between regions and their 'rulers' is "far from fixed" (Fetterly/Pryse 2003: 5). As I shall outline presently, this definition certainly applies to metropolitan Portugal's 'regions', as well as their representation in twentieth-century literary production.

Secondly, the concept of *regionalism* warrants considerable exploration and re-evaluation, not only as a political concept but also within the context of literary fiction. I shall begin by defining this term by what it is *not*: one should avoid connotations with 'provincial' cultural production focused on 'local colour' (cf. Powell 2007: 4), and, as Marjorie Pryse emphasises, "[i]n beginning to theorize regionalism as a literary category, we need to distinguish the term 'regionalism' from denotative representation of geographical place" (1993: 8-9). This seems a fairly obvious starting point, but it is not without its shortcomings, for this thesis is not solely concerned with the defence of 'regional identities'. Therefore, my interest does not lie with the archetypal "regional novel" critiqued by Williams which, "in this limiting sense, has initially so isolated its region, and thus projected it as internally whole [...] that it is unable to recognize the complex internal processes, including internal divisions and

conflicts, which factually connect with those wider pressures" (1982: 61). Rather, a highly *politicised* understanding of regionalist literary discourse – "*not* a literary genre [...] but a way of reading" (Dainotto 2000: 30) – is necessary, although Roberto Dainotto's rather scathing assessment that "[t]he same hypothesis of cultural homogeneity, and the same insistence on the unity of land and people, more often than not accompany both nationalist and regionalist claims" (*idem*: 20) applies more to ultra-conservative 'regionalist' projects[2] than to the specific novels foregrounded in this thesis. Similarly, Frank Davey's "Toward the Ends of Regionalism" adroitly highlights the fact that regionalist literature has *ideological* implications, and that "regionalist identities" are "relative constructions" (1997: 3), but his insistence that "Regionalism appears to have before all else its geography" (*idem*: 4), and that it "resist[s]" or "competes with other [political] discourses" (*idem*: 4-5, 7) does not offer a satisfactory lens for interpreting narratives that *combine* regionalist dynamics with broader socio-political concerns. Instead, one should turn to Douglas Powell's *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape*, which suggests that regionalist cultural production "can provide a rhetorical basis for making claims about how spaces and places are connected to spatially and conceptually broader patterns of meaning" (2007: 2). Yet more pertinent to my own approach to regionalism is Powell's proposal that:

> To understand the full effects of the impact of injustice, of uneven development, of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism, progressive intellectuals […] must reclaim the supposedly tranquil or quiescent [...] spaces of regional culture as vital spaces of cultural strife. (*Idem*: 28)

Although my selection of Portuguese novels does not cover *all* of the inequities outlined above (specifically, racism and heterosexism), this radical widening of the ideological possibilities offered by regionalist cultural production offers a productive lens for re-interpreting the strategic uses of regional spaces, 'local'

[2] See, for example, my comments in I.1. on 'nationalist' uses of regionalist discourse in modern Portugal.

landscapes and regionalist dynamics in narratives that apparently evoke those elements as mere backdrops. Regarding Powell's claim that "critical regionalism" is "a new kind of regional representation that is not only inquisitive about the possibilities for drawing together new configurations of politics and culture, but is always conscious about its own locatedness as a critical practice" (*idem*: 34), I would only partially agree, given that certain Portuguese narratives dating back to the early twentieth century demonstrate precisely this consciousness of regionalist cultural production's political potential.

A number of disclaimers must be attached to my conceptualisation of literary regionalism, however. The first of these is that an emotional (albeit not *sentimental*) aspect of regionalist literary discourse seems evident, beginning with Williams's notion of a "structure of values" / "of feeling" attached to "the idea of settlement" (2016: 120, 137) but moving beyond this. In particular, I attribute great importance to Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of "topophilia", broadly defined as "the affective bond between people and place or setting. Diffuse as concept, vivid and concrete as personal experience" (1974: 4). More specifically, Tuan affirms that this "affective bond" is more authentically experienced on a *limited* geographical level ("topophilia rings false when it is claimed for a large territory" [*idem*: 101]), meaning that it "cannot be stretched over an empire", but it can be felt for "the home region" (*ibidem*) – an affection that I judge to be at play in much Portuguese literary production of the twentieth century. Secondly, I feel compelled to contradict Dainotto's contention that regionalist literature seeks to negate historicism and to replace an historical analysis with an 'a-temporal' spatial one (cf. 2000: 2, 9), for, according to my understanding of the novels analysed herein, spatialisation and historicism are not diametric opposites, but go hand in hand in the development of ideological messages. Thirdly, although the novels examined in this thesis never construct a simplistic territorial dichotomy, my conceptualisation of regionalism overwhelmingly applies to *rural* diegetic environments, given Dominic Head's focus on "novels in which regional/provincial settings cannot so easily be detached from their literary effects, [which] is usually the case when the rural is combined with the regional" (Head 2015: 13-14). Lastly, although the authors I have selected should not be regarded as ultra-conservative or fascist, it will become apparent from the Portuguese context that "identification with the rural

world can generate wildly divergent political responses", from socialism to fascism (Head 2017: 35). I therefore prefer to conceive of regionalisms – in the *plural* – as a series of distinct ideological projects, which are united by their insistence on localised experiences and on the political implications of regional space, but do not foreground geographical location above all else; instead, regionalist dynamics are an essential component of more comprehensive ideological frameworks.

On this note, I should now turn to my third key term: *ideology*.[3] It should by now be taken for granted that this concept is not an externally imposed "false consciousness" from which one must escape – indeed, according to Louis Althusser, it is "a structure essential to the historical life of societies" (1977: 41) –, nor is it an exclusively Marxist phenomenon, despite its "appropriation" by numerous intellectuals affiliated with Marxism (cf. Miller 1995: 193). At its most mechanical level, one can adopt Martin Seliger's definition of "sets of ideas by which men [*sic*] posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, uproot or rebuild a given social order" (1976: 11), although quite how this corresponds to regional geographies requires further exploration. For Lefebvre, ideology "only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein" (Lefebvre 1991: 44), while John Rennie Short's notion of "environmental ideologies" allows for a highly politicised understanding of spatial imagery and dynamics, in that they can reveal broader patterns of social conflict:

> Ideologies reflect not only the distribution of power in society but also the struggle for power in society. [They] bear the imprint of contest, struggle, victory and defeat. […]. Environmental ideologies reflect the distribution of power in society, indeed power can be defined, partially at least, with reference to differential impact on the production of ideologies. (Short 1991: 55)

[3] The term "ideology" was first conceived by Destutt de Tracy, as "the science of ideas" (*apud* Davis 2014: 27).

With this connection between *ideology* and (regional) space established, the question of how narrative fiction fits into this paradigm remains to be settled. To this end, I am drawn to Irving Howe's *Politics and the Novel*, which affirms that, regardless of whether "the writer intends to celebrate or discredit a political ideology", "[their] novel cannot finally rest on the idea 'in itself'" – lest it risk simply reproducing a "political program" – , and that the successful novelist "must drive the politics of or behind his [*sic*] novel into a complex relation with the kinds of experience that resist reduction to formula" (2002: 21-22). Along similar lines, this thesis conceptualises regionalist ideology (or, more precisely, regionalist ideological projects) as distinct sets of political ideas that are articulated within – but do not *dominate* – specific novels, through intervention within geographical and social space and the strategic deployment of regional locations, landscapes and dynamics in service of wider political objectives.

Finally, I will outline my understanding of *resistance*, insofar as it appears within the novels featured in this thesis. There are, as Lennard Davis suggests, "political" and "psychological" meanings attributable to this term, although his contention that the former is "progressive" and the latter is "regressive" / "conservative" (Davis 2014: 12) is a highly questionable binary. A far more nuanced and relevant conceptualisation of "resistance" is Foucault's definition of this concept as "a multiplicity of points […] everywhere in the power network", which are "mobile and transitory", "distributed in irregular fashion" and involve "resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial" (Foucault 1978: 95-96). Further, James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* calls for an analysis of the "hidden transcripts" of implicit or tacit resistant acts / behaviours (Scott 1990: 4), which he describes as operating "below the line" of detection by a dominant power (*idem*: 198): "So long as we confine our conception of *the political* to activity that is openly declared we are driven to conclude that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life […]. To do so is to miss the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt" (*idem*: 199). So far, so fitting; but how could these interpretations of resistance apply to the oppressed inhabitants of regional communities? Scott's earlier study *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*

offers some answers, in his assertion that a sole emphasis on "peasant rebellion" would be "misplaced", given that seemingly unthreatening acts such as "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance" and "feigned ignorance" often replace "collective outright defiance", if the latter is unfeasible (Scott 1985: 29). His conviction that peasant resistance does not necessarily need to be *selfless*, or even *collective*, to be regarded as such (cf. *idem*: 295) is equally important for considering the various political actions of individual characters and communities within the novels I shall examine. Resistance in this thesis, then, stands for explicit or implicit political actions or behaviours directed against an external state, organisation, collective body or other hegemonic entity, which may emanate from any point on the ideological spectrum and which may encompass radically different final objectives.

Through the definitions outlined above, I hope to have reassured readers that my approach will not err into geographical determinism or essentialism, and that the particularities and distinct ideological discourses of each author are understood and accounted for. To that end, each chapter of my thesis will follow a distinct methodological (and, where applicable, theoretical) framework, in recognition of the diversity of regionalist ideological projects that can be detected in Portugal's political history, dominant tendencies of cultural production and individual twentieth-century novels.

Chapter I, entitled "'Fora de Lisboa não há nada': political and cultural regionalist dynamics in modern Portugal", will conduct a comprehensive diachronic overview of the significant impact that the country's regional differences, geographical inequalities and distinct ideological landscapes have had on Portuguese political history, cultural politics and literary production, focussing on the late nineteenth century onwards. I shall begin with a *longue durée* view of the Portuguese State's problematic relationship with its (continental) constituent provinces, giving way to an analysis of regionalist political organisations and movements during the 1910-1926 First Republic, and of that institution's shortcomings *vis-à-vis* Portugal's territorial unity and harmony. I will then turn to the political, social and economic imbalances that characterised Portugal's regional spaces during the 1933-1974 *Estado Novo* dictatorship – with an eye on both the regime's ultra-conservative 'ruralist' ideological doctrine / propaganda and the extent to which Portuguese peasants

in various provinces remained 'apolitical' – followed by an evaluation of regionalist dynamics and discourses from the post-revolutionary period onwards. The second part of this chapter shall chart the ideological uses of regional space and geographical dynamics in modern Portuguese literature, concentrating mainly on the *novel*. Following an overview of late nineteenth-century 'regional' narratives, I will question the geographical, chronological and ideological precepts of 'Neo-Romanticism' (1890s), *Saudosismo* (1890s-1910s), the so-called 'regionalist movement' (1920s-1930s), 'neo-realist' fiction (1930s-1950s) and post-revolutionary novels, alongside other seminal works that do not fit neatly into the categories above, but nevertheless deploy regionalist characteristics as part of broader ideological projects.

Subsequently, Chapter II, "Regionalism as a "rebeldia barata": Aquilino Ribeiro's ambivalent forms of local resistance" will examine two novels published at different moments in Ribeiro's distinguished career – *Andam faunos pelos bosques* (1926) and *Quando os lobos uivam* (1958) –, insisting on readings of this author's narratives as *regionalist* and *ideological* are not mutually exclusive, but rather complimentary and inter-dependent. My analysis of Ribeiro's earlier novel will establish a distinction between *visible* (or explicit) facets of its regionalist ideological projects – which, through plot, characters' actions, utterances and narratorial comments, critique political and religious authorities under the First Republic – and *concealed* (or implicit) ideological dynamics within this narrative, which oscillate between conforming to, ironically subverting and challenging romanticised and 'fetishised' modes of representation pertaining to the Beira Alta highlands and their inhabitants, while defending *topophilia* as a legitimate political standpoint. The chapter's observations on the latter novel will follow a similar *visible* vs. *concealed* structure, while commenting on the distinct political, social and economic circumstances affecting rural communities within this region under the *Estado Novo* regime; I shall argue that, in this instance, Ribeiro pursues a discernibly *oppositional* (yet non-Marxist) politics, which mobilises the tropes of nostalgia, atavism and topophilic emotion, in service of an ideological project that can be read simultaneously as 'conservative' and 'radical'.

Building on this critical framework, Chapter III – "'Sou muito pouco participante [...] desse provincianismo feminista': regionalism and sexual

politics in Agustina Bessa-Luís and Lídia Jorge" – will turn to the interaction of regionalist dynamics with the questioning of gender roles and female authority within twentieth-century Portuguese society, in Bessa-Luís's *A sibila* (1954) and Jorge's *O dia dos prodígios* (1980). My comments on *A sibila* shall address the narrative's refusal to present an unequivocally bucolic Entre-Douro-e-Minho agricultural environment, or to engage in simplistic binary contrasts between rural and urban communities, while sardonically undermining extant tendencies to 'feminise' pastoral settings and to associate those gendered spaces with nostalgic rusticism. Afterwards, the novel's sexual politics of 'resistance' will be evaluated with regards to its highly equivocal perception of the 'northern matriarch' as a model for genuine female advancement, and its promotion of the 'telluric Sibyl' as a harbinger of *potential* social change, with the capacity to meaningfully challenge Portuguese society's patriarchal foundations if those powers of foresight are fully realised. Similarly, my examination of Jorge's narrative shall highlight the ways in which it destabilises preconceptions of an apparently 'remote' and 'picturesque' pre-revolutionary rural Algarve, and of the 'exoticised', 'fetishised' and semi-erotic relationship between Portugal's rural women and their natural environment. I will then interpret each of the novel's various 'female authority' archetypes, critiquing supposed 'matriarchs' and positing the community's 'Sibylline' figure as a 'regionalised' (coastal) model for *anticipating* (but not fully completing) women's full integration into post-salazarist Portuguese society.

Finally, Chapter IV – "'Julgávamos que vivíamos no cabo do mundo': José Saramago's militant particularisms" – will interpret Saramago's *Levantado do chão* (1980) and *A caverna* (2000) as narratives that deeply embed rural communities, regionalist concerns and spatialised thinking into an anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist ideological project, corresponding to the reflections of Raymond Williams and David Harvey, amongst others. In relation to Saramago's earlier novel set in and around the Alentejan *latifúndio*, I shall argue that the author systematically deconstructs territorial stereotypes of rural 'remoteness', 'ignorance' and 'bliss', while critiquing salazarist and capitalist exploitation of this regional space. Following this, I will outline the organic political agency that Saramago attributes to the region's agricultural proletariat, which functions in a liminal space between localised conditions and universal

struggle that can be described as a form of 'militant particularism'. My reading of *A caverna* shall develop this line of thought in relation to a geographically non-descript diegetic environment, which nonetheless challenges unhelpful spatial dichotomies and instead presents a series of inter-dependent locales that are increasingly affected and controlled by contemporary capitalist processes, culminating in an ominous and all-encompassing *Centro* complex. This novel's politics of resistance, I will suggest, stem from its highly subversive treatment of *nostalgia* and *mourning* in a rural context, which involves keeping alive a (messianic) 'struggle for emancipation' in the face of impossible odds, through the precise localisation of rustic remnants and human remains.

The aim of this thesis as a whole, then, shall be to demonstrate the degree to which several widely known twentieth-century Portuguese novels not only *insert* regional spaces, landscapes, tensions and dynamics into strongly political narrative discourses, but also, and more importantly, *rely* on those regionalist concerns in order to develop, articulate and reinforce their respective ideological messages. The narratives in question may not always propose radical or revolutionary political and social change; indeed, they may not even be *coherent* in the ideological projects that they apparently espouse. They are, however, a collection of intensely *political* and *oppositional* novels, that seek to resist through (various) regionalisms.

Chapter I: "Fora de Lisboa não há nada": political and cultural regionalist dynamics in modern Portugal

> *What separates us from our past is, at most, a geographical distance. Nothing is lost in time.*
>
> Roberto Dainotto

As the popular misquotation of *Os Maias* goes, "Portugal é Lisboa... o resto é paisagem".[6] This widespread perception of Lisbon as the sole centre of political, economic and cultural importance in this country is centuries-old, and is reflected in historical events, sociological phenomena and cultural production across multiple political regimes. Nevertheless, as I shall demonstrate, the geographical complexities of Portugal (particularly continental Portugal) are not confined to a *capital* vs. *province* dialectical tension – one must also consider distinctions that have developed between urban and rural communities within a given region, between the North and South of the country, between areas associated with unique sociological and historical conditions, and between the *litoral* (developed coast) and the *interior* (sparsely populated inland areas).[7] Any analysis of 'regionalism' as a political and cultural discourse within the Portuguese context must take these geographical dynamics into account. This chapter will therefore outline the importance of regional tensions in Portugal from the end of the nineteenth century to the early twenty-first. Firstly, I shall consider the relationship between regionalism and political circumstances, from the final years of the monarchy, to the First Republic (1910-1926), to Portugal's dictatorial era (1926-1974), to the revolutionary period (1974-1976) and finally the post-1976 democratic epoch. Subsequently, I will assess the ways in which

[6] The *verbatim* expression used by João da Ega, in José Maria de Eça de Queirós's 1888 novel, is as follows: "Portugal é Lisboa; fora de Lisboa não há nada" (1999: 140).

[7] For an outline of these established territorial divisions, see Maria Fernanda Alegria/José Afonso Teixeira/Jorge Umbelino, "Norte/sul e litoral/interior: duas divisões dicotómicas de Portugal continental" (1990).

cultural production in modern Portugal (particularly novels) has constructed distinct (and yet inter-connected) 'regionalist' ideological projects, including articulations of nationalist sentiment, Marxist-influenced social realism, and post-imperial reflections of Portuguese national identity in an increasingly globalised context.

I.1. Far from the madding Terreiro do Paço: regionalisms in Portuguese politics

On the surface, continental Portugal appears to have maintained a national cohesion that other European (and Western) nations cannot match. According to Tom Gallagher, this country's national borders and territorial integrity have never been successfully challenged:

> Portugal today is the oldest and geographically most stable nation in Europe. In the 800-year history of the Iberian state a relatively impressive degree of cultural unity has been achieved. […]. Indeed, the national boundaries have remained practically unaltered since the thirteenth century, giving Portugal perhaps the world's most stable continental frontier. (1983: 1)

Notwithstanding some of Gallagher's oversights here,[8] his comments should be tempered by the undeniable existence of significant *regional* tensions in continental Portugal. Certainly, Lisbon's political pre-eminence over the country is an historical phenomenon dating back numerous centuries, owing at least in part to the capital's significance as the site of departure for numerous voyages of maritime exploration (from the mid-1400s onwards), as an imperial metropolis, and as a centre of global trade and exchange, conveniently located within a vast river estuary at the western edge of Europe. As Portugal's reliance on subsistence agriculture gave way to the increasingly imperial interests of its leaders, rural communities outside of the Lisbon area merited progressively less

[8] Linguistic variation in Portugal certainly exists, for instance, as evinced by the minority *mirandês* language in the North-East and the *algarvio* dialect.

attention and financial investment from governments based in the capital, as the historian Douglas Wheeler attests:

> Lisbon dominated the official life of Portugal, while the rural masses remained largely unaffected by political changes. In the provinces, […], peasants continued to live in their traditional society consisting of ancient customs, patriarchal habits, and communitarian activity. Indeed rural Portugal remained a passive backdrop to coastal Lisbon. (1978: 5)

Wheeler further contends that by the late seventeenth century (as Portugal fell under Spanish rule), the country was divided into two distinct social groups, which were chiefly determined by geographical location: "By this time, Portuguese society was composed of two basic elements, those who participated in the gradual Europeanisation process, the "political nation," and the rural masses, the majority of the people, who remained largely unchanged in the provinces, apolitical and passive" (*idem*: 6). For this scholar, the seemingly inexorable rise of Lisbon's political leverage led to a "Lisbon-provincial cleavage": "the dominance of Lisbon in most spheres of activity, and the comparative impotence and dependence of the provinces" (*idem*: 19). This widely held belief that Portuguese communities outside of Lisbon found themselves at a significant disadvantage in financial, political and cultural terms, has been repeated by multiple historians,[10] and has been used to partially explain later conflicts and internal tensions in Portuguese society.

For the purposes of balance, it should be acknowledged that the Northern city of Porto "has long chafed at Lisbon's dominance" (Hatton 2011: 9), in that it has historically functioned as a provincial 'foil' to the national capital. More specifically, A.H. de Oliveira Marques states that Porto enjoyed considerable influence and national status from the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth, due to its economic potential: "Porto's importance mainly derived from its industrial concentration, which was much greater than Lisbon's. The relative affluence and economic power of this northern city were

[10] See, for instance, Marques 1972: 120, Hatton 2011: 10 and Birmingham 2003: 110.

disproportionate to its actual size" (1972: 120). Nonetheless, David Birmingham asserts (albeit without much detail) that Porto's significance within the nation was significantly challenged by Lisbon's industrial development from the 1830s onwards: "[T]he centre of gravity of Portugal shifted with the decline of Oporto [*sic*] and the further rise in economic importance of Lisbon. Industrial growth was in Lisbon, the money market was in Lisbon and Lisbon politicians gave protection to their commercial associates" (2003: 128). Some historians have further characterised this shift in economic relations as Lisbon's increasingly "Paris-like" dominance over the nation (cf. Ramos/Sousa/Monteiro 2009: 583).

This competition between Portugal's two major cities leads to my second analytical focus *vis-à-vis* regionalist discourse: North vs. South tensions. This binary distinction between the country's two 'halves' has been attributed to greater population density in the rural North, greater levels of small-scale property ownership in the Northern countryside than in the southern *latifundia* areas dominated by large landlords (cf. Gallagher 1977; Silva 1987), differing conceptualisations of Christianity between the Minho and the Alentejo (cf. Pina-Cabral 1987: 725-726) and, in José Manuel Sobral's view, historical perceptions of *racial* difference between these two points of the compass, on account of prolonged Moorish control within southern Portugal (cf. Sobral 2004: 271-272). Sobral highlights the arguments put forward by several nineteenth- and twentieth-century Portuguese intellectuals and foreign travel writers:[12] the Brazilian author Sílvio Romero, for instance, associated the North with an 'Aryan' complexion and European Christian influence (given that the *Reconquista* from the Moorish Empire began there), and the South – particularly the Algarve – with 'Arabic' racial heritage, on account of the extended period it had spent under Moorish rule as part of *Al-Andalus* (cf. Sobral 2004: 270).[13]

[12] Sobral cites the historian Oliveira Martins, the geographer Orlando Ribeiro and the ethnographer Jorge Dias, amongst other nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectuals (cf. 2008: 207-217).

[13] Moorish rule of much of the Iberian Peninsula under the Caliphate of Córdoba (or *Al-Andalus*) lasted from the early eighth century until 1492, when the Moors were driven from Andalucía. This regime controlled at least some of southern Portugal from approximately 714 to 1294, naming it the *Al-Gharb* (Arabic for 'The West'). For this reason – and due to its hot climate – the Algarve has been described as "as African as it is European" (Stanislawski 1963: 7).

Although, by Sobral's own admission, such racialised images of communities within northern and southern Portugal are clearly constructed, stereotypical and flawed, they have consistently played a role in conceptions of Portuguese identity over the past two hundred years (cf. 2004: 280).

In some instances, such divisions between Portugal's North and South had significant ideological implications: as I shall explain in more detail later, the country's northern rural regions such as the Entre-Douro-e-Minho have been linked to 'conservative' and 'reactionary' political movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (cf. Gallagher 1977; Silva 1987). In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the so-called "Maria da Fonte" rebellion against António Bernardo da Costa Cabral's liberal government in 1846, in which (mostly female) peasants in the Alto Minho began a revolt against the regime's plans for building new roads, implementing new levies and taxing burials within churches and churchyards (cf. Pina-Cabral 1987: 724).[14] For Manuel Carlos Silva, the rebellion was a reaction against the national State's failure to respect traditional religious and community, as well as an objection to the government's centralising designs (cf. 1987: 425). In addition, similar communities within the rural North were implicated in absolutist resistance to Queen Maria II during the Guerra da Patuleia of 1846-7,[15] as alluded to in Aquilino Ribeiro's and Agustina Bessa-Luís's novels.[16] Rightly or wrongly, then, there is a longstanding political and cultural tendency to associate inland communities within the Entre-Douro-e-Minho, Trás-os-Montes and Beira Alta regions with conservative attitudes and resistance to progressive regimes, in contrast to the more 'progressive' South.

Regarding socio-economic circumstances in *all* rural areas of Portugal, the late nineteenth century was arguably characterised by increasingly adverse conditions for communities engaged in agricultural work. According to Tom Gallagher, "crushing poverty, the absence of irrigation and proper fertilisers,

[14] See also Joyce Riegelaupt, "Camponeses e o estado liberal: a revolta da Maria da Fonte" (1981) and Manuel Carlos Silva, "Camponeses nortenhos: «conservadorismo» ou estratégias de sobrevivência, mobilidade e resistência?" (1987).

[15] For a detailed study of the Patuleia 'civil war', see Maria de Fátima Bonifácio, *História da Guerra Civil da Patuleia 1846-1847* (1993).

[16] See Chapters II and III.

emigration, primitive farm tools and frightfully low yields continued to be the hallmarks of the rural economy" (1983: 16). Admittedly, intellectuals and politicians of the period such as Alexandre Herculano and Oliveira Martins demonstrated concern for rural development, proposing agricultural strategies such as the 'colonisation' of central and southern provinces (cf. Wheeler 1978: 7-8). Nonetheless, government measures that could have significantly improved conditions within Portugal's agricultural economy were seldom implemented and, in Gallagher's view, deliberately prevented by vested domestic interests such as landlords and industrialists (cf. 1983: 16).

This unwillingness to support Portuguese agriculture during the final decades of the Monarchy (1880-1910) can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, several historians have noted that this period of "rotativismo"[19] within national government was supported by implementation of political manipulation and corruption on a local / municipal scale, otherwise known as *caciquismo* (literally: "boss rule").[20] Wheeler notes that the political elite of the late nineteenth century frequently made use of this system based on political patronage and mutual dependence, thereby undermining local democratic practices:

> Government manipulation of local and national elections was a common practice. Rural areas had no voice except through a narrow patronage system based on local caciques. Caciquismo flourished. Local bosses 'arranged' the local vote in return for such favors as money, exemption from the army, and jobs. (1978: 27)

Moreover, these manifestations of *caciquismo* within late nineteenth-century rural Portugal often disproportionately benefitted economic interests in specific

[19] *Rotativismo* can be defined as a set of "clientelistic networks" of political influence in rural areas, and an implicit 'revolving' system allowing political parties to 'take turns' in government (Baum/Glatzer 2012: 94).

[20] The term "caciquismo" derives from "cacique", the name for chiefs of certain tribes native to the American continent (cf. Priberam 2021a). However, "caciquismo" is often used pejoratively in Portugal (and Spain), to signify corrupt, oligarchic and / or clientelistic local political structures.

regions. Gallagher argues, for example, that such oligarchic practices enhanced the influence and leverage of large landowners in the *latifundia* of the Alentejo, with this interest group exercising considerable control over national policy, allowing it to virtually dictate the socio-economic conditions within such areas (cf. 1983: 16). In this regard, socio-economic inequities and a lack of effective democracy in Portugal's provinces significantly contributed towards growing dissatisfaction with the Constitutional Monarchy system in the final years of the nineteenth century.

Indeed, the fact that an abortive 1891 Republican uprising took place in Porto, having developed from an organisation called the *Liga Patriótica do Norte*, is suggestive of an increasing opposition to centralised, Lisbon-based power from other corners of the nation. That said, more immediate causes can be attributed to this failed revolt, such as the 1890 British Ultimatum to Portugal regarding its claim on African territories, which caused Portugal to experience national humiliation and a loss of imperial prestige (cf. Saraiva/Lopes 1996: 668). Furthermore, it would be simplistic to associate rising Republican sentiment solely with *northern* provincial anger towards an unpopular capital city. Although the 1891 programme of the *Partido Republicano Português* [PRP] included plans for decentralisation of powers and reformed local government (cf. Melo 2013: 770), this party arguably owed its growing support base at the turn of the twentieth century to the expanding industrial and agricultural workforce around Greater Lisbon and further south, whose growing influence in the Portuguese economy, relative detachment from the Catholic Church and disillusionment with successive Monarchical governments provided 'fertile ground' for Republicanism (cf. Ramos, Sousa and Monteiro 2009: 582-583). It was, after all, within the city of Lisbon that most radical Republican (and anarchist) movements such as the *Carbonária* were based (cf. Baum/Glautzer 2012: 94-95), with young activists like Aquilino Ribeiro being implicated in bomb attacks and in the 1908 assassination of King Carlos I (cf. Vidigal 1986: 62; Nunes 2020: 91). Therefore, while geographical tensions in continental Portugal possibly precipitated the collapse of the Constitutional Monarchy and the implementation of a Republican political system in 1910, the new authorities were certainly not overly concerned with satisfying all regions of the nation equally.

I.1.1 Regionalist projects of the First Republic

In fact, several historical perspectives on this short-lived Republican 'experiment' argue that the main political figures of this regime were excessively concerned with a Lisbon-based demographic / electorate and paid scant attention to communities, livelihoods and issues relevant to other points of the Portuguese compass. David Birmingham, for example, states that the First Republic was, from the beginning, a system designed by and for the population of Lisbon – at the same time that the capital was becoming the main beneficiary of internal migration and the chief engine of industrial / professional activity in the country: "The republican revolution of 1910 was a Lisbon revolution. Half the country's teachers, doctors and accountants lived there, and many of its tailors, chemists and coal merchants. Thirty per cent of industrial employees worked in or near the city" (2003: 151). In Gallagher's view, although Republican governments dedicated considerable resources to Porto as well as Lisbon, rural areas – particularly in the North – were granted negligible attention and investment: "Political instability, an acute shortage of funds, and the urban representative's disinclination to turn his gaze to the other Portugal which lay beyond Lisbon and Oporto [*sic*], effectively prevented all change" (1983: 23). Gallagher adds that successive Republican administrations excluded Portugal's vast peasant population from participation in national life and, through anti-clerical measures, alienated many religious rural communities from progressive, democratic politics (cf. *ibidem*). Similarly, Wheeler argues that governments from 1910 to 1926 found themselves "unable to resolve the historic conflicts and tensions between Lisbon and the country", or to "significantly alter the traditional landowning patterns and deteriorating agrarian conditions in central and south Portugal" (1978: 156). Regardless of the precise impact of the First Republic's rural policies (or lack thereof), the average peasant's perception of this political system was arguably that of a Lisbon-based 'clique' with little interest in improving their circumstances, as suggested by the way in which this

regime change is depicted in José Saramago's *Levantado do chão*: "A república veio despachada de Lisboa" (1994: 33).[26]

Aside from the Republican regime's reputation in the eyes of its mostly rural populace, certain political choices during this period certainly fostered resentment from the nation's constituent parts towards the Terreiro do Paço – Lisbon's riverside government quarters. Specifically, Gallagher highlights the adoption of an *estado unitário* in the Republic's 1911 constitution – betraying the PRP's earlier promise to decentralise political power from Lisbon – which in his view "could have fostered political awareness in small-town and rural Portugal" (1983: 23). While this hypothesis is somewhat speculative, other scholars have explicitly linked this constitutional decision to the emergence of regionalist proposals in later years (cf. Melo 2013: 766-769; Queiroz 2016: 19-20).

Indeed, an exponential number of regionalist political movements, platforms and programs developed in Portugal throughout the First Republic era: Daniel Melo emphasises that although projects dedicated to federalism, municipalism and regionalismin Portugal date back to the turn of the twentieth century (cf. 2013: 765), they experienced a rapid growth during the Republican period, appearing in a variety of texts and manifestos.[28] Several historians note that 1910-1926 was "uma época dos movimentos «regionalistas»" (Ramos/Sousa/Monteiro 2009: 614), insofar as regionalist organisations and movements appeared in numerous provinces: Porto and the North, the Alentejo, the Beiras, the Algarve, and the Azores archipelago.[29] In addition, numerous

[26] See IV.1. for my analysis of this novel.

[28] Queiroz (2010), Santos (1985), Amaro (2006) and Melo (2013) discuss numerous First Republic-era proposals to de-centralise, including regionalism, alongside "municipalism" and "federalism". For the sake of coherence, I will primarily use "regionalism" as an umbrella term for political movements that sought de-centralisation and / or regional development.

[29] On northern regionalist movements, see António José Queiroz, *Um projecto descentralizador: o núcleo republicano regionalista do norte (1920-1924)* (2010); on regionalism in the Alentejo, see António Ventura, "Centalismo e regionalismo: movimentos regionalistas no Alentejo durante a I República" (2001); for movements in the Beiras, see António Amaro, "Regiões e regionalismo: a região da Beira" (2008); regarding Algarvian political and cultural regionalism, see António Oliveira, "Mateus Moreno (1892-1970) e o regionalismo algarvio" (2017); for

meetings took place throughout the country aimed at formulating local government reform proposals, such as the *Congresso Nacional Municipalista* (1922). These developments should not be viewed solely as calls for administrative or bureaucratic reform, but also as opportunities to air long-held grievances and hostility at Lisbon's continued disinterest in dismantling corrupt political structures and improving conditions in Portugal's provinces. This can be observed, for example, in a speech made at the *Congresso Nacional Municipalista*:

> O novo regime [...] não reorganizou administrativamente o país como devia. Mudou a fachada, [...], mas conservou a velha estrutura viciada e carcomida. […]. Na essência tudo ficou como estava: a mesma centralização; a mesma dominação das províncias pelo Terreiro do Paço; as mesmas intrigas… e os mesmos processos de caciquismo. (E. Amaral *apud* Santos 1985: 120)

However, this emergence of regionalist political projects in the Republican era did not denote widespread interest in separatism or a wholesale rejection of the Portuguese nation state. In fact, Paulo Gonçalves notes that such organisations as the *Núcleo Republicano Regionalista do Norte* strove to *preserve* national unity, precisely by advocating mutual respect, accommodation and compatibility between Portugal's various regional identities (cf. 2016: 12). Thus, these regionalist initiatives can be viewed as acting in the service of nationalism and defending 'national renewal', as Melo suggests: "doutrinas emergentes primo-novecentistas, como as federalista e regionalista, foram amiúde apresentadas como doutrinas regeneradoras, desde logo enquanto ideia de país, de reinvenção do país e do seu lugar no mundo" (2013: 768).

What is important to underline regarding this early twentieth-century regionalism, however, is the support for such ideas across the political spectrum. As Melo suggests, from the onset of the Republican era, certain ideological dividing lines were apparent between 'traditionalist' politicians who favoured a

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Azorean autonomism, see Carlos Cordeiro, *Nacionalismo, regionalismo e autoritarismo nos Açores durante a I República* (1999).

unitary state, and 'radicals' (of the Left and Right) who preferred a decentralised form of government bordering on Iberian federalism (cf. 2013: 766).[32] Indeed, throughout the First Republic a number of heterogeneous movements proposed such policies in their respective political programmes. Right-wing organisations in favour of decentralisation included *Integralismo Lusitano* (1914-1932), a Monarchist, nationalist organisation inspired by the French anti-liberal "Action Française" (cf. Pinto 1982: 1419), which sought an ultra-traditionalist system of local governance (cf. Cordeiro 1999: 220-221). On the Left, regionalist initiatives informed the programmes of radical Republicans, including the Porto-based *Núcleo Republicano Regionalista do Norte* and the *Partido Comunista Português* [PCP], which, in its 1921 Federalist Programme, proposed that Portugal join the recently-formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (cf. Melo 2013: 770). Consequently, support for regionalist and decentralisation initiatives did not pertain exclusively to any particular 'party line' or ideological standpoint within the First Republic's political climate.

Concomitantly, tensions between Republican governments in Lisbon and Portugal's wider population were not limited to bureaucratic disagreements on the nation's governmental structure; one should also consider the complex economic and social issues within Portugal's provinces that government ministers either failed to rectify, ignored completely or even aggravated with their policies. In this regard, Birmingham forcefully argues that the regime's major shortcoming was its Lisbon-centrism:

> The real failure of the republic [...] was not its neglect of the army, or even its persecution of the church, but its inability to recognise that Lisbon was not Portugal and [that] the well-being of the people depended on agrarian renewal and not on the petty squabbles of class fractions in the cities (2003: 156).

[32] Regarding Iberian federalist philosophies, see Sérgio Campos Matos, "Was Iberism a nationalism? Conceptions of Iberism in Portugal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (2009).

This assessment of the 1910-1926 period is extremely problematic, however: notwithstanding the other causes of discontent with which the First Republic was beset – including Portugal's disastrous World War I involvement, mounting government debt and political instability[34] – Birmingham's comments carve a binary distinction between Portugal's capital and 'the rest of the country' that does not adequately reflect the distinct, and yet inter-related, socio-political tensions present in Portuguese society during this period. Regional dynamics were certainly at play, but they did not operate *independently* of those other issues.

Firstly, one must consider the failure of anti-clerical Republican politicians –who expelled several religious orders and separated Church and State – to comprehend the differing levels of devotion to Catholic doctrine across the country (cf. Marques 1972: 131; Alves 2008). While such measures pleased many educated middle-class in Lisbon and Porto (and peasants in the Southern *latifundia* territories, who Nancy Gina Bermeo describes as having a more "secular nature" [1986: 26]), citizens in Portugal's northern and central regions did not react with the same enthusiasm. In Gallagher's view, the Catholic Church's influence remained "unbroken" in these provinces throughout the First Republic (1977: 61), arguably consolidating its power in such areas from 1917 onwards following alleged 'visions' of the Virgin Mary in Fátima (Santarém district), (cf. Alves 2008).[35] In this context, Gallagher maintains, the anti-clerical campaigns of Afonso Costa and other leading republican ministers alienated large swathes of Portuguese society north of the Tagus: "While popular in the towns, [the government-directed anti-clerical campaign] occasioned deep hostility in the [central and northern] countryside and drove devout rural dwellers into the arms of reactionary and obscurantist forces" (*idem*: 60). Accordingly, the Republic's inability to comprehend regional differentiations in

[34] From 1910-1926, Portugal had 45 different governments. See Wheeler 1978 for an overview of the First Republic's crises and shortcomings.

[35] From May-October 1917, multiple encounters with the Virgin Mary at Cova da Iria (Fátima) were reported by three local children; on the 13th October, in the same location, a crowd allegedly witnessed a solar display known as the *Milagre do Sol*.

religious sentiment is often cited as a reason for its weakening public support north of Greater Lisbon.

Secondly, the Republic's misunderstanding of agricultural communities far from the capital can be linked to its ambivalent commitment to improving the lot of Portugal's lower classes. Although this country was slowly becoming more urbanised, proletarianised and politically radicalised along the lines of other western European nations, the "petty squabbles of class fractions" that Birmingham alludes to were not limited to the industrial workforce within Portugal's major cities. One should equally consider actions taken by agrarian labourers such as the strikes and protests of *latifundia* workers in the Southern Alentejo from June 1911-January 1912 (cf. Pacheco Pereira 1982: 28); as Wheeler notes, the Republican authorities repressed these rural strikes in collaboration with local landowners (cf. 1978: 66), which undermined potential support for this regime amongst the rural proletariat. Admittedly, it would be unjust to claim that no Republican ministers ever attempted to remedy the adverse conditions and imbalances in Portugal's agrarian economy: the 1924-1925 Secretary of Agriculture, Ezequiel de Campos, planned a radical Agrarian Reform that never came to fruition, despite support from socialists, Communists and anarchists (cf. Marques 1972: 122; Birmingham 2003: 157). Nevertheless, the Republic's failure to implement any meaningful agricultural improvement can be regarded as a significant shortcoming in what was still a predominantly rural nation (cf. Wheeler 1978: 156).

Indeed, the unequal distribution of farmable land to the agricultural workforce was both a key issue in early twentieth–century Portuguese society and a significant point of difference between Portugal's northern and southern rural communities. On the one hand, Gallagher highlights the *minifundia* system of smallholder land ownership that characterised much of northern Portugal (particularly the Minho), which reduced economic inequalities and, consequently, political radicalisation: "the absence of extremes of wealth and poverty worked in favour of social cohesion" (1977: 60). On the other hand, the *latifundia* system in the South – the historic division of territory into vast agricultural estates, owned by a relatively small number of absentee landowners – has been cited as an explanation for Alentejan agricultural workers' greater

propensity towards militant action: "The whole sociology of the South enhanced radicalization rather than co-optation" (Bermeo 1986: 99).

Be that as it may, patterns of land distribution did not constitute the *only* factor informing distinct political outlooks within continental Portugal. Another issue of geographical variation during this period was the rate of literacy in different regions. Wheeler, for instance, associates 'backwardness' and higher rates of illiteracy in northern and northeastern rural communities with weak support for Republicanism as a political system:

> [T]he backwardness [was not] evenly distributed. The highest literacy rates, wages, politicization, and republicanism concentrated in the two cities, Lisbon and Oporto, and in a handful of other towns in central-south Portugal. [...] The greatest illiteracy, 67-85 percent, was to be found in rural, north[ern] Portugal in the areas of Braga, Bragança, and Vila Real, where monarchism was strongest and republicanism weakest. (1978: 62-63)

Although these comments retain some ambivalence as to whether this 'backwardness' was a *cause* or *effect* of higher Monarchist sentiment, there is some logic to Wheeler's assertion. With little access to (or ability to engage with) political education, party propaganda or radical publications, it is perhaps to be expected that northern Portugal in particular generally favoured the Monarchist *status quo* or reactionary political movements, as evidenced by the spread of the *Monarquia do Norte* rebellion in 1919 from Porto to Mirandela and other northern towns.[38]

With this in mind, the 26th May 1926 *coup d'état* that brought an end to the First Republic can be closely (albeit not solely) linked to the inability of Lisbon-based government ministers to address Portugal's complex – and intersecting – geographical and socio-economic realities. Gallagher and others have drawn attention to the fact that this "May Revolution" was launched from the conservative city of Braga, *in reaction* to the values and policies of Lisbon's

[38] For further information on the 1919 "Monarchy of the North" uprising, see Wheeler 1978: 196-197.

Republican administrations, with which many Portuguese citizens north of Porto did not identify: "the rebels deeply distrusted Lisbon, the main stronghold of the PRP, and preferred to strike out from provincial Portugal, where disenchantment with the Republican regime was far stronger. (1983: 35) While the location from which the coup was launched does not provide a comprehensive explanation for the First Republic's demise, the fact that the Republican régime was overthrown from a movement originating in the 'distant' Minho region is a fitting epitaph to a regime that did not meet the diverse needs and aspirations of continental Portugal: "O 28 de Maio de 1926 foi, em certa medida, uma rebelião da Província contra Lisboa, simbolicamente sublinhada pela marcha das diversas forças rebeldes, de várias regiões do país em direcção da [*sic*] Lisboa, ao centro do poder que durante tanto tempo ignorou e desprezou o país real e rural" (Ventura 2001: 116). Ultimately, however, the dictatorship to come would have a far more problematic impact on the diverse socio-economic realities across different regions of the nation.

I.1.2. Peasants and politics under the Estado Novo

For almost 50 years, Portugal would be governed by a radically different set of policies and principles than those that had characterised the First Republic. Following a brief *Ditadura Nacional* lasting until António de Oliveira Salazar's ascension to the Premiership in 1932, the country was then ruled by a "New State" (*Estado Novo*) dictatorship, presided over firstly by Salazar until 1968, and then by Marcello Caetano until 1974. This regime, alternately described by scholars as "fascist" (Collotti 1994: 122),[40] "statist" (Wheeler 1978: 248), "nationalist" (cf. Trindade 2008: 261), and "Catholic authoritarian" (Maxwell 1995: 16), had a number of unique features: the construction of a 'Corporatist State' involving government control of industry and the workforce, the creation of a *União Nacional*-led one-party system and the prohibition of other political parties, and their defence of traditionalist and ultra-Catholic social values – as

[40] As Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses notes, the categorisation of Salazar's régime as "fascist" has proved controversial, due to its less explicit racial policy and its adherence to Catholicism (cf. 2010: 162-165).

epitomised by the slogan *Deus, Pátria, Família* (Mendes 2009: 490-491).[41] Such values were promoted at all levels of national life, particularly "schools, the Church, the official party, and the elaborate apparatus of the corporate state", including "*casas do povo* (rural community organisations)" (Raby 1988: 6). Finally, as Gallagher outlines in "Controlled Repression in Salazar's Portugal", the *Estado Novo*'s efforts to "prevent rather than contain unrest" involved maintaining a nationwide secret police known as the PIDE [*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*], which coordinated a network of spies and up to 20,000 "bufos" [local informants] from the early 1930s onwards (1979: 387),[42] and a rigorous censorship regime dedicated to cutting, editing and controlling cultural production.[43]

Regarding this regime's treatment of the aforementioned regional dynamics in continental Portugal, it is important to consider its ambivalent attitudes towards decentralisation of governmental authority, and the accordingly low levels of political agency within many of this country's rural communities. Although José António dos Santos and others discuss the influence of Republic-era regionalist movements on apparent 'decentralisation' within the *Estado Novo*'s 1933 *Constituição* and the *União Nacional*'s statutes (cf. Santos 1984: 30), these superficial institutional moves should not be misinterpreted as a desire to grant meaningful decision-making authority to rural communities outside of Greater Lisbon. Rather, the dictatorship's interest in the proposals of prior regionalist movements has been linked to a shared desire to promote 'patriotism' and 'national unity' (cf. Catroga 2005: 216). For António Ventura, the Salazarist dictatorship deliberately co-opted the more conservative regionalist discourses of the First Republic period, repackaging that decentralising sentiment as part of its reactionary ideological project: "O novo

[41] This slogan was increasingly used in *Estado Novo* propaganda after Salazar's infamous "As grandes certezas da Revolução Nacional" speech in Braga (1936): "Não discutimos Deus e a virtude; não discutimos a Pátria e a sua história; […]; não discutimos a família e a sua moral" (*apud Diário de notícias* 2007).

[42] The character Julião Barnabé in Aquilino Ribeiro's *Quando os lobos uivam* is emblematic of this archetypal "bufo" figure. See II.2.

[43] See Cândido de Azevedo, *Mutiladas e proibidas: para a história da censura literária em Portugal nos tempos do Estado Novo* (1997).

poder, longe de combater o regionalismo, procurou condicioná-lo e direccioná-lo, integrando-o na doutrina do regime" (2001: 116). Indeed, as my analysis of Ribeiro's *Quando os lobos uivam* will address, the *Estado Novo* was particularly successful in mobilising, through its cultural politics, certain (justifiable) grudges held by rural Portugal against urban centres, whilst neglecting to substantially address the material deprivation and socio-economic problems experienced within those inland communities.

How can one define the relationship between this regime's regionalist "doutrina" and its broader political objectives, then? For numerous observers of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship, a key characteristic of the hegemonic ideological discourse during this period was a promotion of an idyllic (and generic) rural existence as the desired model for Portuguese national life and culture. António de Figueiredo refers to a reactionary "pastoral ideology", predicated on "a romanticized vision of the rural way of life, medieval simplicity, freedom of Catholic belief and the love of the land" (1975: 164). More specifically, this ideology was articulated through the propaganda chief António Ferro's promotion of a *política do espírito* [politics of the spirit] that idealised rural ethnography, folklore, gastronomy, agriculture and fishing via cultural events and propagandistic exercises (cf. Melo 2001: 44, 75; Corkill/Almeida 2009: 384, 388, 394). For example, the *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* / *Secretariado Nacional de Informação* [SPN / SNI], under Ferro's direction, organised 'folkloric' events such as the *Jogos Florais* (1936-1949) and, most notably, the "Aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal" competition (1938), which in Daniel Melo's view signalled "uma nova fase, uma superação, associando o «povo das aldeias» à «obra do renascimento folclórico e etnográfico nacional». [...] [C]om este concurso já ficava registada uma cartografia dos estereótipos regionalistas" (*idem*: 219-221).[45] Such 'regionalist stereotypes' were further reinforced by images of an idyllic rural existence and the promotion of a "domestic natural sublime" in state-sponsored cinematic productions of the 1930s and 1940s (Vieira 2017: 117), such as José Leitão de Barros's *As pupilas*

[45] This 1938 competition, won by the *transmontano* village of Monsanto, involved a jury travelling across Portugal to observe its most 'authentically Portuguese' villages. See Joaquim Pais de Brito, "O Estado Novo e a aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal" (1982).

do senhor reitor (1935) and Chianca de Garcia's *Aldeia da roupa branca* (1939).[47] These folkloric and bucolic cultural initiatives were arguably instrumental in instilling broader and more durable ideological notions within Portugal's collective consciousness; for António Medeiros, such strategies "might have created a more powerful lasting effect on [...] national identity than images more directly associated with the dictatorship, and more easily rejected following the fall of the regime" (2008: 94).

In particular, the *Estado Novo*'s systematic depictions of idyllic landscapes, lifestyles and communities can be linked to its ultra-conservative social doctrine and insistence on the 'virtues' of the nuclear family. This is especially characteristic of the dictatorship's attempts to limit the behaviour, status and freedoms of Portuguese women; as Ana Paula Ferreira affirms, the dictatorship's determination to limit Portuguese women "to the role and consequent duties of the savvy mother-housewife" (1996: 135) was mediated through consistent efforts to equate 'Woman' with a "natural order of things" (*idem*: 136), and a 'fetishised' depiction of rural female subjects as heads of agricultural households (*idem*: 140).[48] Ferreira's analysis is supported by the activity of State-managed women's organisations such as the *Obra das Mães para a Educação Nacional* [OMEN], which focused on charitable endeavours in rural areas, rejecting "collectivism, industrial society, urbanization and modernization" (Pimentel 2002: 130) and promoting "a ruralidade como reduto de defesa da nação ameaçada" (Neves 2001: 99). Moreover, this institutional promotion of female 'rurality' links to long-standing stereotypes regarding women's 'enhanced authority' in certain Northern agricultural communities, particularly in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho: the anthropologist Caroline Brettell associates historical male emigration from that region with "matri-centrality" (1986: 9), whereas Margarida Durães outlines the apparent financial control exercised by Minho peasant women since the eighteenth century (cf. 1986: 22-

[47] According to Vieira, *Estado Novo*-era cinema combined "the terror-inducing sublime" with a suggestion that nature can be "tamed", thereby "tout[ing] the superiority of an existence in tune with nature as opposed to the supposed artificiality of urban living" (Vieira 2017: 117-121).

[48] As I shall outline later in this chapter, in Chapter II and in Chapter III, Ferreira's analysis applies to anti-dictatorship literature as well as pro-*Estado Novo* cultural production (cf. 1996: 130).

28). Regardless of the accuracy of such statements,[50] it was in accordance with these precepts of 'regional specificity' that the dictatorship crafted its "ruralist" ideological project.

That said, I would venture that the emphasis on rural folklore, bucolic imagery and gender-conservative regional tropes outlined above contains ambiguities and internal contradictions that warrant further interrogation. Firstly, scholars have disputed the *Estado Novo*'s attitudes towards modernity as articulated via its discourse concerning rural space: on the one hand, D.L. Raby affirms that the *Estado Novo*'s focus on "ruralism and self-sufficient poverty" was "the antithesis of modernisation, and has to be seen as more purely reactionary, in a philosophical and not merely a political sense" (1988: 5). On the other hand, Tiago Saraiva's study "Fascist Modernist Landscapes: Wheat, Dams, Forests, and the Making of the Portuguese New State" suggests that authoritarian Portugal, like Benito Mussolini's Italy, did not pursue a 'atavistic' or 'reactionary' rural agenda but rather a modernist, even utopian vision of a landscape *transformed* by the regime's husbandry: "Mountains covered with forests, green irrigated plains, productive wheat fields: this was the idyllic landscape of Salazar's New State" (2016: 68).[51] Although this account fails to consider the rather 'traditionalist' methods resorted to by many peasants who actually *worked* within these landscapes, Saraiva's argument is nonetheless vindicated by key planks of the dictatorship's rural policy: specifically, the authorities spearheaded a *Campanha de Trigo* (1929) designed to upscale wheat production in the Alentejo (cf. Saraiva 2016: 56), a disruptive 'afforestation' initiative designed to appropriate *baldios* (common lands) from central / northern peasant communities and repurpose them as pine or eucalyptus forests (cf. Saraiva 2016: 68; Estêvão 1983: 1157-1260; Silva 2020: 131),[52] and, finally, a succession of hydroelectric dam-building projects, leading to the evacuation and destruction of centuries-old villages like Vilarinho da Furna in the Serra do

[50] I shall tackle these predications regarding northern 'female authority' in Chapter III.

[51] See also Saraiva 2016: 54, 69.

[52] As Estêvão notes in "A florestação dos baldios", the systematic afforestation of *baldios* in central and northern Portugal began in the late 1800s, but was intensified by *Estado Novo* policy (cf. 1983: 1175-1178).

Gerês;[53] collectively, such infrastructure and rural development projects were encapsulated by the seemingly contradictory term *colonização interna* (cf. Silva 2020). In practice, then, the survival of 'traditional' rural communities and livelihoods was never particularly high up on the regime's agenda, as Ribeiro sardonically indicates through a civil servant's comment in *Quando os lobos uivam*: "O progresso não é um ferro de engomar. Alguma coisa vai cilindrando na sua marcha" (2014: 68).

This notion of enforced modernisation through 'internal colonisation' leads us to a further contradiction within the *Estado Novo*'s ideological interpretation of 'regionalism': the dictatorship's adoption of seemingly oppositional 'regionalist' and 'nationalist' elements. Although, as mentioned, regionalist movements during the First Republic sought to maintain 'national unity', the Salazar regime is aptly described by Ricardo Agarez as advocating "national-regionalism" through "superficial regional types" (2016: 13). According to Agarez, "[n]ational and regional identities were [...] not seen as incompatible, either in democratic or dictatorial times, but as fundamentally complementing each other. In this frame, regional identity was not merely desirable: it was essential" (*idem*: 12). While it is arguable that the dictatorship did not *invent* a nationalist consciousness ("[o] Estado foi menos um regime político nacionalista criador de uma cultura nacionalista do que a criatura dessa cristalização do nacionalismo" [Trindade 2008: 14]), it was certainly the first Portuguese regime of the twentieth century to explicitly exalt sentiments of 'nationalism', 'national greatness' and 'patriotism' in its populace, through various educational initiatives, maps, posters and events promoted by the SPN (cf. Caeiro 2006: 367-395; Sapega 2008). Moreover, a great deal of conservative cultural production of this period equated 'regionalism' with a 'nationalist' spirit, as evidenced by the *transmontano* writer Domingos Deusdado's 1934 treatise *Regionalismo e patriotismo*: "Regionalismo, é o amor pátrio sublimado; é o amor cimentado no afectado ao cantinho em que nascemos; é a ternura que sentimos, ao recordar a aldeia distante onde démos os primeiros passos" (1934:

[53] This 'communitarian village' was evacuated between 1969 and 1970, and was submerged in 1971.

13-14).[57] According to Deusdado, regionalism should have a clear decentralising ethos (cf. *idem*: 273) but, in contrast to separatist movements in neighbouring Spain (cf. *idem*: 21-23), it should exhibit loyalty and affection towards the "mãi comum, que é a Pátria Portuguesa" (*idem*: 23). Paradoxically, the author then suggests minimal contact with urban environments such as Lisbon which, in his view, have a corrupting, 'unpatriotic' and 'de-nationalising' influence: "É certo que a corrente desnacionalizadora tem lançado a sua semente daninha nos grandes centros; mas graças a Deus, essa semente não frutifíca na terra agreste das nossas montanhas" (*idem*: 18-19).

In fact, this convergence of the 'regional' and the 'national' is symptomatic of an over-arching theme in *Estado Novo* ideology from the 1930s onwards: imperialism, sustained by attempts to encompass so-called 'regional identities' (in reality, an imagined combination of metropolitan Portugal with overseas colonial territories) within a 'pluricontinental' nation.[58] While Deusdado's text hints at this 'union' of regions within a singular Empire ('[n]ão consentiremos, nunca, que nos tirem a mais pequena parcela do nosso Império!" [*idem*: 19]), the dictatorship's strategic deployment of regional geography for imperialist purposes can be observed in multiple examples of musical and visual propaganda. In addition to song lyrics written for the *Mocidade Portuguesa* youth organisation ("Em Sagres como na Beira, / na Praia ou na Terceira, / em Dili, Macau, Bolama, / Angola ou no Funchal, / a própria terra chama, / aqui é Portugal!" [*apud* Rosas 1995: 29]), one can consider maps from this period, such as "Portugal não é um país pequeno" (1934): this map posits Portuguese imperial possessions as 'natural extensions' of continental Portugal's frontiers, with overseas territories such as Macau, Goa and East Timor seemingly 'neighbouring' the Minho, Trás-os-Montes, the Beiras, the Alentejo and the Algarve.[59]

[57] In all citations in this thesis, I use the author's original orthography, which does not always conform to the ortographic agreements currently in place.

[58] Although previous Monarchical and Republican governments had been colonialist, the *Estado Novo* made maintaining and expanding this Empire a key policy aim, beginning with the 1930 Colonial Act that stressed territorial "unity" and "indivisibility" (cf. Caeiro 2006: 371-372).

[59] See Cairo 2006: 380 for this map.

The *Estado Novo*'s determination to establish an unbreakable line of logical continuity between 'region', 'nation' and 'Empire' is most clearly evinced by several exhibitions that were held throughout continental Portugal up until the beginning of the 1940s. An incipient attempt to project this image can be found in the country's first *Exposição Colonial* (Porto, 1934) which, in António Medeiros's view, evidenced the regime's "new emphasis on representing both internal and overseas 'provinces'" in their "internal diversity" (2008: 81-82). Nonetheless, Medeiros affirms that the "images of a regionally varied Portuguese national culture" in this 1934 Exhibition were "condensed and formulaic" (*idem*: 82), as well as 'unfinished': "[a] discourse of [Portuguese] cultural specificity [that] had not yet been achieved" (*idem*: 93). Ultimately, the dictatorship's determination to fuse 'regional' and 'overseas' cultural tropes into a cohesive national identity was far more explicit in the 1940 *Exposição do Mundo Português*, a high-profile (and high-budget) exhibition of Portuguese history and culture that took place in Lisbon's *Belém* district.[61] This event – described by Luís Trindade as the "ponto culminante" of Portuguese nationalist propaganda (2008: 301) – contained two key elements that are indicative of the *Estado Novo*'s ideological weaponisation of regionalism. Firstly, the 1940 *Exposição* airbrushed Portugal's expanding middle-class and urban society out of existence, in favour of an idealised peasant class (cf. Trindade 2008: 305-19). Secondly, the organizers' decision to construct the *Centro Regional* and the *Secção Colonial* alongside one another within the Exhibition site is significant: given that both of these sections staged 'authentic' lifestyles with 'imported' natives,[62] the event combined regional folklore and the customs of colonised peoples to construct a "new hybrid identity" (Corkill/Almeida 2009: 381) that nevertheless promoted "an impression of unity" (Sapega 2008: 36).

This crafting of a simultaneously "hybrid" and 'unified' Portuguese national consciousness during the dictatorship's early years was used to

[61] This Exhibition was the centrepiece of the 'Duplo Centenário', celebrating 800 years of Portugal's existence as a nation and 300 years of independence from Spanish rule (cf. Sapega 2008: 24).

[62] The *Secção Colonial* hosted the king of the Portuguese Kongo, who was invited from Angola, whereas the *Centro Regional* showcased peasants in reconstructed 'aldeias' from across continental and insular Portugal (cf. Sapega 2008: 39).

facilitate and justify the regime's colonial policies in subsequent decades: in 1951, under post-war international pressure to relinquish imperial possessions, Salazar's government extended the legal designation of "províncias" to include *all* of Portugal's overseas territories (cf. Maxwell 1995: 47), and in 1960 the dictator himself disparaged calls for the independence of such colonies as "certos problemas que apenas respeitam à organização administrativa e a maior ou menor descentralização ou autonomia" (Salazar 1961: 18), thereby comparing nascent anti-colonial discourses to non-threatening 'regionalist' organisations of previous decades. In 1961 – the year that Portugal's Colonial Wars began with an uprising in Angola – the academic Herlander Machado provided further support to the *Estado Novo*'s imperial project in a public lecture, by ridiculing and relativising independence movements active within the Portuguese Empire: "Visaram Goa… Agora visam Angola… Talvez a venham a defender relativamente ao Minho ou ao Algarve, para não dizer que visarão um dia a «autodeterminação da Comarca de Figueiró dos Vinhos!... »" (1961: 15). Thus, having cemented the 'indivisibility' of Portugal's regions and colonial possessions in the Portuguese popular psyche from the 1930s onwards, the Salazarist dictatorship continued to present these territories as equivalent 'provinces' even as the Colonial Wars were commencing.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to outline the extent to which peasant communities in continental Portugal contested and resisted the *Estado Novo*'s hegemony and, more specifically, its rural policies. For Joyce Riegelhaupt, the "highly centralized political system" that characterised the regime (1979: 168) – involving, for instance, "the direct appointment by the state of low level officials" (*idem*: 169) – did much to disempower local communities and deny them political agency, particularly in more geographically 'remote' areas:

> At the local level, [...] the people who represented through 'election' the interests of the villagers were in fact directly responsible to the municipal council, more specifically to the mayor. Although local desires, policies, or conflicts could be communicated upward, they could not be acted upon locally. (*Idem*: 171)

This lack of organic democratic processes and political accountability, Riegelhaupt claims, achieved the dictatorship's objective of maintaining an "apathetic" peasant populace: "[v]illagers were marginal actors in the Portuguese political system; they were integrated into a political process which granted them a minimal role of apathetic acquiescence. The Estado Novo prevailed for almost fifty years by enforcing apathy" (*idem*: 187-188). According to Raby, this analysis was broadly shared by the clandestine Communist opposition of the period, which consistently struggled to recruit agricultural labourers from central and northern Portugal, and (unsuccessfully) adapted its propaganda for those areas in order to address small-scale land ownership patterns and an 'anti-revolutionary' social consensus (cf. Raby 1988: 86-87, 258).

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that multiple rural communities throughout continental Portugal decisively rejected *Estado Novo* rural policies and reacted with unrest, often for contrasting reasons and in accordance with distinct worldviews. In northern and central Portugal, peasant protest chiefly arose from the dictatorship's aforementioned afforestation program, leading to civil suits against the authorities' plans, boycotts and arson, as well as confrontations with the *Serviços Florestais* (cf. Fonseca/Freire 1999: 730-732). In these instances, Dulce Freire argues, peasant resistance was motivated by a determination to preserve "os 'usos tradicionais' [dos baldios] e a necessidade de garantir a reprodução das comunidades como até aí", alongside "a insegurança provocada pela impossibilidade de continuarem os seus modos de vida sem que vislumbrassem alternativas consistentes e vantajosas" (Freire 2004: 193, 200). In other words, such communities in the Beira Alta and other northern regions often reacted violently against attempts to *change* their way of life, favouring *continuity* over socio-economic transformation.

This 'conservative resistance' was counter-balanced, however, by a number of peasant strikes aimed at addressing *unchanged* socio-economic inequalities and injustices, as evidenced by events in 1958 involving the agricultural workforces of Covilhã and other small Serra da Estrela towns (cf.

Raby 1988: 128).[66] Above all, political unrest in the *latifundia* of southern Portugal (mainly in the Alentejo but also, to a lesser extent, in the Ribatejo) was particularly incited by *existing* and *unaltered* inequities in terms of land ownership and working conditions. If, as mentioned, large landowners' disproportionate ownership of agricultural territory was a source of class conflict in the Republican era, the discontent and militant activity of Alentejan peasant labourers throughout the *Estado Novo* reached new levels, due to the regime's repressive actions which "forced a political definition" to "the organization of opposition based on economic grievances", with the Alentejo's "rural social structure [...] contribut[ing] to the development of a radical political consciousness" (Hammond 1979: 258-259).[67] Accordingly, Raby affirms, "[i]t was the agricultural proletariat of the South which revealed continued and growing militancy, becoming a permanent thorn in the side of the regime", undertaking "chronic" militant action from the 1940s onwards (*idem*: 123-124), convincing the PCP leadership that labourers within this region would offer the party a "shock brigade" of support in the event of substantial revolutionary activity (*idem*: 86-87). A number of specific peasant disturbances in southern Portugal can be highlighted that demonstrate this *localised* propensity for political resistance during this period: in the Ribatejo district in 1944, in Montemor-o-Novo in 1945 (and again in 1958), and the successful campaign in 1962 for an eight-hour working day. In this way, peasant activism in the Alentejo and Ribatejo regions arguably exemplifies what Bermeo regards as "a local tradition of resistance" (1986: 34) – a tradition whose significance became extremely clear in the revolutionary period, during which latent regional tensions came into sharp focus.

I.1.3. Revolutions, reactions, rurality and regions in post-dictatorship Portugal

[66] Raby also highlights that agricultural labourers in inland Portugal organised strikes (e.g. 1954), in support of factory workers in large cities, such as Porto (cf. *ibidem*).

[67] For further sociological commentary on the Alentejan agrarian proletariat under Salazarism, see José Cutileiro, *A Portuguese Rural Society* (1971).

From the 1960s onwards, numerous factors began to terminally undermine the *Estado Novo* regime, particularly the government's insistence on fighting a Colonial War against insurgents in Portugal's African territories, which consumed considerable economic resources and caused thousands of deaths on both sides. However, Kenneth Maxwell also stresses the impact of a severe crisis that took place within the agrarian economy: "The neglect of agriculture had important political consequences since it strained to breaking point one of the principal sources of support for the old system" (1995: 22). Further, Maxwell highlights the adverse impact of large-scale emigration on the Portuguese economy – particularly from agricultural areas – in the latter days of the dictatorship (cf. *idem*: 23), with Portugal's urban areas absorbing many former peasants (cf. Almeida 2020: 2-5), and other agrarian labourers (chiefly from northern regions) emigrating to France (cf. Brettell 1979: 285). Once the Carnation Revolution / military coup had finally occurred, inaugurating the 1974-76 *Processo Revolucionário em Curso* (PREC) and granting the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA) a key role in post-*Estado Novo* provisional governments,[75] regional distinctions arguably contributed significantly to political tensions and (occasionally) open conflict between the ultra-conservative right, moderate democrats and extreme-left factions, as evidenced by "violent anti-MFA demonstrations, and attacks on the Communist Party offices in the conservative northern section of the country" (Machado 1991: 180).

Two specific phenomena connected to the PREC era suggest the continuation and culmination of regional divisions within post-1974 continental Portugal: firstly, one can consider the behaviour of Lisbon-based organisations towards rural populations during this revolutionary period; secondly, it is essential to consider 'radical' and 'reactionary' measures taken by the peasants themselves in different areas of the country. With regards to the first of these, Figueiredo noted during the revolutionary period that political parties were failing to understand (or listen to) concerns within peasant communities: "urban party organizers have made the mistake of coming out to the countryside to teach

[75] For a comprehensive overview of the Carnation Revolution and the PREC, see Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy* (1995).

before trying to learn, and the result has been that the peasants have often thrown them out of their villages" (1975: 16). This observation lacks territorial precision, however; when the geographical trajectory of specific 'civic engagement' projects is considered, the regional complexities of Portugal's revolution can be better appreciated. To this end, Sónia Vespeira de Almeida has shed considerable light on the MFA's 1974-5 *Dinamização Cultural* and *Acção Cívica* campaigns, which, in her view, reproduced and reappropriated romanticised images of idealised rural communities from the previous authoritarian regime. These campaigns – which included "brigadas de alfabetização e educação sanitária", theatrical activities and "sessões de esclarecimento" (Almeida 2009: 29, 65, 106) – required the MFA to 'regionalise itself', as armed forces newsletters emphasised: "torna-se necessário que os nossos técnicos, o nosso pessoal qualificado se regionalize, abandonando os centros urbanos[,] e inicie a caminhada até às aldeias" (*apud idem*: 256). Specifically, the MFA primarily targeted small-scale rural communities in the Minho, Trás-os-Montes, the Beiras and the Azores archipelago (cf. *idem*: 29), while fewer visits to the Alentejo took place, given the MFA's convinction that this region was already sufficiently receptive to revolutionary ideas (cf. *idem*: 132-133).[78] In this spirit, the MFA conducted an "Operação Nortada" aimed at increasing political engagement and support for revolutionary policies in such towns as Viseu, Vila Real and Bragança (cf. *idem*: 164-165), which in certain cases incited direct hostility from influential local inhabitants and clerical authorities in press articles and Catholic masses:

> [A] igreja e os notáveis locais, [...], asseveram as suas posições relativamente à Dinamização Cultural e ao processo de transição em geral, ancorando-se num discurso regionalista e anticomunista. [...] De facto, as campanhas de dinamização cultural não foram um terreno pacífico, tendo sido palco de inúmeras críticas e oposições, ao que não foi alheia a escolha dos seus destinos: as comunidades rurais

[78] The MFA also made some visits to the Algarve during its *Operação Povo Culto* (cf. *idem*: 133), potentially alluded to in Lídia Jorge's *O dia dos prodígios*. See III.2.

> do norte e interior centro do país, zonas de minifúndio e de elevada prática católica. (*Idem*: 167-168)[79]

The relationship of the MFA's activities to regionalist ideological discourse is relevant not only due to northern conservative reaction against them, but also on account of the armed forces' reliance on pre-revolutionary regional stereotypes: namely, the *Estado Novo's* idealisation of apparently 'bucolic' peasant society in Portugal's North and Centre (cf. *idem*: 264). Following Almeida's arguments, the *Dinamização Cultural* and *Acção Cívica* campaigns would not appear out of place within a *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* initiative coordinated by António Ferro: "são os camponeses e a ruralidade a Norte que são resgatados pelo MFA, [...], para representar o 'povo', permitindo uma aproximação ao país rural e autêntico" (*idem*: 254-255). In this way, Almeida affirms that the MFA's "'ressemantização' do conceito de povo" (*idem*: 252) and its discursive construction of the "'povo' como sinónimo de cultura camponesa" (*idem*: 256) was *regionally targeted*, with the armed forces' "*pastoral* revolucionária" (*idem*: 303) designed to convince *northern* peasants of the need for radical socio-political transformation.

Regarding the political agency of Portuguese peasants *themselves*, as outlined above, inhabitants of the Southern Alentejo and Ribatejo *latifundia* already had a pre-existing propensity for militant action, as Bermeo succinctly notes, "the rural proletariat of the South did not have to wait until 1974 to be tutored in class consciousness" (1986: 25-26). Accordingly, from December 1974 to mid-1976, Alentejan landless peasants began to occupy local agricultural estates that had been left abandoned and unworked by absentee landowners, transforming them into agricultural cooperatives. These spontaneous occupations continued to occur after land expropriation laws were passed in 1975, and resulted in more than one million hectares of Portuguese farmland being occupied by workers and farmed collectively – 23% of continental Portugal's total agricultural territory, almost exclusively south of Santarém (cf. Bermeo 1986: 5). At the time, these occupations were attributed

[79] Moreover, inhabitants of rural towns such as Tomar (Santarém district) resorted to stoning MFA soldiers during their visits (cf. Gallagher 1983: 206).

to the machinations of the PCP, in the form of local activism, infiltration and direction from Communist leaders (cf. Rutledge 1977: 91). However, as Bermeo persuasively contends, more evidence exists to indicate that southern tenant farmers involved in these events acted in complete independence of party-political structures, *organically* and *spontaneously*: "the seizures were not the product of orchestration 'from above' but were instead the outgrowth of a complex and varied series of structural changes that allowed people to take action from below" (1986: 80).[80] Furthermore, Bermeo states that these labourers were able to occupy agricultural territory due to their regionally specific historical circumstances: "the seizures continued because no one seemed to control the South. […] The farmworkers of the South started a social revolution of their own and on their own. Their consciousness came from their history. Their justification came from the sociology of the South" (*idem*: 100). Consequently, these events in the Alentejo during the mid-1970s can be associated with a 'regional distinctiveness': "a regional social revolution emerged within the national political revolution" (*ibidem*). Indeed, it has been suggested that, following the 1976-78 Socialist government's Agrarian Reform laws of 1977 (which addressed land inequalities but began to return occupied estates to their original owners), memories of the PREC occupations fed into Alentejan society's sense of its own unique regional identity (cf. Balabanian/Bouet 1991: 324).

In direct contrast to this Alentejan revolutionary activity, many individuals and organisations involved in agriculture within northern and central regions[82] aggressively opposed radical changes to continental Portugal's agrarian economy, through organised protests linked to the *Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal* [CAP], which explicitly stated its determination to save Portugal from "the Marxists" (Bermeo 1986: 188). Gallagher too addresses heightened 'counter-revolutionary' sentiment in the North and Centre, with a

[80] For a cinematic portrayal of such 'peasant-directed' occupations, see Thomas Harlan's *Torre Bela* (1975), which documents the founding of a Ribatejan agricultural cooperative by local agricultural labourers.

[82] Anti-revolutionary demonstrations also took place in the Madeira and Azores archipelagos during this period – see Silva 1987: 407.

generalised fear in those areas that Lisbon-based provisional governments (including some Communist ministers) would forcibly extend agricultural expropriation to their local properties, or at least *allow* the occupations to spread northwards (cf. 1977: 59). This concern, Gallagher suggests, was amplified by the fact that "[i]n the capital, comparatively little attention was directed northwards", with "little concern that over-rapid change might trigger off a popular backlash against Lisbon's revolutionary policies" (*ibidem*). This historian's remarks on northern / central peasant 'conservatism' are enlightening, but his claim that opposition to socio-economic transformation in those areas resulted from a lack of formal education, more equitable land distribution and greater clerical influence on peasant communities can be viewed as overly simplistic, deterministic and patronising, as other scholars have implied (cf. Silva 1987: 413-415, 437-438). Specifically, Manuel Carlos Silva affirms that such 'conservative' behaviour can be attributed to 'survival strategies', in the face of capitalist intrusion and revolutionary 'risk' to their settled livelihoods (cf. *idem*: 445), whereas Caroline Brettell highlights the "strong anti-communist, antirevolutionary, and pre-work-ethic" worldview of those peasants who were more likely to emigrate abroad, which, she argues, was not simply the result of Catholic indoctrination (Brettell 1979: 288). In any case, the regional divisions within continental Portugal during the PREC period were multi-faceted, sociologically complex and intensely *political* in nature.

Following this fiercely contested transition from dictatorship and the eventual 'taming' of Portugal's radical direction by 1976, a significant institutional change brought about by the revolutionary process was the introduction of 'home rule'-style political autonomy for the Azores and Madeira archipelagos, partly in response to independence movements within those islands (cf. Andrade 2014: 5).[84] However, aside from the institutionalisation of *Poder Local* (in this instance, *municipal* government) in 1976, no attempt was made to devolve political power on a regional or district level within continental Portugal; according to Gallagher, "if anything, the centralizing imperative

[84] Examples of these were the *Frente de Libertação dos Açores* (FLA) and the *Frente de Libertação do Arquipélago da Madeira* (FLAMA), drawing inspiration from the independence movements of Portugal's former African colonies. See Andrade 2014: 12, 425.

strengthened in the years following the collapse of the dictatorship" (1999: 135). Hence, new debates regarding 'regionalisation' and regional development emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s (cf. Gaspar 1985: 150; Santos 1985: 172) which, to some extent, were reminiscent of the aforementioned "regionalismos" of the First Republic era. Concomitantly, observers have been quick to emphasise geographical patterns in the Portuguese electorate's adhesion to left- and right-wing parties since 1975, although claims of "three Portugals: the North, the Center, and the South" (Machado 1991: 194) are somewhat crude and dated territorial divisions. Rather, established political divisions between regions of the Portuguese mainland *interacted* with economic class, sexual politics and other sociological conditions to produce an intricate and dynamic post-revolutionary ideological geography.

Portugal was, of course, faced with a plethora of new challenges as it navigated its new democratic pathway, such as the restructuring of its economy, addressing women's rights and decolonisation, which formally concluded Portugal's colonial presence in every overseas territory except Macau. This sudden reduction of the country to its medieval borders could not help but have a significant impact on Portuguese national identity; as the philosopher Eduardo Lourenço recognised in *O labirinto da saudade*, for centuries before the Carnation Revolution Portugal had relied on imperial possessions as "espaços compensatórios" (1991: 41) and, "na hora em que fomos amputados à força" (*idem*: 38), faced a geo-political reckoning and was forced to 'return' to its internal dimensions (cf. *idem*: 45). One of the key coping mechanisms adopted by Portugal's post-imperial governments was a new foreign policy, as exemplified by the groundwork laid by Socialist Prime Minister Mário Soares for the country to join the European Economic Community in 1986. Nonetheless, several historians note that the impact of European integration on Portugal was neither uniformly beneficial nor evenly shared across the nation, with latent *litoral-interior* divisions resurfacing, and rural traditions of *caciquismo* preventing European Union funding from being distributed to those regions most in need of it (cf. Birmingham 2003: 200-201; Hatton 2011: 212). Further, several scholars contend that Portugal's adherence to contemporary neo-liberal globalisation – principally through its EU membership (cf. Syrett 2002: 14) – has shifted its population distribution towards Greater Lisbon,

leading its citizenry to develop an increasingly "urban outlook" (Birmingham 2003: 203). Broader geo-political shifts involving Portugal, then, have significantly affected regional development within the country, as well as its internal geographical dynamics.

That said, Portugal's deferred adherence to late-capitalist globalisation processes has not yet completely eradicated its "traditional" rural communities – "rather[,] the contemporary landscape is marked by the juxtaposition of traditional and modern forms of production, consumption and social reproduction" (Syrett 2002: 1) –, nor has it conclusively resolved socio-economic conflicts *within* Portuguese regions or *between* them. For example, the open hostility of northern peasants to external 'intrusion' once again became apparent in 1989, when inhabitants of the Lila valley (Valpaços, Trás-os-Montes) refused to allow a company to plant eucalyptus trees on a nearby estate, resulting in large-scale protests, police violence and arrests (cf. Rodrigues 2017).[87] According to local landowner António Morais, such efforts to economically exploit agricultural territory through eucalyptus planting were openly promoted by Aníbal Cavaco Silva's Social Democrat government of the period: "A tese dominante [...] era que urgia substituir o minifúndio e a agricultura de subsistência por monoculturas mais rentáveis, era preciso rentabilizar a floresta em grande escala" (*apud* Rodrigues 2017). This specific episode localised in Valpaços evinces two enduring dynamics within post-revolutionary rural Portugal: firstly, attitudes espoused by centralised authorities and private enterprises that were clearly reminiscent of the *Estado Novo*'s 'internal colonisation' policy; secondly, the willingness of apparently 'reactionary' peasant communities in northern Portugal to contest enforced socio-economic transformation, to the extent of physical confrontation.

With regards to regional divisions *throughout* the country, a concerted effort was made to 'decentralise' political power in 1998, when António Guterres's Socialist government held a national referendum to determine whether continental Portugal should be divided into eight administrative regions. The negative result of this plebiscite – 64% *against* the introduction of

[87] As Ricardo Rodrigues outlines, the local community's opposition to this project stemmed from a (now vindicated) fear of forest fires (cf. 2017).

administrative regions (cf. Rádio e Televisão de Portugal 1998) – raised numerous questions regarding the country's capital-province divide. Gallagher, for example, states that "[t]he defeat of the referendum [...] perhaps illustrated the degree to which the centralizing ethos had put down strong roots in the soil of Portuguese political culture" [1999: 132-133]), with "the imagined Portugal, which the state and its apologists had imposed upon the public consciousness" also contributing to the result, alongside "a low level of political awareness in many parts of the countryside" (*idem*: 145-146). This appraisal of the vote might be seen as exaggerated, however, given that the proposal itself was regarded as flawed due to its arbitrary division of regional boundaries, and that the campaign's rhetoric arguably exasperated regional divisions rather than healing them (cf. Corkill 1999: 188). In fact, the "regionalisation" campaign harboured a decidedly ideological dimension, given accusations that the PCP was supporting this change in order to gain "permanent control" over the agricultural South (Gallagher 1999: 141), and that the referendum proposal was only approved in the largely pro-Communist Alentejo.[90] In contrast, Portugal's 'conservative' northern provinces firmly rejected regionalisation, and also voted against the legalisation of abortion in two separate referendums between 1998 and 2007 (cf. Manuel/Tollefson 2008: 122), thereby demonstrating that, into the twenty-first century, Portugal's distinct regional identities have continued to interact with political and social values.

A final essential point to be made regarding the importance of 'regionalist' dynamics to Portuguese politics concerns the deterioration of material conditions and infrastructure within multiple provinces, encapsulated by the notorious Entre-os-Rios bridge collapse on the Douro River, in 2001, killing seventy, the fatal collapse of a quarry road near Vila Viçosa (Alentejo), in 2018, and repeated seasons of forest fires since the turn of the century, as epitomised by the death of sixty people in Pedrógão Grande (a municipality with

[90] The PCP has consistently won a plurality or majority of votes in numerous municipalities between Lisbon and the Algarve, such as Montemor-o-Novo, Palmela and Setúbal, at least up until the 2017 Local Elections (cf. Secretaria-Geral do Ministério da Administração Interna 2017).

a high concentration of eucalyptus trees), in 2017.[93] As tragic as these isolated incidents are, though, they potentially gesture towards deeper structural problems afflicting Portugal's *interior*, as *Financial Times* journalist Peter Wise suggests: "the wounds exposed by the disaster and inflicted by decades of neglect, rural flight and remoteness from political power cannot be healed by aid alone" (2017). Wise's argument, that decades of under-investment and de-population affecting the country's inland communities have "widened the poverty gap" between Portugal's regions, particularly following years of austerity (*ibidem*), is supported by the increasing media and academic attention now being paid to human "desertification" affecting Portugal's eastern countryside, which is frequently attributed to material poverty, emigration, low birth rates and an ageing population (cf. Baum/Freire 2003: 38; Carvalho 2018; Almeida 2020: 2). Several positive developments in this regard should be highlighted, however, including President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's call for public policies to reduce inequalities between multiple "Portugais" (*apud* Rádio e Televisão de Portugal 2018), efforts by António Costa's Socialist governments to devolve more political power to municipalities and to foster economic development within the *interior* (XXII Governo 2021), and potential signs of economic revival within certain inland communities (for instance, in the Serra da Estrela), on account of increased small-scale manufacturing and artisan ventures (Balch 2019). Regardless, it is evident that, over centuries of imbalances between Portugal's capital and its provinces, between the country's regions and *within* those regional spaces, regionalisms (in various guises) have played a fundamental role in public discourse, notions of territorial identity, the extent of national social cohesion and the likelihood of political (and / or physical) confrontation. As I shall now demonstrate, twentieth-century Portuguese fiction consistently evoked and appropriated these regionalist dynamics, albeit not in an aesthetically or ideologically coherent manner.

[93] Ecological concerns in contemporary Portugal involve global anxieties over climate change, alongside more *localised* circumstances, such as forest fires and environmental desertification (both of which have been linked to the proliferation of eucalyptus trees). For a *longue durée* view, see Viriato Soromenho-Marques, "A Portuguese Approach to the Environmental Crisis" (2019).

I.2. "Regionalismos na minha terra": a secret history of regionalist ideologies in the Portuguese novel

To some, a review of "the rural" in Portuguese literary production may appear somewhat redundant, considering the frequent presence of provincial and rural landscapes in fiction, poetry and theatre over several centuries. One can certainly trace "pastoral" settings and themes back to Gil Vicente's 1527 play *Tragicomédia pastoril da Serra da Estrela* (cf. Verdelho 1982: 11; Godinho 1975: 33-35), and to the *novela pastoril*, a sixteenth- / seventeenth-century genre derived from the classical bucolic eclogue (cf. Simões 1987: 107-110), exemplified by Bernadim Ribeiro's *Menina e moça* (1554). As I shall demonstrate forthwith, however, the deployment of 'regionalism' in Portuguese fiction goes far beyond *simply evoking* or *illustrating* regional environments, and often assumes ideological contours. As opposed to a chronologically, politically and aesthetically limited "corrente regionalista" (Nogueira 2013: 81), along similar lines to the French "mouvement littéraire régionaliste" that championed regional ethnic identities and dialects in the first half of the twentieth century (cf. Thiesse 1991; Correia 2017: 22-23), it is more productive to consider Portuguese regionalism as a dynamic literary project that, Ana Maria Costa Lopes suggests, "[a]travessou várias épocas e interpretações, em função das escolas literárias e das ideologias políticas professadas, ora mais à direita, ora mais à esquerda" (2008: 160). Nonetheless, as outlined in my Introduction, Lopes's 2008 study is also somewhat problematic, given that what ostensibly begins as a diachronic overview of regional difference in Portuguese literature transforms into a mapping exercise, with individual sections dedicated to fictional depictions of the Minho, Beiras and Algarve, amongst other provinces (cf. *idem*: 163-202). This geographical framing of regionalist literature (and in Óscar Lopes's text "Regionalistas e panfletários" [2002]) does not sufficiently address the implications of regionalism as a series of *ideological projects*, which deploy regional space as a discursive *means* rather than as a political *end*.

In this respect, Alda Correia (2017) provides a more substantive chronological framework for examining evolving portrayals of regional space in Portuguese fiction. For instance, Correia is right to point out that, in Portugal, a

dynamic and interactive relationship has existed between 'regionalist' literature and successive political regimes: "the relationship between literary regionalism and national ideologies [...] is an accepted social and literary reality. In Portugal, Liberal ideology, Republicanism and the Estado Novo [...] interfered in this relation, using, transforming and finally, fighting it. (2017: 163). The critic does not suggest, though, that this trajectory was entirely linear or diachronic, or that regionalist works of the same period were completely consistent in the worldviews that they expressed. Rather, Correia proposes "at least three types of landscape present in the [late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century] Portuguese regionalist short narrative", comprising "landscape marked by idealisation (fresh and healthy)", "landscape marked by decadence" and "landscape marked by oppression and aggression/rebellion" (*idem*: 172). The distinctions drawn here between ideological conceptions of 'landscape' are eminently useful ones, but they nevertheless need to be problematised, at least with regards to the Portuguese *novel*. Specifically, as I shall argue with regards to several novels, at least two different markers may be detected within the same author's corpus or indeed within a single narrative, resulting in seemingly contradictory political statements being made. Finally, it must be remembered that any given 'regionalist ideological project' involves not only landscape description, but also an exploration and / or critique of territorial dynamics and inequalities connected to regional geography.

To this end, I shall now conduct an outline of regionalism as an ideological feature of Portuguese fiction from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first, while consciously avoiding any attempt at an encyclopaedic approach to fictional depictions of the region over that period. To begin with, while scholars have debated whether Almeida Garrett's *Viagens na minha terra* (1846) can be regarded as a proto-regionalist text or as a 'nationalistic' one (cf. Dias 1977: 18; Lopes 1990: 12;), a more consensual candidate for Portugal's first regionalist narrative is Alexandre Herculano's *O pároco de aldeia* (1851), regarded to be an inspiration for literary interest in 'hidden' and 'neglected' rural communities (cf. Besse 1996: 115), and for the *conto rústico* [rustic short story], which continued into the twentieth century (Lopes 1990; Braga 2015: 180). In a more systematic sense, the late nineteenth-century author Camilo Castelo Branco has been highlighted on account of his often sardonic portrayals of "the

diverse social environments of a country still living with quasi-medieval social structures and attitudes" (Frier 2009: 122), with a particular concern for Portugal's northern provinces (cf. Rego 1967: 496-400). Specific examples of Branco's regionalist literary leanings include *A queda dum anjo* (1866), which "plays with the traditional dichotomy of the corruption of city society in conflict with the virtues of [...] [the nation's] conservative rural heartland" (2009: 126), and *Novelas do Minho* (1875-77), in which the author ironically manipulates *minhoto* traditions, local dialect, and the "persistência dos morgadios e de velhos preconceitos de classe em Portugal" (Saraiva/Lopes 1996: 776-786).

In parallel to this humourous exploration of Northern regional identity through the *novela*, the *romance* [novel]'s early engagement with regional dynamics is apparent in the work of Júlio Dinis (1839-1871). Specifically, Dinis has been examined in light of his apparently idealistic portraits of rural communities (particularly in the Minho), in such novels as *As pupilas do senhor reitor* (1866) and *A morgadinha dos canaviais* (1868) which, according to Frier, "reflect an altogether gentler vision of the same provincial environment [as Camilo's fiction]" (2009: 129). More pointedly, Maria Manuel Lisboa affirms that Dinis, despite his scientific and medical training, experienced a "belated conversion to the delights of the rural idyll", leading him to "fear the damage which the inroads of science, technology and industry might inflict upon a series of personal and national, imagined or desired, gardens of Eden" (2003: 42). Lisboa concludes that Dinis strove to cultivate "a flower garden which, albeit harbouring a few worms in a few buds, is suspiciously evocative of any number of Romantic pre-lapsarian paradises" (*ibidem*).[107] As I will outline later, it is precisely this 'bucolic' paradigm that would be co-opted by twentieth-century reactionary political movements and regimes, while more idiosyncratic and / or progressive writers evoked those idyllic tropes in a much more ironic or parodic manner.

I.2.1. Regional spaces and nationalist aspirations

[107] It is perhaps due to Dinis's apparently idealised treatment of Minho communities that his fiction was adapted to the cinema during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship (for instance, in 1935).

Before discussing the twentieth-century novel it would be helpful to examine the prevailing cultural paradigms influencing Portuguese literary production at the very end of the nineteenth century. While the poetry of Cesário Verde has been noted for the "antonímia estruturante" that it establishes between Portugal's urban and rural environments (Macedo 1986: 27), the literary movement that holds more relevance for 'regionalist' tendencies at the turn of the twentieth century was the so-called *Geração de Noventa* – a group of Portuguese writers engaged in 'Symbolist', 'Decadentist' and 'Neo-Romantic' literature during the 1890s, directly following Portugal's international humiliation by the British *Ultimato*.[110] In particular, Neo-Romanticism (otherwise known as "Neo-Garrettism", insofar as it revived the literary values of Almeida Garrett) has been posited as the most *nationalistic* of these three literary trends, as discussed in Augusto da Costa Dias's *A crise da consciência pequeno-burguesa: o nacionalismo literário da geração de 90*. Specifically, Dias contends that this tendency was characterised by tensions between a generic 'national space' and the 'local particularisms' that contributed towards national identity discourses in 1890s Portugal: "A simultaneidade do universal e do nacional, por um lado, e do particular e regional, por outro, é mais uma das dolorosas contradições em que se debate a vida intelectual portuguesa nesta época" (1977: 72). Dias is also critical of the 'local colour' and 'folkloric' dimensions of this literary nationalist project: "O conceito de nacional diluiu-se, perdeu-se no colorido regionalista, no insólito folclórico" (*idem*: 58). Finally, the scholar links the *Geração de Noventa*'s 'provincial' imagery to atavism and nostalgia for a pre-industrial past, in defiance of urbanisation processes that gathered pace during the final decades of the Portuguese Monarchy: "Se nos dirigirmos àqueles recantos provincianos onde o presente ainda se salva porque é um passado serôdio, decerto encontraremos o ideal dos homens de 90" (*idem*: 135).

Certainly, such 'nostalgic' uses of regional space have been associated with poetry collections of that decade, particularly António Nobre's *Só* (1892/1898), whose "neo-pastoralism" (Macedo 2009: 19) explores northern coastal and agricultural settlements through seemingly 'Romantic' perspectives

[110] For details on all three of these tendencies, see Saraiva/Lopes 1996: 959-960.

and frequent evocations of the poetic subject's childhood (cf. Silva 1985: 309-312; Duarte/Silva 1981: 35-36).[111] That said, prose and essays were the main literary form through which *Geração de Noventa* intellectuals cultivated notions of nationalism that were simultaneously *regionalist*, insofar as they contested Lisbon's cultural hegemony. Paradigmatic examples include Alfredo Cunha and Trindade Coelho's so-called 'nationalist manifesto', which instructed writers to "ir às províncias do país buscar para os desfalecimentos do espírito a saúde e o vigor" (1893: 1), and Alberto de Oliveira's essay *Palavras loucas* (1894), which calls for Lisbon to be 'punished' for its sidelining of the nation's other provinces: "É preciso castigar Lisboa não a fixando na história [...]. Quiz-se fazer passar por Portugal, aos olhos da civilisação: por essa burla merece a pena maxima" (1894: 218). In place of the capital, Oliveira advocates a 'geographically diverse' national literature that encompasses multiple regional identities and dispositions: "Portugal é o Minho, o Doiro, as duas Beiras, o Alemtejo, o Algarve. [...] Cada temperamento escolheria a provincia propria: os calmos para o Minho, os melancolicos para a Beira, os desesperados e audelàistas para as serras tragicas de Traz-os-Montes" (*idem*: 219-220). While Oliveira has been described as "the first theorizer of regionalist literature in Portugal" (Correia 2017: 109), equal importance should be attributed to the Alentejan author Fialho de Almeida,[112] and to the 1891 short story collection *Os Meus Amores* (by the *transmontano* writer Trindade Coelho), identified by João Gaspar Simões a direct precursor of Portugal's subsequent "escola regionalista" (1987: 578). Unfortunately, Simões falls into precisely the same trap as Óscar Lopes and Ana Maria Costa Lopes, in defining regionalism as simply a literary school or aesthetic trend, lacking any ideological framing of that concept. In my view, Dias's comments on the "nacionalismo literário" of the 1890 generation are far more convincing and useful for political interpretations of regionalism in twentieth-century fiction.

[111] A more subversive, "queer" reading of Nobre's poems is also possible – see Anna M. Klobucka, "Queer Lusitania: António Nobre's Minor Nationalism" (2011).

[112] According to Correia, Almeida exhibited a "strong regionalist sensitiveness", but also described Alentejan communities with disparaging, racialised language and defended "eugenic measures" (2017: 113).

Returning to the novel genre, it is essential to consider the 'provincial' communities presented in the work of José Maria de Eça de Queirós, a novelist known for satirically critiquing nineteenth-century Portuguese society. While Queirós's earlier narrative *O crime do padre Amaro* (1875/1880) depicts the corruption of provincial priests in Leiria, the author's posthumous narrative *A cidade e as serras* (1901) arguably constructs his most explicit dialectical tension between 'city' and 'country' environments. This novel – which portrays the disillusionment of bourgeois protagonists Zé Fernandes and Jacinto with 'cosmopolitan' life in Paris, and their subsequent escape to a simple rural existence in a Douro Valley estate – has incited conflicting readings with regards to the seemingly oppositional social values that the 'decadent' *cidade* and the 'idyllic' *serras* represent (cf. Besse 1996: 116; Silva 1998: 1496-1497). Frier, however, offers an incisive interpretation of *A cidade e as serras* based on its allusions to "local specificities" and the enduring legacy of conservative 'miguelismo' in nineteenth-century peasant society, as epitomised by the Maria da Fonte rebellion (2013: 219, 231). In any event, Portuguese narrative fiction published at the beginning of the 1900s was clearly exploring and negotiating the complex relationship between bucolism, nostalgia and national identity.

To some extent, it is according to this problematic edict that a significant artistic tendency of the new century began: *saudosismo*, or 'nostalgia-ism'. This particular movement – primarily characterised by the poetry and essays of Teixeira de Pascoaes between 1895 and 1915 –[116] has been defined as "envisag[ing] a recovery of the spiritual and historical essence of Portugal through a nationalistic concept of saudade [...], seen as the key to the transformation of Sebastianic yearnings into a new Portuguese universality" (Macedo 2009: 19), identifying the country's rural landscape with "le souvenir nostalgique d'une enfance heureuse" (Besse 1996: 116). Nonetheless, *saudosismo* has also been thoroughly critiqued on two accounts: first, due to its essentialist conceptualisation of Portuguese rural society as a "structure monolithique" (*ibidem*); second, owing to its "tradução poético-ideológica" of Portugal's historical (arguably, archaic) nationalist myths (Lourenço 1991: 25), often to the benefit of ultra-conservative political causes. Accordingly, many

[116] See Pascoaes's treatise *Arte de ser português* (1915).

aesthetic premises of *saudosismo* were contested by Portuguese modernist artists of the early twentieth century – particularly those associated with the *Geração de Orpheu*,[119] which mainly evoked metropolitan, cosmopolitan and futuristic themes (cf. Mourão-Ferreira 1977: 27-29).[120]

In parallel to this predominantly urban artistic trend, other authors who began to publish during the First Republic concentrated on daily existence in 'regional settings' within continental Portugal: alongside the paradigmatic Beira Alta fiction of Aquilino Ribeiro, to be discussed in Chapter II, one can highlight the short fiction of Antero de Figueiredo, which evokes the Minho region, Manuel de Brito Camacho (a one-time Republican minister and High Commissioner to Mozambique) whose fiction depicts the Alentejo, and Hipólito Raposo (the ultra-traditionalist, extreme-right founder of *Integralismo Lusitano*) whose short stories portray the Beira Baixa (cf. Lopes 2002: 145-182).[122] As a result, some scholars have described the 1910s and 1920s as a period characterised by a 'regionalist literary tendency' (cf. Verdelho 1982: 7; Lopes 1990: 21). However, two controversies can be identified with regards to this apparent 'regionalist movement': firstly, whether or not the concept of 'literary regionalism' was celebrated by Portuguese intellectuals during the 1910s and 1920s; secondly, whether regionalist literature of this period did or did not represent a decisive break with nineteenth-century artistic tendencies, with regards to its ideological objectives.

Certainly, the extent to which Republican Portugal's *intelligentsia* welcomed an influx in regionalist novels and short fiction is highly debatable. Evelina Verdelho, for instance, argues that this 'movement' eventually garnered

[119] The *Geração de Orpheu* moniker refers to Fernando Pessoa, Mário de Sá-Carneiro and Almada Negreiros, amongst other artists and intellectuals, who collaborated on the *Orpheu* literary magazine (Jan.-June 1915); many of these individuals then published in the 1917 magazine *Portugal futurista*.

[120] That said, Fernando Pessoa's 'heteronym' Alberto Caeiro has been identified as an example of (ironic) bucolic poetry (cf. Garcez 1985).

[122] Vitorino Nemésio's concept of *açorianidade*, as expressed through his poetry and prose from 1916 onwards, can also be regarded as a 'regionalism' of sorts, according to Rafael Ávila Azevedo (1980: 165-173), as can the notion of *madeirensidade* (Rodrigues 2015: 165-190). However, these 'insular' movements are not my focus here.

the respect and involvement of much of Portugal's literary establishment: "Pode dizer-se que por volta de 1920 a generalidade dos escritores portugueses atribuía a maior importância ao regionalismo" (1982: 25). This rather sweeping statement, though, is belied by evidence from mid-1920s periodicals, which suggests that regionalism was far from a universally acclaimed literary tendency. A public journalistic debate that took place in the mid-1920s between Ferreira de Castro and José Dias Sancho is a key example of this; while Sancho maintained that "esse regionalismo tão discutido como brotojeia contemporânea sempre existiu, de forma que esgrimir contra ele se me afigura qualquer coisa de semelhante a pelejar contra moinhos de vento" (Sancho 1925: 1), Castro decries regionalist fiction as "um pretenciosismo literário" preoccupied with ethnographic detail (Castro 1925: 5), with little prospect of durability: "Tem o regionalismo tendência para subsistir na nossa época e futuramente? Não. Ele morrerá entre o realismo e o naturalismo, morrerá asfixiado por essa enfadonha nuvem de gafanhotos, que eram os pormenores naquelas escolas" (*ibidem*). In addition, regionalist cultural production was explicitly criticised by the modernist author Fernando Pessoa, due to what he regarded as 'small-mindedness' and a tendency towards geographical circumscription:

> O regionalismo é uma degeneração gordurosa do nacionalismo, e o nacionalismo também. [...] O regionalismo em Portugal é uma doença do que não há. Amar a nossa terra não é gostar do nosso quintal. [...] O meu quintal em Lisboa está ao mesmo tempo em Lisboa, em Portugal e na Europa. O bom regionalismo é amá-lo por ele estar na Europa. Mas quando chego a este regionalismo, sou já português, e já não penso no meu quintal. (Pessoa 1980: 134-135)

For several eminent authors, then, 'regionalism' and 'regionalist literature' (insofar as they had been practised in Portugal and / or considered as such) acquired a perjorative meaning, with regionalist fiction increasingly viewed as a 'limiting', 'isolating' and myopic practice. One notable exception was the author and Republic-era politician Jaime Cortesão, who stated that this cultural movement represented "[o] começo de uma nova era da humanidade, uma forma verdadeira do nacionalismo" (*apud* França 1992: 127).

It is on this note – regarding regionalism's relationship to nationalist ideology – that it would be helpful to turn to this movement's similarities and differences when compared with previous ideological uses of regional space in Portuguese literature. While António José Saraiva and Óscar Lopes link Camilo Castelo Branco's and Fialho de Almeida's fiction to the 'regionalist', 'aesthetic' and 'regressive' literature of the 1920s (cf. Saraiva/Lopes 1996: 1024), Maria Graciete Besse argues that Aquilino Ribeiro's early work "met un terme à toute une série de visions romantiques attachées à l'univers rural et constitue une innovation par rapport à la tradition nationale" (Besse 1996: 116-117). In my view, while these comments acknowledge the *implied* ideological freight of landscape descriptions within regionalist novels and short stories, they fail to recognise the contribution of such narratives to *explicit* national identity discourses, like those of the *Geração de Noventa* before them. According to Verdelho, literary *and* political regionalism in Portugal generally had the aim and effect of reinforcing national unity, rather than territorial discord:

> [E]ntre nós o regionalismo, nos vários sectores onde se manifestou, não foi bandeira erguida contra a unidade nacional. Em muitos casos os ideais regionalistas foram mesmo cultivados com a convicção de que por essa via se fortaleciam os sentimentos patrióticos entre todos os portugueses, se intensificava o apego de cada um à Mãe-Pátria […]. (1982: 26)

As outlined earlier, this emphasis on national cohesion through regional *diversity* was characteristic of multiple regionalist political discourses during the First Republic and, later, of the *Estado Novo*'s 'regionalist-nationalism'. Nonetheless, it is also apparent, as Verdelho outlines, that literary manifestations of regionalism during the first decades of the twentieth century were heterogeneous: "não há um regionalismo único, com características fixas em todas as latitudes, mas regionalismos vários, com aspectos diversificados, a par de aspectos comuns fundamentais" (*idem*: 32). This notion of "regionalismos vários" allows for competing (and productive) interpretations of the ideological significance pertaining to regionalist narratives. While it is certainly apparent that not *all* such fiction had political and / or autonomist pretensions (cf. Lopes

1990: 26), key authors of that movement like Hipólito Raposo were associated with 'ultra-conservative' groupings such as *Integralismo Lusitano* (cf. *idem*: 28), whereas the paradigmatic regionalist novelist Aquilino Ribeiro aligned himself with anti-monarchical, anti-clerical and (in later decades) anti-dictatorial positions, in both his fictional output and his real-life political commitments.[127] Hence, the claims made by certain scholars that regionalism was a single, chronologically delimited 'literary movement' of the early twentieth century are profoundly misleading; instead, I contend that multiple 'regionalisms' existed in twentieth-century Portuguese fiction (often concurrently), with distinct ideological means and ends.

I.2.2. Conforming to and challenging the pastoral paradigm

As Portugal embarked upon its prolonged period of dictatorship, the country's regional geography and territorial 'tropes' were politically weaponised in cultural production that was sponsored / encouraged by the regime, *or* in literature that was fundamentally opposed to it. As mentioned above, some of the *Estado Novo*'s flagship cultural projects – the "Aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal" contest in 1938 and the *Exposição do Mundo Português* in 1940 – exploited visions of an idealised, ultra-traditional way of life in Portugal's provinces as a means of "strengthen[ing] traditional patterns of rural dependence by propagandistic means" (Sapega 2008: 17). In addition to exhibitions and certain cinematic productions (cf. Vieira 2017: 115-120), this tendency can also be observed in literary output imbued with the dictatorship's ultra-conservative ruralist doctrine. One can consider, for instance, the *Antologia da terra portuguesa* (1957-1966) which was "designed to appeal to sentiments of nationalism and regional pride" (Baubeta 2007: 148). In addition, it is important to consider the *Estado Novo*'s overt efforts to foster ruralist-traditionalist literary production – despite its aforementioned vested interest in keeping the bulk of Portugal's peasantry semi-literate –, through such initatives as the State-sponsored *Mensário das casas do povo* magazine (cf. Lopes 2008: 160), *bibliotecas rurais*, and a 1947 literary contest entitled "A vida rural na

[127] See Chapter II for an outline of Ribeiro's political activism and literature.

literatura portuguesa" (cf. Melo 2001: 156), which focussed on "literatura campesina da verdade" (Trigueiros *apud* Melo 2001: 159). Furthermore, Melo notes that the dictatorship's interference in Portuguese cultural production extended to academic scholarship, as evidenced by the fact that António Álvaro Dória was assisted by a government grant for his aforementioned 1950 monograph *A vida rural no romance português* (cf. *ibidem*). Indeed, given the highly partial, nationalistic nature of Dória's study, it is hardly surprising that the scholar received financial support from the Salazarist regime; at moments, his monograph is almost indistinguishable from the period's 'regionalist' doctrinal texts (and from the 'literary nationalisms' of previous decades): "A vida rural portuguesa, tão variada e tão pitoresca, oferece vasto campo aos escritores à busca de temas. É na Província que encontramos ainda bem vivo esse espírito nacional" (1950: 397). In such cases, literary criticism itself participated in the same bucolic and idyllic renderings of rural Portugal that the dictatorship promoted, while explicitly denigrating 'revolutionary literature' in favour of fiction extolling the regime's ultra-Catholic discourse: "Em Portugal a literatura revolucionária não encontrou cultores de categoria: a propaganda fazia-se em obras de carácter retintamente político e panfletário ou de divulgação histórica. Mais felizes foram os defensores do regresso à Igreja" (*idem*: 226).

Despite the claims of such critics, however, numerous Portuguese authors of this period deployed regional settings, landscapes and dynamics in order to fundamentally oppose authoritarian (and, in many cases, capitalist) political, social and economic norms, in face of considerable government censorship.[128] This is true, for instance of Miguel Torga, an author of several rural short story collections mainly set in his native Trás-os-Montes region (including *Contos da Montanha* [1941], *Novos Contos da Montanha* [1944] and *Pedras Lavradas* [1951]), the novel *Vindima* (1945) which depicts the struggles of workers in the Douro Valley, and numerous *Diários*, in which Torga charts his travels around Portugal and articulates a deep sentimental attachment to

[128] The same could also be said of certain regional newspapers such as *Jornal do Fundão*, which frequently clashed with the censorship authorities – See Eduardo Manuel Simoes Alves, *Jornal do Fundão: jornalismo de causas, cultura e identidade* (2009).

Portugal's regional landscapes: "Sou, na verdade, um geófago insaciável, necessitado diariamente de uns quilómetros de nutrição. Devoro planícies como se engolasse bolachas de água e sal, e atiro-me às serranias como à broa da infância" (1976: 149). Several studies attest to the *ideological* importance of Torga's short fiction set in Trás-os-Montes, associating this writer's particular brand of *transmontano* 'ruralism' with an anti-salazarist literary project and depictions of violent rustic communities (cf. Lisboa 2000: 22-45; Hussar 2012: 75-88). Another significant short story writer that problematised idyllic notions of life in Portugal's northern countryside was the Alto Douro author João de Araújo Correia (cf. Lopes 2008: 168-169),[130] whereas Ferreira de Castro – despite his public repudiation of 'regionalist literature' decades before – addressed the struggles of workers in the Serra da Estrela mountain range in his 1947 novel *A lã e a neve*. As Alda Correia argues, then, it is evident that numerous short stories (and novels) of the 1930s and 1940s succeeded in "reproducing an ideology or certain cultural values, showing inequalities or inadequate life conditions" (2017: 22-23) through strategic deployment of regional geographies and landscapes.

Above all, it was through so-called "neo-realist" works – which Dória might have regarded as 'revolutionary' literature – that Portuguese authors politicised geographical dynamics and regional environments, within a markedly ideological literary movement from the late 1930s onwards. This particular literary trend – not to be confused with the "realist" fiction of Eça de Queirós and other late nineteenth century authors (cf. Pontes 2005) – has generally been associated with the notion of artistic production as mimesis or 'mirror' of socio-economic reality, in line with the views of Hungarian philosopher and cultural critic György Lukács (cf. Lacerda 2006: 33).[132] In terms of international influence, Portuguese neo-realist literature has been linked to the 'socialist realism' of artistic production within the USSR (cf. Torres 2002: 183), and to the Brazilian 'Northeastern novel' movement of the 1930s, which drew attention to human misery within the poverty-stricken *sertões* [backlands]

[130] See, for example, Araújo Correia's *Contos bárbaros* (1939).

[132] In "Realism in the Balance", for instance, Lukács discusses the need for literature to "mirror objective reality" (1980: 43).

of Brazil's north-eastern states (cf. Mendonça 1967: 27-41). In a more programmatic sense, Besse highlights this movement's theoretical reliance on 'dialectical materialism' (cf. 1996: 117), whereas Álvaro Manuel Machado defines neo-realist literary production (short stories, novels and poetry) as containing at least one of the following elements: (a) a predominantly 'descriptive' and / or 'documentary' tone; (b) the use of characters as 'social types' trapped or contained within certain situations; (c) ideological messages rooted in "num vago humanismo marxista"; (d) an 'anti-individualistic', 'anti-decadent' and 'anti-bourgeois' function (cf. Machado 1984: 43). Although some of the elements above – particularly (d) – are somewhat ambivalent and difficult to ascertain, it is nonetheless readily apparent that the most prominent neo-realist authors (Alves Redol, Manuel da Fonseca, Joaquim Soeiro Pereira Gomes and Carlos de Oliveira)[134] assumed a Marxist *and* anti-dictatorship stance, both within their literary works and through their political activism; Redol and Gomes, for instance, were both prominent members of the PCP, and Redol was arrested for his political activity. Moreover, Redol's novel *Gaibéus* (1939) – widely regarded as the first neo-realist narrative in Portugal – prefaces its depiction of working conditions in Ribatejan rice paddies with a defence of 'documentary' literary pretensions: "Este romance não pretende ficar na literatura como obra de arte. Quer ser, antes de tudo, um documentário humano fixado no Ribatejo. Depois disso, será o que os outros entenderem" (2009: 8).

With regards to the environments evoked in neo-realist fiction, the notion that rural and / or agricultural settings were predominant is relatively consensual among literary scholars (cf. Besse 1996: 115-126; Viçoso 2011: 39; Queiroz 2017: 50). However, more critical debate has occurred around the extent to which neo-realism can be considered 'regionalist', according to the criteria outlined above. While Carlos Reis affirms that neo-realism aimed to "repensar a problemática do *regionalismo* na criação literária" (1983: 168-169), Adriana Nogueira suggests that "[o] mais próximo de um movimento literário com

[134] As is the case with much Portuguese literature prior to 1974, neo-realism is often regarded as a predominantly *male* cultural phenomenon. However, Chatarina Edfeldt highlights the contribution of women writers – including Maria Archer and Maria Lamas – to neo-realist fiction (cf. Edfeldt 2006: 91-93).

características regionalistas [em Portugal] é o neorrealismo" (2013: 81), although her conception of literary 'regionalism' is precisely the reductive one that I have repeatedly rebutted: "[estes romances] procuram aproximar-se do povo, utilizando frequentemente expressões e tipificações de regiões, e pretendem representar personagens de diversas partes do país, principalmente nas zonas rurais ou de província" (*ibidem*). Finally, João Gaspar Simões makes the cryptic statement that neo-realist authors engaged in "um regionalismo sem regionalismos" (*apud* Besse 1996: 117). While the critic's exact meaning here is unclear, his comments offer three potential readings: (a) that this movement's geographical choices were limited (a claim that I dispute); (b) that these writers' interpretations of 'regionalism' were not as ideologically diverse as previous 'regionalist literature' had been (which is a more convincing argument, but nevertheless open to criticism); (c) that such authors were united by their *political* deployment of regional environments as opposed to a celebration of Portugal's regional diversity – a position that is much closer to my own.

Regarding the geographical range of neo-realist fiction, Besse and Alfredo Margarido both claim that Portugal's 'latifundian South' (encompassing the rice paddies of the Ribatejo and the Alentejo's *latifundia*) was a preferred diegetic environment (cf. Margarido 1978: XVI; Besse 1996: 116, 121), as evidenced by Redol's *Gaibéus* set in the Ribatejo and the Alentejan environments of *Aldeia Nova* (Manuel da Fonseca, 1942) and *Seara do vento* (Fernando Namora, 1958). In addition, one can highlight Redol's *Port wine* novels focused on the Alto Douro wine industry, and Carlos de Oliveira's fiction set in the agricultural territory between Coimbra and Aveiro, to which Oliveira attributes the term "Gândara" (cf. Besse 1996: 121; Moreira 2003). In particular, Oliveira's work is noteworthy for its denunciation of decadent bourgeois landowning families and "estruturas ainda herdadas da Idade Média" (Torres 1977: 96-97), as well as its ironic treatment of 'rural isolation' and the impact of capitalist modernisation processes on previously 'remote' communities: "Na gândara há aldeolas ermas, esquecidas entre pinhais, no fim do mundo. [...]. Pelas estradas, pelo caminho de ferro, nos vagões, nas camionetes, o comércio das cidades, das vilas, das aldeias, acelerava-se [...]. O isolamento dos pequenos

meios desaparecia" (Oliveira 2004: 7, 48).[140] Concurrently, it has been claimed that most neo-realist authors' *avoidance* of certain provinces (namely, the *minifundia* estates of Entre-Douro-e-Minho) is directly linked to the ideological objectives of those writers, and, in turn, to the socio-economic variations in land ownership within continental Portugal: "Le nord, dont la terre est souvent émiettée, ne permet pas des analyses tranchées des formes de domination, puisque les petits propriétaires et les métayers sont marqués par l'illusion de la liberté" (Margarido 1984: 37). In other words, the seemingly *geographical* choices of settings for neo-realist fiction were in fact inextricably linked to these authors' *ideological* concerns, and to their determination to illuminate a specific set of circumstances experienced by *some* (but not *all*) rural communities. Indeed, as Maria Alzira Seixo insightfully observes, this literary movement was adroit at placing regional locations in the service of political *doctrine*: "O neo-realismo apercebe-se [...] de que a localização exterior pode ser um ingrediente novelístico privilegiado. Isso acontece por razões de ordem doutrinária" (1986: 71).

Nonetheless, it is precisely this link between the human subject and their regional surroundings that has led to misgivings regarding neo-realism's effectiveness, and to assertions (by Seixo and others) that this movement was overly 'deterministic':

> [O] envolvimento (rural, urbano, humano, objectual) que a personagem sofre no romance neo-realista corresponde à valorização absoluta da representação [...] que por isso mesmo pode falsear a relação personagem-meio (caso em que o neo-realismo justamente falhou muitas vezes o seu objectivo). (*Ibidem*)

Equally, Eduardo Lourenço makes the rather scathing comment that neo-realist literature was "bem pouco revolucionário" but that it had an "inegável sucesso sociológico" (1991: 31), whereas Vítor Viçoso describes the movement as an "'etnografismo' emancipador" – albeit in opposition to the ultra-conversative 'etnografismo' of *Estado Novo* cultural propaganda (2011: 14). The real

[140] From Oliveira's *Casa na duna* (1943).

question that these observations raise, though, is the degree to which neo-realism *surpassed* 'documentary' and / or 'ethnographic' literary practices, or offered a meaningful "ruptura com a cenografia bucólica [da produção literária favorecida pelo Estado Novo]" (*idem*: 39). When one considers the engagement (or disengagement) of such fiction with political and social issues beyond the dictatorship and the class struggle, it can be said that its record is somewhat mixed.

Specifically, the relative absence of transgressive sexual politics and socially progressive understandings of gender roles in *Estado Novo*-era "writing on rural and colonial lands", even when that literature was operating "under the "implicit banner of Marxist internationalism", has been highlighted by Ana Paula Ferreira, who argues that apparently 'revolutionary' literature of this period maintained Portuguese culture's "long-standing association of the 'natural' with Woman" (1996: 140). Concomitantly, certain writers utilised regional settings to construct alternative "*contra-imagens* de Portugal" (Lourenço 1991: 32) that were concerned with fundamentally redefining the role and place of women in Portuguese society. While the use of regional geography for such purposes can tentatively be seen in the 1960s poetry and fiction of Natália Correia – which constructs a radical, quasi-matriarchal notion of 'matrismo' through "ties to [Correia's] Azorean island motherland or 'ilha mãe'" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2009: 176) –, the 1972 literary project *Novas cartas portuguesas* (Barreno/Horta/Costa) arguably goes further, explicitly weaponising regional environments, alongside other sources of inequality such as class and education, in the service of female emancipation (cf. Haysom 2016).

In the work of certain novelists, though, the relationship between 'regionalist' tropes and oppositional ideologies (e.g. anti-authoritarian; anti-capitalist; anti-patriarchal) is less clear-cut). This is particularly apparent with regards to the post-1950 narratives of Vergílio Ferreira and Agustina Bessa-Luís, both of whom have been described as transformational authors due to their shift away from neo-realist themes and aesthetic techniques (cf. Gomes 1993: 31). Ferreira – who began his career as a 'dialectical materialist' writer affiliated with neo-realism (cf. *idem*: 27) – later tackled existentialist philosophical themes through such narratives as *Alegria breve* (1965), a portrait of the last surviving inhabitant in a Beira Alta village (cf. Machado 1984: 66) thereby addressing the

issue of human desertification. In addition, Bessa-Luís's novel *A sibila* (1954) has been regarded as a "watershed for twentieth-century women's writing in Portugal" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2009: 173), although the way in which this narrative approaches regional (Entre-Douro-e-Minho) dynamics has several potential readings with regards to the status of women in mid-twentieth-century Portugal.[143] Furthermore, Aquilino Ribeiro's 1958 novel *Quando os Lobos Uivam* contains *visible* and *concealed* critiques of the prevailing regime, but its potential ideological readings hinge on a rejection of Marxist preconceptions of opposition and 'revolt' within Beira Alta peasant communities.[144] Finally, certain novels by Almeida Faria (particularly his "tetralogia lusitana") have been noted for their depictions of Alentejan agricultural communities that denounce "a opressão ditatorial e a imensa injustiça social", but which nonetheless reject the formulaic ideological templates and aesthetic strategies for which neo-realism was criticised: "essa evocação nada tem de demagógico ou de miserabilista, [...], [nem de uma] atitude *engagée* simplista e retórica" (Machado 1984: 91).

It is readily apparent, then, that numerous Portuguese authors of the dictatorship period deviated from the programmatic, mimetic attempts to 'represent' regional realities with which neo-realism became associated; as Chapters II and III will demonstrate, certain novels of this era both *affirm* and *reject* regional tropes, stereotypes and preconceptions, through narratives that simultaneously sustain *progressive* and *conservative* ideological messages. It is therefore essential to challenge the almost binary division of novelistic trends that have been established between Portugal's *Orpheu* generation and the April 1974 Revolution:

> [O] romance portugues do modernismo à Revolução dos Cravos oscila entre duas linhas de força, às vezes, muito distintas, outras, não: a ficção artística, voltada para a concepção universal do homem, e a ficção comprometida com uma ideologia, voltada para o homem inserido em seu tempo. [...] Tais concepções de

[143] See III.1.

[144] See II.2.

> romance acabam por resvalar por um perigoso reducionismo. (Gomes 1993: 30-31)

Here, Gomes acknowledges that these duelling notions of universalising 'artistic fiction' and geographically circumscribed 'ideologically committed fiction' are not diametric opposites, and to my mind this apparent distinction should be treated with the upmost scepticism. As chapters II and III of this thesis will evidence, a number of significant Portuguese novels published before and after 1974 eschew a 'reductionist' ideological treatment of regional communities and realities, offering more potential for political transgression than they initially appear to do.

I.2.3. The geographies and politics of the post-revolutionary novel

Continuing into the post-revolutionary period, it is apparent that a number of factors affected cultural production and its capacity to respond to rapid socio-political transformation in Portugal. In the immediate term, one can highlight a more explicit politicisation of literature, as an inevitable consequence of governmental change and the abolition of State censorship; according to Mark Sabine and Claire Williams, these circumstances "brought both political theorisation and polemic out into the open, rendering the newspaper *crónica*, the essay, and even the lyric an open field of ideological confrontation" (2009: 183). Furthermore, it is important to address these authors' critical exploration and revision of "national history" (Kaufman/Klobucka 1997: 19), and the emergence of numerous women writers and female perspectives during the 1970s and 1980s, as adeptly chronicled by Isabel Allegro de Magalhães (1994: 177-192) and Hilary Owen (2000).

All of the elements above are essential for comprehending what I consider to be one of the most significant novelties in post-1974 Portuguese fiction: the theme of 'internal discovery' within hitherto neglected areas of continental Portugal, following the former Empire's decolonisation process. Although Eduardo Lourenço identified this cultural trend in 1978 ("[a] classe intelectual, e o público em geral, acedem a um grau superior de autoconsciência,

com a descoberta de um Portugal oculto" [1991: 77]), his anachronistic comments linking such tendencies to nineteenth-century fiction ("[essa autognose] não é ainda radicalmente diferente do que representou no século XIX o romance de Camilo, de Júlio Dinis ou Eça de Queirós" [*ibidem*]) are somewhat suspect.[146] In fact, several prominent novels from the 1980s onwards represent a significant departure from both bucolic and 'documentary' uses of regionalism in previous Portuguese literature; their voyages of 'internal' exploration into isolated spaces of rural Portugal demonstrate an original ideological re-purposing of regional dynamics for the realities of a post-authoritarian, post-imperial nation.

Intriguingly, critics have coined competing expressions to denote this innovative manifestation of regional space within post-revolutionary Portuguese fiction. Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, for instance, refers to the "earthiness" ("[t]he expression of a special relation to the earth, to places, to nature and rhythms") of narratives by women writers, citing Maria Velho da Costa and Hélia Correia as examples (1994: 187-189). Maria Alzira Seixo (1986) also offers some pertinent comments in this regard; referring to Carlos de Oliveira's *Finisterra* (1978), Lídia Jorge's *O cais das merendas* (1982) and José Saramago's *Memorial do convento* (1982), Seixo contends that Portuguese novelists of the late 1970s and early 1980s elevated *land* from the secondary status of *background* to a fundamental diegetic element in their respective literary projects:

> É como se tivesse passado a ter sentido *escrever a terra* em vez de *escrever sobre a terra*: de objecto, utensílio ou ponto de referência, a terra passou a ser uma espécie de objecto primeiro ou mesmo de sujeito irradiador. Escrever a terra é fazer sentir que entre a história que o romance conta e a personagem que a vive há uma entidade-suporte (essa mesma terra) que dá o sentido da pulsação da personagem na história. (1986: 73)

[146] Certain films of the late 1970s were also criticised on this basis, including António Reis's and Margarida Cordeiro's quasi-ethnographic *Trás-os-Montes* (1976) (cf. Costa 2012: 255).

As relevant as this statement is, I would take issue with Seixo's analysis on several fronts. Firstly, I hope that my prior and future comments in this thesis demonstrate the wealth of pre-1974 Portuguese fiction that does not limit its regionalist discourse to writing "sobre a terra". Secondly, significant Portuguese novelists of the 1980s, including Saramago, explicitly acknowledge the difficulties in attempting to "escrever a terra", as the dust jacket of *Levantado do chão* attests: "[O] meu sonho foi o de poder dizer deste livro [...]: 'Isto é o Alentejo'. [...] [Porém,] me limitarei a escrever: 'Isto é um livro sobre o Alentejo'" (Saramago 1994: cover).[147] Such comments contradict Seixo's conviction that 'writing the land' and writing *about* the land are incompatible literary techniques, and that the latter is somehow deficient in relation to the former. Finally, any study of regionalism as an ideological structuring element in fiction should expand its remit beyond the 'land' itself, to encompass the behaviour, actions and worldview of communities / individuals *within* that land.

A further study that deserves inclusion in this discussion of regional space in the post-revolutionary Portuguese novel is Helena Kaufman's article, "Is the Minor Essential? Contemporary Portuguese Fiction and Questions of Identity" (1997). This text, which applies Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of 'minor literature' to the early novels of Jorge and Saramago, posits geographical location as one of several "zones of the minor" that such narratives seek to bring into representation:

> [C]ontemporary Portuguese fiction approaches the minor condition both as a reflection of the country's political, social, and cultural positioning in relation to the outside world [...] while seeking expression for the zones of the minor within itself: its language, regional divisions, class and gender differences. (1997: 176)

Although the question of language is less vital to my own readings of Jorge and Saramago, I certainly endorse the parallels that Kaufman establishes between "regional divisions" and "class and gender differences". Equally important to my analysis are the scholar's comments on narrative strategies "which privilege

[147] See Chapter IV.1. for a detailed analysis of this comment by Saramago.

fragmentation, particularity, locality, anti-authoritarian and anti-author centered discourses" (*idem*: 181-182); in my view, the levels of (actual and imagined) geographical isolation within certain regions of Portugal, and the varying degrees of political agency that such 'minor' communities are deemed to possess, are fundamental for understanding the 'regionalist' discourses of Jorge's *O dia dos prodígios* and Saramago's *Levantado do chão*.[148]

My only caveat regarding Kaufman's arguments would be the observation that this "particularity" and "locality" of the early 1980s is somewhat problematised in novels published after 1986 (when Portugal joined the European Economic Community); the effects of de-regulated, neo-liberal globalisation processes on Portuguese society (particularly from the 1990s onwards) are relevant for considering geographical dynamics within contemporary fictional output, as is the spectre of rural de-population and desertification. Besides Saramago's critique of late twentieth-century capitalist globalisation and its destruction of rural (and urban) communities in *A caverna* (2000),[149] Mário de Carvalho's 2003 narrative *Fantasia para dois coronéis e uma piscina* has been highlighted for its critique of the "new rurality" (countryside as place of leisure) (Queiroz 2017: 53). According to Ana Isabel Queiroz, this novel (depicting the renovation of an old Alentejan *latifundium* by two former army officers) draws attention to the complex power differentials involved in re-shaping Portugal's rural landscapes at the turn of the twenty-first century (cf. *ibidem*). In parallel, Jorge's *O vento assobiando nas gruas* (2002) combines a depiction of encroaching construction projects in the Algarve with a post-colonial critique, in which a Cape Verdean immigrant family is "incarcerated" within poor quality, ghetto-like housing – although Emily Knudson-Vilaseca acknowledges that such marginalisation is more typical of Greater Lisbon than the novel's Algarvian diegetic environment (2006: 402-404). As a post-script to the novelists mentioned above, the poetry of Rui Lage is significant for its sardonic treatment of rural Portugal's demographic decline; tellingly, his collections contain such poems as "Auto da horta destruída" (*Corvo*, 2008) and "Museu rural" (*Estrada nacional*, 2016), gesturing towards

[148] See III.2. and IV.2.

[149] See IV.2.

the apparent disappearance of 'traditional' rural communities but not un-critically mourning their passing.

To summarise this 'secret history of regionalisms', then, it is apparent that Portuguese literature (particularly the novel) from the late nineteenth century onwards has *consistently* adopted regional geography and geographical dynamics as a significant element in ideological discourses. Although the tone and purpose of this 'ideological regionalism' has varied according to the periods of publication and the political outlooks of the authors in question, their use of 'the region' to explore and / or critique ideological concerns can be detected in novels written during the late Monarchy, the First Republic, the *Estado Novo* and the post-revolutionary democratic era. As a result, studies that define 'regionalismo' as an aesthetic choice or as a self-contained 'literary movement' of the early twentieth century require substantial revision; it is not the *presence* of regional geography / dynamics that is contingent on historical, political, social and economic circumstances, but rather the *nature* of regionalism's strategic deployment in fiction that alters over time, and in accordance with each author's unique worldview. As this thesis's subsequent three chapters will argue, selected novels by Aquilino Ribeiro, Agustina Bessa-Luís, Lídia Jorge and José Saramago demonstrate the breadth and variety of ideological projects in which 'regionalism' is present, as well as certain commonalities of imagery and approach that these novelists share.

Chapter II: Regionalism as a "rebeldia barata": Aquilino Ribeiro's ambivalent forms of local resistance

Para um homem ser revolucionário numas coisas tem simultaneamente que ser conservador noutras. Assim me sucedia a mim.

Aquilino Ribeiro

Aquilino Ribeiro (1885-1963) has long been respected as a 'canonical' author in Portugal, during his lifetime and long after his death, culminating in his interment within the *Panteão Nacional* in 2007. Ribeiro's fiction, commencing with the short story collection *Jardim das tormentas* in 1913 and concluding fifty years later with *Casa do escorpião* (1963), encompasses a multitude of novellas, *crónicas*, short stories and novels, of which some of the most renowned are *Terras do demo* (1919), *Andam faunos pelos bosques* (1926), *A casa grande de Romarigães* (1957) and *Quando os lobos uivam* (1958). Although some of his works are located in urban environments such as Lisbon and Paris, he is overwhelmingly regarded in Portuguese literary criticism and in the nation's collective imagination as a 'regionalist', who brought the regional landscapes and communities of his native Beira Alta region into representation, particularly the Serra da Nave and Serra da Lapa highlands. While numerous critics have mentioned the author's evocation of regionalist language and vocabulary (cf. Gomes 1933; Almeida 1988), of ethnological details relating to Beira Alta agricultural life (cf. Almeida 1993: 54) and of topography / landscape typical within this environment (cf. *idem*: 49), this 'regionalist' epithet has equally been described as a *limitation* on potential readings of Ribeiro's fiction (cf. Almeida 1993: 13; Nunes 2020: 83). In fact, I would venture that superficial and *non-political* definitions of the term "regionalist" have hindered productive readings of Ribeiro's literature through an ideological lens. Certainly, this author's political activism has been well documented, including his involvement with the *carbonárias* and other Republican activists in 1908 before fleeing to

Paris in exile, his participation in the "reviralhista" attempts to overthrow the *Ditadura Nacional* in 1927, and his public support in the late 1940s and 1950s for the *Movimento de Unidade Democrática* that sought the demise of the *Estado Novo* (cf. Nunes 2020).[150] On that basis, critics have painstakingly debated the ideological persuasions of Ribeiro's literature. One of these controversies concerns the validity of searching for ideological messages in the author's fiction, as exemplified by Henrique Almeida's comments:

> O que nos parece errado é folhearem-se os seus textos […] de modo indistinto, procurando linearmente referências temáticas e ideológicas que conformem um perfil de enfant terrible. [...] Muitos foram os críticos que, assentando praça neste ângulo de visão, pretenderam tomar Aquilino como símbolo e estandarte ideológico, mais do que obreiro da literatura. (1993: 114)

In my view, Almeida's determination to extricate 'non-literary' elements from analysis of Ribeiro's fiction risks stifling the potential for innovative socio-political readings of his work. Moreover, the critic's efforts to confine Ribeiro's fictional output to a transcendental sphere that is isolated and unpolluted by political, sociological and historical phenomena allow this author's output to be co-opted by reactionary elements in Portuguese society, on the grounds that Ribeiro's novels can be separated from the real-world activity of their creator. Indeed, Salazar made a similar suggestion to a French journalist in 1936, when asked how writers and intellectuals viewed his regime: "Comece o seu inquérito por Aquilino. É um inimigo do regime. Dir-lhe-á mal de mim, mas não importa: é um grande escritor" (*apud* Nunes 2020: 175). The dictator's dismissal of Ribeiro's political views as immaterial, however, suggests that to view the author's work as ideologically 'neutral' is a political act in itself.

Unlike Almeida, other scholars are systematic in their enumeration of potential ideological interpretations of Ribeiro's narratives: Luís Vidigal, for

[150] Renato Nunes's pioneering 2020 study *Aquilino Ribeiro na ditadura militar e no Estado Novo de Salazar* outlines Ribeiro's active participation in the anti-salazarist political struggle, as well as the more problematic aspects of his ideological positioning, such as his support for Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s (cf. Nunes 2020: 96-97).

example, lists "equilíbrio ecológico", "anti-estatismo" and "[o] anseio pelo Igualitarismo, contra uma Globalização de conquista e uniformização" (cf. 2009: 219-220) as key 'Aquilinian' themes. However, I would contend that Ribeiro's novels express and explore relevant contemporary political concerns not *in parallel to* their regional settings, but *through* their treatment of regional environments and regionalist dynamics. To this end, Alfredo Margarido offers a useful starting point for considering Ribeiro's regionalism as ideological *praxis*:

> Para Aquilino, este regionalismo não deriva apenas da necessidade de descrever uma região, mas de uma posição teórica mais profunda. Na verdade, parte ele da convicção, prático-teórica, de que a unidade mínima da organização social portuguesa é constituída pela aldeia, constituída esta por um número limitado de famílias. (1985: 33)

Margarido's conception of regionalism as a 'practical-theoretical' undertaking is extremely productive, and will inform much of this chapter's analysis of *Andam faunos pelos bosques* and *Quando os lobos uivam*. At the same time, the comment above suggests that although Ribeiro's worldview differed sharply from the doctrine / propaganda of Salazarism in many respects, both the author and the regime shared a preoccupation with the rural 'village' as the most important unit of social organisation within Portuguese national life or, as Renato Nunes puts it, a perception of the "[a] aldeia como a célula básica da Pátria", thereby connecting Ribeiro's literature to the regime's "ideologia ruralizante" (2020: 175). In effect, Margarido and Nunes highlight a fundamental tension between Ribeiro's novels and *Estado Novo*-era political discourse that this chapter will explore: while the novelist's vision of peasant existence within the Beira Alta *serras* frequently challenges extant "pastoral ideology" developed and / or endorsed by the regime (Figueiredo 1975: 164), his fiction's concern for the "aldeia" is nonetheless vulnerable to political appropriation and / or co-optation by ultra-conservative scholars and commentators. Although several critics have distinguished Ribeiro's "sórdido provincianismo camponês" (Pires 1985: 98) from the dictatorship's "falsa

etnografia" and "representações adocicadas e folclóricas do povo" (Domingues 2017: 7), it is actually more productive and illuminating to examine the tensions between romanticised views of the Beira Alta and anti-bucolic discourse within Ribeiro's narratives.

To this end, it would be pertinent to outline a literary and ideological understanding of 'regionalism' that corresponds to both *Andam faunos pelos bosques* and *Quando os lobos uivam* (henceforth, *Faunos* and *Lobos*). Helpfully, Ribeiro himself directly commented on this problematic several times, and we should start by considering the author's preface to *Terras do demo* (1919/1946) – described by Almeida as a "'manifesto' em defesa do regionalismo" (1993: 26). Aside from an initial insistence on 'regional' language / dialect ("o meu léxico é o deles; as minhas vozes ouvi-lhas" [Ribeiro 1983a: 6]), this *prefácio* emphasises the remoteness and isolation from 'civilization' that characterises the novel's diegetic environment: "Sem dúvida, nunca Cristo ali rompeu as sandálias, passou el-rei a caçar ou os apóstolos da Igualdade em propaganda. Bárbaras e agrestes, mercê apenas do seu individualismo se têm mantido, sem perdas nem lucros, à margem da civilização" (*idem*: 5).[151] Decades later, however, Ribeiro's *Abóboras no telhado: crítica e polémica* would express regret regarding his earlier novel's 'regionalist' shortcomings ("Fazer literatura regionalista é descrever a região com os modismos de linguagem, formas dialectais ou corruptelas ali sazonadas, sentidas e vividas. [...] Ora eu só desci à limitação em parte das *Terras do demo*" [Ribeiro 1963: 295]), while accepting that narrative's creation of a literary "escola" concerned with "[uma] fracção da humanidade portuguesa, ignota, terrível, heróica e mesquinha, pungida pelo drama da existência" (*idem*: 73). In this essay, the author categorically rejects both nineteenth-century 'bucolism' and the twentieth-century 'regionalism" that *Terras do demo* had helped to launch in Portugal: "Há na nossa língua [...] uma série de lugares-comuns empalhados, *noli me tangere*. Um deles é o bucolismo campestre, praticado por Júlio Dinis, outro o regionalismo, a que se atribuiu foros de escola. Ambos os conceitos são a meu ver destituídos de valor imanente" (*idem*: 78-79). In fact, Ribeiro's text questions the very notion of *regionalist* cultural production in a country as homogeneous as Portugal ("se

[151] A potential allusion to this quotation appears in Saramago's *Levantado do chão* – see IV.1.

existe um regionalismo francês ou germânico [...], pode havê-lo num país como o nosso, todo do mesmo cerne, igual, com um só idioma do Norte ao Sul, em tudo o mais, rotina, burel, tojo, *solus totus et unus*?" [*idem*: 79]), although, as my thesis argues, an understanding of 'regionalist ideology' purely on the basis of regional cultural difference is reductive and unhelpful.

Furthermore, although Ribeiro derides 'populist' (i.e. neo-realist) fiction that, in his view, focused too narrowly on agricultural poverty and class politics in regional settings ("o populista não compreende que a literatura discorra sobre outro tema que não seja as misérias da plebe" [*idem*: 26]), he is particularly critical of contemporary regionalist writers for 'allowing' their work to be assimilated into the dictatorship's ultra-conservative, 'regionalist-nationalist' discourse:

> No fundo, pois que o Estado-Mecenas age e fala teològicamente, o que se pretendia era traduzir nos figurantes da literatura regionalista os reflexos da doutrina e graça de Deus. Desde logo impunha-se que fossem de boa condição, para o que haviam de ser conformes com a cartilha, sem deixar de sê-lo com o folclore e com a moral política, a reinante, entende-se. (*Idem*: 75)

Here, the reader has clear evidence that, if Ribeiro's fiction has been linked to the *Estado Novo*'s "ideologia ruralizante", it was not intentional (or, indeed desirable) on the novelist's part – although, as I shall demonstrate, it is perhaps an unavoidable consequence of his narratives' internal contradictions. The excerpts above demonstrate two important facets of Ribeiro's "regionalist ideological project" in *Faunos* and *Lobos*: a) his belief that excessive attention to aesthetic descriptions and linguistic perculiarities results in insufficient, inauthentic and shallow renderings of Portugal's regional communities; b) his rejection of "bucolismo campestre", a rejection which, in these two novels, leads the author to foreground the Beira Alta *serras* as a battlefield and ideologically contested *locus*, although, significantly, not in a Marxist sense that would posit rural territory as a "means of production".[152]

[152] See my analysis of Saramago in Chapter IV.

Moreover, it is essential to consider two manifestly 'political' statements made by Ribeiro in the final decade of his life, both of which will guide my analysis to some extent: 1) "Fui sempre rebelde, mais ou menos; uma rebeldia barata" (*apud* Caeiro 1957); 2) "Para um homem ser revolucionário numas coisas tem simultaneamente que ser conservador noutras. Assim me sucedia a mim" (Ribeiro 2016: 161). Both of these citations hint at the internal tensions and conflict within this author's fiction between 'conservative' and 'modern' resistance against salazarist or proto-salazarist political discourse: if "conservative" can be defined (in English and in Portuguese) as "the quality of not usually liking or trusting change, especially sudden change" (Cambridge Dictionary 2022, definition 1; Priberam 2021b, definition 7), then certain aspects of Ribeiro's narratives can be treated as such, although, as I shall outline presently, their treatment of continuity and change is a complex one.

More broadly, the peasant protagonists of both *Faunos* and *Lobos* certainly engage in political practices that are decidedly non-theoretical and non-doctrinal; to quote Hobsbawm, "the difference is not one between 'traditional' societies 'without politics' and 'modern' ones with politics. There is politics in both" (1973: 5). As I shall demonstrate throughout this chapter, Ribeiro's novels construct ideological critiques not only *directly* – against the hegemony of religious and political authorities – but also *indirectly*, through parody and satire relating to bucolic idealisation of Portugal's inland landscapes (and of the 'rural women' that reside within them). This paradigm is complicated, though, by the author's consistent evocation of *topophilia* – "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (Tuan 1974: 4) – which "rings false when it is claimed for a large territory" (*idem*: 101) and is more appropriate for a circumscribed *regional* environment than for an arbitrarily demarcated *national* territory. In certain instances, Ribeiro's recourse to topophilic sentiment appears 'atavistic', in a manner that seemingly coheres with the *Estado Novo*'s efforts to maintain a traditionalist peasant populace. However, while in some respects these *serranos* appear to be engaged in a struggle "for adjustment of the old, which normally means either the defence of the traditional society against some threat or the restoration of the old ways" (Hobsbawm 1973: 12), Ribeiro also suggests that "'[t]raditional' societies are not static and unchanging, exempt from historic change and evolution, nor is there a single model of 'modernisation' which

determines their transformation" (*idem*: 4). Indeed, within *Lobos* in particular, rural nostalgia and 'anxiety of loss' assume a transgressive and politically 'radical' quality, in accordance with Alastair Bonnett's argument:

> The radical eye is often represented as looking beyond 'backward villages' and 'dirty old towns' to the gleaming modern vistas of tomorrow. Yet it is within the old places, the real places, the streets and living communities, that narratives of popular identity, as well as class and community solidarity, are found and admired. (Bonnett 2010: 8)

In much the same way, while Ribeiro's worldview as expressed in these two novels is not a classically 'Marxist' one, there is a discernible realisation – particularly in the latter narrative – that 'modernising' impulses should be resisted when these are imposed by a fascist, centripetal force.

This chapter, then, will interpret *Faunos* and *Lobos* as 'ideological' on two accounts, re-configuring Frank Davey's critique of "visible regionalisms" and of regionalisms that convert "geography into a sign that can conceal the presence of ideology" (1997: 3-6). On the one hand, I shall argue that Ribeiro's novels make political statements on a *visible* level, insofar as they openly satirise, critique and resist the hegemony and interference of national (religious and political) authorities, thus risking the ire and even censorship of such entities. On the other hand, *Faunos* and *Lobos* both contain what I shall term *concealed* ideologies, with political critiques that reveal themselves through close, sustained analysis of diegetic environment (and of the highland characters' relationship with it). In my section on *Faunos*, I will begin by outlining Ribeiro's overt critique of the Catholic priesthood's doctrine, influence and behaviour within the rural Beira Alta, and, by extension, of national and local political intrigue during the First Republic. I will then evaluate the ways in which *Faunos*'s depiction of the Beira Alta *serras* (and of human activity within that environment) systematically lampoons and undermines the idyllic and "pastoral" conservative cultural discourse that arguably pre-dated the *Estado Novo* dictatorship (cf. Trindade 2008: 316), and would later characterise much of the regime's propaganda. In the second half of the chapter, I will first address

Lobos's satirical treatment of local and national authority figures and policies under the *Estado Novo*, as well as Ribeiro's explicit rejection of Marxist doctrine in his delineation of 'peasant resistence' to the salazarist regime. Following this, I shall define the 'concealed ideologies' within Ribeiro's 1958 novel as a) a veiled critique of the regime's 'ruralist' discourse, which is nonetheless problematised by b), multiple characters' *topophilia*, which suggest a firm opposition to enforced socio-economic and technological transformation within the Beira Alta. Hence, my goal will be to demonstrate that Ribeiro's supposedly 'cheap' rebellion advances an intimate and mutually reinforcing relationship between these novels' *regional* diegetic environment and the novelist's *ideological message*.

II.1. Fauns (and demons) in the hills: *Andam faunos pelos bosques*

In November 1926, mere months after the 28th May *coup d'état* that ended Portugal's First Republic, Aquilino Ribeiro published his third novel, *Faunos*.[153] Like his quintessentially 'regionalist' 1919 narrative *Terras do demo*, its diegetic environment is clearly located in the Upper Beira, in a number of villages spaced between the Serra da Nave and the Serra da Lapa highland areas. The plot commences as local Abbot Padre Jesuíno's attention is called to the apparent rape of local shepherdess Micas Olaia, at the hands of a mysterious 'creature' roaming the highlands. Subsequently, more reports emerge in the surrounding villages of peasant girls ("lavradeiras ou trabalhadoras de campo, zagalas, filhas-famílias dadas ao governo da casa, costureiras, vendedeiras ambulantes, professoras e uma funâmbula…" [Ribeiro 1983b: 238]) seemingly losing their virginity to this unknown figure. In parallel, the romantic liaisons in the highlands between certain priests (e.g. Padre Teodoro) and local girls are detailed. When appeals to political and religious authorities to address the problem are ignored or disregarded, the priests of the local parishes anxiously seek solutions and local citizen Pedro Jirigodes coordinates an armed hunt for the perpetrator among the highlands, involving hundreds of peasants from different parishes in the area. When this expedition fails to identify the rapist,

[153] An early version of *Faunos* was published in 1920, as the novella "O derradeiro fauno".

Jirigodes attempts a smaller stakeout with himself and the local 'madman' Baltasar, who often sleeps in what he regards as the 'sacred mountains'; following an argument, Jirigodes kills Baltasar and abandons his body. Meanwhile, another priest Padre Dâmaso discovers in his churchyard what appears to be a 'cult' of local men and 'deflowered' girls worshipping the unidentified being ("o *Inefável*"), which they believe to be imbued with divine significance. Eventually, with no success in unmasking or stopping the predator, the nearest Bishop organizes a synod in Viseu (the regional capital), to be attended by all the clergy serving in highland areas affected by this phenomenon. At this meeting, theological debate abounds regarding these events; while one parish priest, Padre Moura Seco, claims that these occurrences are the work of 'fauns', Padre Dâmaso affirms that 'demons' have invaded the highlands. The conclusion of the synod, however, is that *both* of these mythical creatures are involved; the rapes are deemed to be the consequence of human 'instinct' and lust which has spread across the region. At the narrative's end, Padre Dâmaso, having been cured of his naïve perceptions of human behaviour, finally submits to his own lust for the house servant girl Silvana.

Numerous scholars describe this novel as a paradigmatic example of Ribeiro's insistence on regional identity: for David Mourão-Fereira, this novel defends the notions of "*terraferma*" and "continentalidade" – in other words, a shift of focus away from 'oceanic' and 'maritime' literary tropes towards an inland "espaço terrestre" (1985: 73-74) – while Ana Cordeiro (rather simplistically) sees the narrative's binary tensions between "regionalismo" and "universalismo" as an end in itself (2009: 84). Others have concentrated on the 'vitalistic' and 'primordial' purity of the narrative's diegetic environment (Pereira 2016: 26-27), which, in António Fernandes's view, is undermined by Ribeiro's portrayal of disruptive figures of authority: "*padres, legisladores, santarrões, letrados e sacripantas* [são retratados] como os controladores, repressores e deturpadores de uma bondade primordial da fonte da vida" (2013: 88). Rui Lage offers a more discerning observation that *Faunos* conducts an ironic "inversão invulgar" of the Arcadian pastoral ideal through the erotic and (seemingly) 'demonic' behaviours that *all* characters display, "no quadro de um erotismo telúrico e de uma emancipação dionisíaca do corpo ao arrepio da dogmática católica" (2016: 225, 227-228). Nonetheless, this is to ignore the

powerful and multifaceted role that the Beira Alta highland landscape plays in reinforcing this narrative's political critique and spatialised ideological dynamics. My reading, then, will outline *Faunos*'s satirical treatment of governmental and ecclestical authorities within the Beira Alta region and its destabilisation of the precepts on which the prevailing Catholic doctrine rests, through the priests' contradictory attitudes towards 'tradition' and 'modernity' within the rural communities they are responsible for. The bulk of my analysis, however, will be dedicated to the ambivalent manner in which the narrative's diegetic environment is portrayed over the course of the novel, which serves to denounce and lampoon bucolic aestheticism while simultaneously emphasising the notions of emotional (topophilic) *attachment, atavism* and *significance* with regards to this region and the peasant communities that populate it.

II.1.1. "O Estado e a Igreja": visible ideology

First of all, it will be important to outline the *explicit* instances of ideological critique contained within this narrative, beginning with Ribeiro's unflattering treatment of regional and national political authorities during the late Monarchy and into the First Republic. This disdainful tone is evidenced by the narrator's reference to local political office holders as "regedores patudos" (Ribeiro 1983b: 43), and to Padre Dâmaso's father as a despised local bailiff and bureaucrat: "O pai dele era um homenzinho de Foz Coa, meio ajudante de escrivão, meio beleguim, destes párias das vilas, que vivem a esburgar os ossos que lhes largam os gordos burocratas" (*idem*: 26). Moreover, specific incidents within the diegesis critique the indifference that Portugal's governing institutions exhibit towards the localised circumstances facing the Beira Alta's highland villages. This is apparent, in the highlanders' failed attempts to secure outside assistance, in order to track down the mysterious *serra* rapist: "Em sua tribulação, apelou o serrano para os homens da governança e santos bons advogados. Dos primeiros, alguns responderam por chalaça; dos celestes patronos, em despeito de reiterados votos e rogativas, nenhum se dignara ainda responder à deprecada" (*idem*: 38). The unhelpful reaction of these 'government men and holy lawyers' – ridicule and silence – is depicted as both *geographically circumscribed* and *widespread*, through Ribeiro's use of the

collective, non-inflected noun 'o serrano' to suggest homologous circumstances throughout the region.

Simultaneously, *Faunos* satirises practices of *caciquismo* in early twentieth-century Portuguese politics,[154] although, curiously, the author denounces such clientelistic practices through the activies of local Catholic clergy rather than representatives of the political class, thereby exemplifying the critique of "caciquismo religioso" that José Cardoso Pires has identified within Ribeiro's *oeuvre* (1985: 99). In this 1926 novel, the reader observes the unusual practice within the *serras* of parish priests being *elected* by their parishioners, which causes bitter rivalries between opposing camps of corrupt clergymen, as evidenced by Padre Jesuíno's rant to Padre Teodoro regarding a prior election:

> Sabe porque risquei com esse pandilha? Eu lhe conto. Tivemos as eleições da paróquia, aqui como em toda a parte, e o homem, espicaçado pelo *Pardal-sem-rabo*, um títere que ocupa uma cadeira vitalícia em S. Bento e foi duas vezes ministro, quando noutro país não chegaria sequer à craveira de contínuo, aparece-me arvorado em cacique. (Ribeiro 1983b: 28-29)

In the author's explicit references here to 'safe seats' in the national (São Bento) parliament, and to the existence of "cacique[s]", *Faunos* equates Lisbon-based national political institutions with the 'spiritual authority' of the Catholic Church within the novel's localised diegetic space. While the clergy might be viewed as "sobrepondo-se mesmo ao poder civil instituído" (Cordeiro 2009: 86), it would be more accurate to describe this relationship between Church and State as a partnership of equals, according to which religious and political authorities regularly collaborate. Such a state of affairs is alluded to in a comment made by a priest attending the synod in Viseu ("[A situação] [e]xige a acção combinada da lei e da moral, que é o mesmo que dizer, do Estado e da Igreja" [Ribeiro 1983b: 248]),[155] which can be read as an *exposé* of theocratic tendencies and

[154] See I.1. regarding this phenomenon in modern Portuguese political history.

[155] Such utterances, as we shall see in IV.1., share some affinity with *Levantado do chão*'s references to the "santíssima trindade" of Church, State and *latifúndio* in the *Estado Novo*-era Alentejo.

excessive Catholic influence in certain inland areas and, accordingly, as an approval of secularist policies pursued by Republican politicians at a national level (in the face of considerable northern opposition).[156] Moreover, the narrative's parodic treatment of peasant reactions to the mysterious sexual predator roaming the *serras* reveals a sardonic attitude towards contemporary 'religious' occurrences elsewhere in rural Portugal. Specifically, Maria da Encarnação's (and the local newspaper's) messianic interpretation of the "Inefável" figure as a 'holy sign' ("O eleito do Senhor abriu-me os braços e em seu seio amoroso santificou-me. É o Inefável que anunciam as Escrituras. [...] Da mesma maneira que o Messias veio à luz nos desertos da Judeia, elegeu ele agora para teatro estas terrinhas humildes" [*idem*: 110-112]) arguably lampoons the *Milagre do Sol* in Fátima – nearly a decade before Faunos's publication – and the Portuguese Catholic Church's instrumentalisation of this so-called 'miracle' in its own (and, subsequently, the salazarist dictatorship's) propaganda.[157]

As Fernandes notes, however, while *Faunos* is "[uma] sátira ao clero da província nos inícios do século XX" in some respects, its ideological importance should not be limited to that of an anti-clericalist *roman de thèse* (2013: 81). Indeed, Ribeiro's comments in the novel's *prefácio* indicate a *realistic* perception of clerical figures within the Beira Alta:

> Não me digam que são devassos ou pagãos; são sacerdotes de Cristo, dignos sacerdotes dentro da lei natural, com lisura e singeleza. Todavia não requiero para eles a bênção dos senhores bispos. Pintei-os como os conheci na minha infância e como julgo que vêm da genuína tradição lusitana. (Ribeiro 1983b: 5)

In this excerpt, Ribeiro's posits the provincial clergymen that appear in *Faunos* as 'decent' and 'gentle' in nature, while defending his *plausible* portrayal of such priests from potential ecclesiastical objections. At the same time, the author's allusion to "sacerdotes dentro da lei natural" depicts the succumbing of these

[156] See I.1.

[157] See I.1.

clergyman to sexual desire and human pleasures as *inevitable*, thereby attacking as hypocritical the vows of celibracy inherent to the clerical vocation. In fact, the narrator within the diegesis frequently suggests that married or non-celibate priests with children in Beira Alta communities – like the author's own father – are exceedingly common: "o abade do Touro, anafado, bochechas de presunto, pai de filhos e lavrador, e outros, quase todos bons garfos, todos amigos da mulher, do vinho e também de Deus, em conformidade com o múnus que exerciam" (*idem*: 68). Finally, Ribeiro's entreaty to the reader not to regard these clergymen as "pagãos" introduces an important element of ideological ambiguity into the novel, regarding the role of Catholicism and / or competing spritual practices in promoting social *modernisation* or *regression* within seemingly 'remote' inland communities.

To this end, Eduardo Lourenço describes the co-existence of Christian and 'paganistic' practices as a key motif in Ribeiro's narratives (cf. 1985: 20), although, in *Faunos*, this relationship is rather antagonistic. At an early point in the diegesis, for instance, Padre Dâmaso fiercely denounces local religious customs that do not align with traditional Catholic doctrine, such as the aforementioned voting system used to elect parish priests within the highland villages: "Votos como este da Penha do Vouga, para lá dos limites da freguesia, deviam ser abatidos nas Constituições do Bispado. São uma sobrevivência pagã, fonte só de libertinagem" (Ribeiro 1983b: 24). Dâmaso's denunciation of popular democracy as a 'remnant of paganism' and a source of 'licentiousness' reveals his (somewhat paradoxical) efforts to delegimitise elections as an outdated (indeed, *primitive*) practice. In reply, Padre Teodoro comments that this "tradição veneranda" of semi-political suffrage has the ability to entuse and 'rejuvenate' the *serra*'s 'isolated' villages: "[Estes votos] [t]êm uma coisa a recomendá-los: serem uma digressão, insuflarem um pouco de ar novo à vida destes povos, encurralados entre montes" (*ibidem*). This battle for hearts and minds between Catholicism and so-called 'paganistic' vestiges resurfaces towards the end of the diegesis, when Dâmaso reflects upon the conclusions reached at the Viseu synod regarding the "Inefável":

> Repontava do horizonte, no ciclo sem fim das coisas, a era pagã, a era do instinto. Para que tal calamidade fosse possível, necessário era que a religião não actuasse no universo moral como freio moderador. E o corolário era este: a religião dominava ainda, sim, dominava; mas dominava em cérebros e não em corações. Era uma sobrevivência, atitude ou rotina, roble sem ter húmus onde mergulhar os raízes. (*Idem*: 259)

In this passage, one can detect a near-total reversal of the priest's previous position, in that organised religion is now regarded as a 'surviving' relic, still in a position of control but on a *cerebral* level rather than an emotional one, lacking the 'humus' needed to 'submerge its roots'. In contrast, Dâmaso believes a 'pagan era' of 'human instinct' to be dawning, but, significantly, it is regarded as a 'ressurgent' period, through Ribeiro's use of the verb "*re*pontar" and his notion of *cyclical* return ("[o] ciclo sem fim das coisas") to a 'primordial' state. At the heart of these competing claims of 'backwardness' within the Beira Alta, then, lies a deeper struggle between the ideological themes that Catholicism and Paganism represent in this novel: tradition *vs*. modernity; theocracy *vs*. democracy. In effect, Ribeiro's fluctuating portrayals of these two belief systems (as either 'primitive' or 'insurgent') destabilises a fundamental assumption held by Portugal's Catholic – and, later, salazarist – establishment, regarding the country's inland rural communities: that peasant 'conservatism' and adherence to ritualistic 'anachronisms' was socially desirable and politically manageable.

Indeed, the clergy's preconceptions of peasant 'backwardness', 'isolation' and moral 'purity' are alluded to at several points in the diegesis, beginning with the concerns that several priests express in chapter III, regarding the sexual depravity that they believe to have polluted the area: "o espírito de imundície que corria à solta pelos andurriais da Nave" (*idem*: 75). These complaints that a previously 'virtuous' corner of the country has been 'infested' with immorality are voiced most vociferously by Padre Dâmaso, during the Viseu synod ("uma legião de demónios infesta este nosso cantinho de Portugal!" [*idem*: 241]), with Dâmaso's supporters arguing that such developments could *only* be the work of Satan: "Se Satanás [...] era príncipe do mundo, e possuía o dom da ubiquidade, admirava que o seu casco de bode calcasse terrinhas que não têm história nem vêm nos mapas?" (*idem*: 251). This excerpt – which I will

return to presently – clearly exhibits the prevailing stereotypes pertaining to the Beira Alta region (and more broadly, Portugal's *interior*) that Ribeiro's 'concealed ideologies' seek to challenge.

II.1.2. "Parecia guardar a natureza religioso e grato silêncio": Concealed ideologies

It is on this note that I will now shift my attention to the more subtle 'regionalist' ideological dynamics of this novel, with reference to Ribeiro's portrayal of the Beira Alta highlands diegetic environment. On the one hand, the narrative can be read as a critique of bucolic aestheticism, in its ironic rendering of natural exoticism and its depiction of the *serra* landscape as a violent battlefield. On the other hand, if one examines certain facets of the narrative's landscape descriptions, the characterisation of specific protagonists, and Ribeiro's own comments in the *prefácio*, a level of topophilic sentiment is evinced which, while clearly rejecting the romanticised and idealised imagery of much regionalist fiction of the period, nevertheless emphasises the *importance* and timeless *significance* of the Beira Alta region and its peasant inhabitants.

To begin with, *Faunos* contains passages that almost explicitly call into question the usefulness of bucolic imagery, as Ribeiro's detailed landscape description at the end of chapter I demonstrates. Specifically, the idyllic passage "milagre do ar puríssimo, ouviu-se o chocalho dos rebanhos badalejando longe; calou-se, volveu a ouvir-se; e, sincopado, figurou-lhe o doce solilóquio do ermo" (*idem*: 36) is preceded by the much more ambivalent "Gemia um carro lá longe e parecia naquele gemer vibrar toda a melancólica languidez do crepúsculo. [...]. Voluntariamente, parecia guardar a natureza religioso e grato silêncio" (*ibidem*). In this excerpt, Ribeiro's reference to the twilight's "melancólica languidez" can be read as a foreboding pathetic fallacy or, alternatively, as suggestive of a lethargic, depressive atmosphere. Above all, the author's repetition of "parecia" gestures towards a bucolic *appearance* that masks a harsher reality, particularly in the second case, where the verb "guardar" suggests the keeping (or concealing) of a secret truth under a veneer of "silêncio". From its first chapter,

then, this novel confounds 'pastoral' expectations of regionalist literature via Ribeiro's ambiguous depiction of the Beira Alta landscape.

More systematically, Ribeiro's narrative consistently associates bucolic natural imagery with the sexual fetishisation and voyeuristic observation of 'rural women'. This is evident at the beginning of chapter I, when Padre Jesuíno contemplates Micas Olaia's body while she recounts the story of her sexual assault: "não perdera Jesuíno a faculdade de admirar *uma bela natureza de mulher*. Nus, agora, só os corpinhos dos neófitos lhe passavam pelas mãos calejadas. Deixá-lo, aldemenos aos olhos, enquanto o viático não tocasse à sua porta, ninguém poderia roubar o condão de ver!" (*idem*: 17, my emphasis). At the end of this chapter, the narrator directly links Jesuíno's lust for peasant girls with the panoramic (and idyllic) views of the local highland landscape from his balcony:

> Aborrecido com a lágrima poética que lhe empapava a alma, Jesuíno retirou os olhos do panorama encantado. E, saudoso dos bons tempos, quando *moças novas e fagueiras* o escoltavam para as romarias, tornou a pegar na bolsinha de sarja com a sobrepeliz e o ritual e foi esconjurar o Demónio do *seio mimoso da zagala*. (*Idem*: 36, my emphasis)

Here, the priest's thought association between a "panorama encantado", memories of "moças novas e fagueiras" in years gone by, and Micas Olaia's "seio mimoso" clearly equates aesthetic appreciation of the highland landscape with sexual objectification of the female body. This fetishistic paradigm is sustained in chapter II's description of various local village communities marching towards the highlands, which contains a direct comparison between the blooming of mountainous plants and the 'flowering' of young women: "o gentio de feições góticas, intonso e achavascado, no meio de quem, às vezes, como desopilação da natureza, floria mocinha, mais branca e graciosa que açucena num tojal" (*idem*: 44-45). This bucolic portrayal of highland women (alongside a mostly 'unkempt' and 'crass' mass of *serranos*) is most clearly articulated in Padre Teodoro's assignation with his lover Leopoldina in a forest

clearing (chapter V), during which the narrator associates the priest's yearning for her body with the fragrant *flora* and fertile soil surrounding them both:

> Espojaram-se, na cabeleira farta, luxuriosa de todos os rescendores que exala a terra: erva-maria, alfazema, amentilhos de soutos, dum odor quase genésico, feno cortado que derrama aquele perfume de amêndoas, especial das bocas lascivas, saudáveis. Por muito, muito tempo, os olhos dele deliraram com o espectáculo deliciososo e, decerto, Leopoldina, nervosa já e sem sossego, lhes teria sentido ora a carícia leve, ora a ferroada. (*Idem*: 114)

This sequence is, as Pereira suggests, a key moment in the diegesis when idyllic natural imagery is fused with erotic desire (cf. 2016: 27), with the "espectáculo delicioso" that Teodoro is confronted with being both the local landscape and a local girl. To a certain degree, such 'fetishisation' of peasant female sexuality appears to validate Ana Paula Ferreira's critique of 'rural fiction' as epitomised by Ribeiro and others, on account of its "association of the 'natural' with Woman" (1996: 140) that would later characterise *Estado Novo* discourse.

Nevertheless, I would argue that the extent to which *Faunos* adopts such a paradigm *acritically* is debatable, given that the novel directly distinguishes between *perceptions* of pastoral beauty and the unpleasant *reality* of social conflict within rural space. Ribeiro's undermining of idyllic preconceptions is clearly evidenced, in the narrator's ironic tone as Padre Dâmaso strolls around the outskirts of Viseu during a recess from the priest synod (chapter IX): "Cucuritavam os galos com perfeita vocalização rural, e Dâmaso deixava espairecer os olhos, inebriado da bucólica, a que a sombra das torres não roubava a graça rústica e a candura" (*idem*: 233). The author's overt use of the terms "bucólica" and "graça rústica" here suggests an acknowledgement (on the author's part) of prevailing stereotypes and romanticised literary depictions of such environments in Portuguese literature – in a similar vein to *Levantado do chão*'s ironic exhortation "Começai, Musas minhas, começai o canto bucólico" (Saramago 1994: 275).[159] In addition, Ribeiro alludes to the constant presence

[159] See IV.1.

of violence in this apparent "recanto parecido, humilde e pacato" (Ribeiro 1983b: 233), through Dâmaso's shock at witnessing a violent altercation between two peasants on the horizon: "E Dâmaso ficou horrorizado, porque a cena bárbara lhe recordava Caim e Abel, o furor supinamente selvagem, fatídica e sagradamente telúrico que nas primeiras idades só se satisfazia matando" (*idem*: 233-234). The priest's revelation here is significant for several reasons: first, Dâmaso's recollection of Cain and Abel evokes a post-Edenic descent into barbaric fratricide, thereby disrupting his hitherto paradisiacal view of the landscape; second, the narrator's assocation of 'savagery' with 'telluric sanctity' (via the adverb "sagradamente") subverts both the "bucolismo campestre" – that Ribeiro would later overtly rebuke – and the hegemonic influence of Catholic doctrine within (and *upon*) this pastoral aesthetic.

Indeed, such tensions between *idyllic* and *demonic* imagery pertaining to the Beira Alta landscape correspond to the novel's broader symbolic division between the images of the 'faun' and the 'demon', which the priests explicitly outline during the Viseu synod; while Padre Moura Seco believes that the local girls in the highlands have been graced with the presence of 'fauns' ("seres benignos e universais" [Ribeiro 1983b: 253]), Padre Dâmaso counters that these occurrences are rapes for which the 'Devil' and 'demons' are responsible. On the one hand, the 'Faun' – alluded to, of course, in the narrative's title – derives from Faunus, the half-human, half-goat Roman deity of forests, fields and herds, and is frequently associated with agricultural fertility and / or with the 'spirit' of forests (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018, 2020).[160] There is also an inherent affinity between this pre-Christian deity and the Catholic priesthood: just as Faunus was the Roman god of shepherds and flocks, so the priest's role is to act as a 'pastor' to his flock of followers within his community.[161] Moura Seco's thesis that fauns are responsible for sexual deviance therefore posits these mythical creatures as direct competitors to the local clergy. On the other hand, Dâmaso's attribution of blame to "uma legião de demónios" (*idem*: 241) evokes pre-modern or medieval fears of "bosque" (forest) environments in European

[160] The Greek equivalent of Faunus was Pan – also mentioned in *Faunos* (Ribeiro 1983b: 255).

[161] Fauns often appear in Catholic iconography, with a prominent Portuguese example being the choir screen in Braga's Cathedral.

culture; as John Rennie Short notes, "[t]he traditional agrarian view saw forests as the home of evil spirits. European folklore is populated with demons and dangers who dwell in the forest" (1991: 6-8). Furthermore, the fact that the mountainous *serras* assume such a prominent role in the narrative's events allows for differing ideological interpretations of their symbolic importance, given that, according to Tuan, such mountainous landscapes have traditionally been viewed either as "sublime, the abode of the gods" or "as ugly, distasteful, the abode of demons" (1974: 70). Ribeiro's decision to use *both* of these competing images to depict the novel's highlands prevents reactionary political forces from co-opting these landscapes as a bucolic ideal, while reinforcing the 'cheapness' of his own ideological rebellion through narrative fiction.

Faunos's Beira Alta *serras*, then, are posited as spaces marked by conflict and contestation, which is made viscerally apparent not only in the macabre events that happen within them (e.g. Baltasar's death at the hands of Pedro Jirigodes), but also in their natural appearance, which the narrator often likens to a battlefield. This can be observed, for example, in the decidedly militaristic description of the highlands in chapter VI:

> Os horizontes estendiam-se até onde consentia *o parapeito* dos altos. Lá estava a serra da Estrela, coberta de mantel lilás com *velaturas de bronze*, [...]; [...]; logo abaixo, nos Alhais, luzia sobre o casario baço o coruchéu em ardósia, negro-brunido, *da torre normanda*. E por ali em fora, *por batalhões*, os penedais apresentavam, sob os jorros da luz, uma doce carantonha de bons gigantes. (*Idem*: 135, my emphasis)

This panoramic view of the mountainous landscape – stretching towards the Serra da Estrela on the horizon – alludes to the remains of an historic battleground, replete with references to a 'parapet', 'bronzed glazes', a 'Norman tower' and 'batallions' of rocky outcrops. Coupled with such military imagery is a depiction of the region's *serranos* as warriors; in chapter II, for instance, Pedro Jirigodes's "expedição" to hunt the "inefável" encompasses hundreds of highlanders from different *aldeias*, "em pé de guerra com grande fúria e denodo" (*idem*: 46). This scene, outlining the coordination of distinct villages on a

common ‘war footing’, might be seen as a parody of the ‘catalogue of ships’ in Homer’s *Iliad* (cf. Mourão-Ferreira 1985: 76; Lage 2016: 230), but it also makes more geographically specific historical allusions. Namely, the weapons carried by some of the villagers are defined as “catanas da Maria da Fonte” (*idem*: 37) which, together with the narrator’s reference to “os povos patuleias” later in the chapter (*idem*: 51), associates the region with historically significant peasant rebellions during the mid-nineteenth century.[162]

Any notion of *collective, synchronised* military activity unfolding within the *serras*, however is undermined by the heterogeneity of these different communities, with some wielding primitive tools (“ganchos, partazanas, espetos de ferro”) and others carrying state-of-the-art rifles: “Floreavam armas de toda a espécie, desde a Mauser, último modelo, à caçadeira de boca de bronze, desde a espada do alferes-mor à forquilha dos tojos” (*idem*: 45). Aside from these *economic* distinctions between the different groups of *serranos*, the subjective and derisory manner in which each village is ‘ethnically defined’ (cf. Mourão-Ferreira 1985: 75-76) – through such expressions as “tribos bravias”, “gentes ciclópicas” and “horda troglodita” (Ribeiro 1983b: 46) – borders on racial slur at times, in a manner that is rather unacceptable in 2022: “anegralhados de tez, mestiços de cigano e moiro”; “caras tisnadas” (*idem*: 44). While these excerpts suggest ethnic prejudice on the narrator’s part, they also potentially represent the *aldeias*’ hostile perception of *each other*, in quasi-racialised terms. If the latter is true, Ribeiro’s novel can be read as a provocation against organicist concepts of ‘regional identity’ (cf. Dainotto 1996: 505) in that there is a pronounced lack of homogeneity and harmony amongst the inhabitants of a specific regional (in this case, Beira Alta) space. In the Portuguese context, such imagery might be viewed as a challenge to extant ‘racialised’ concepts of regional difference across the country (cf. Sobral 2004: 280), while, simultaneously, this ‘motley crew’ of distinct communities anticipates the “irregular” distribution of peasant resistance (Foucault 1978: 96) that is much clearer in Ribeiro’s later novel *Lobos*.

[162] It is important to note, however, that the Maria da Fonte rebellion and the Guerra da Patuleia are more commonly associated with the Entre-Douro-e-Minho than with the Beira Alta. See I.1. regarding these historical events, and III.2. for similar references in Bessa-Luís’s *A sibila*.

Notwithstanding the multiple strategies outlined above that *Faunos*'s author deploys to destabilise "[o] bucolismo campestre", there are certain aspects of the novel that gesture towards the "affective bond" between inhabitant and landscape that Tuan defines as "topophilia". This emotion is displayed from Ribeiro's *prefácio*, in which the author outlines his own sentimental (and potentially *irrational*) connection to the territory and natives of his birthplace:

> [S]into a tenacidade teimosa, um pouco absurda, talvez indefensavelmente idealista, dos camponeses da Beira, meus avós, que viviam e morriam no sonho de converter chavascais em floridos vergéis. Esse meu empenho - seja questão de probidade, seja atavismo da rija e obsessa alma beiroa - é superior ao meu raciocínio, aos raciocínios mais robustos deste mundo. (*Idem*: 7)

This highly personal outburst from the author – intensified by its self-deprecating tone and poetic use of alliteration ("tenacidade teimosa"; "indefensavelmente idealista"; "converter chavascais") – is notable for the deliberate precedence that *sentiment* assumes over *reasoning*, and for its open acceptance of "atavismo" and "[os] camponeses da Beira" as structuring elements of the subsequent diegesis. Such assertions appear to converge with traditionalist (and, subsequently, *Estado Novo*) insistence on a nostalgic "ideologia ruralizante" that awarded primacy to the "aldeia" as the fundamental basis of Portuguese society.

Aside from Ribeiro's own paratextual comments, this 'atavistic' paradigm is prominent in Ribeiro's characterisation of Baltasar, the ill-fated 'madman' who roams the *serras* alone, is disliked by almost all locals, and is eventually killed (albeit accidentally) by Pedro Jirigodes. Although Feliciana's assessment of this figure in chapter I depicts him as a near-feral individual ("É um desinfeliz que anda a monte com os lobos. Ninguém lhe dá pousada, ninguém gosta dele, porque tem uma língua que varre sete fornos, e é ruim, mais ruim que um saco de lacraus" [Ribeiro 1983b: 33]), Baltasar is the *serrano* within this narrative who is most evidently in harmony with the surrounding mountainous landscape, *flora* and *fauna*. In chapter VI, this is made apparent through Baltasar's admission to Jirigodes that he often sleeps in the highlands

and secretly drinks from the udders of goats: "Eu vivo mais na serra que nos povos. A serra é minha amiga, a cada canto me oferece dormida. Chego-me às cabras, quando os pastores não vêem, e mamo. No Verão dão-me pútegas, quantas me pede o apetite. A serra… quero-lhe como a minha mãe" (*idem*: 137). While Ribeiro's (somewhat hyperbolic) portrayal of Baltasar here amounts to reverse anthropomorphism, within the same chapter this character is depicted as extremely pious, regarding the highlands as sacred and in direct contact with God:[163] "A serra tem vida, sente, fala e escuta. Fala para Nosso Senhor e é quando está azul, mais azul que o manto da Virgem Maria. Ouve Nosso Senhor, para isso tem os picotos levantados ao céu. Não, aqui não mata. [...]. Tudo isso é corpo de Deus" (*idem*: 143-145). This 'Biblical' depiction of Baltasar is reinforced by his own name – one of three magi present at the Messiah's birth –, while the character's violent death in these same *serras* likens him to a martyr; a Christ-like figure of sacrifice, perishing within a 'sanctified' space.

On balance, however, the narrator's depictions of the Beira Alta highland landscapes and specific landmarks play a greater role in evoking 'topophilic' sentiment than the emotions experienced or expressed by any single character within this narrative. To some extent, this paradigm characterises man-made monuments of religious importance in the *serras*, such as the local "capelinhas" visible to Baltasar and Pedro Jirigodes in chapter VI: "tinham a mística suavidade de padroeiro a abençoar; reluzindo no meio das matas, e delas, como escada de Jacob, ascendia aos ares uma coluna de celestial pureza" (*idem*: 143). Nonetheless, while this portrayal of the chapels produces images of 'divinity' to a certain degree, with their comparison to Jacob's Ladder and Ribeiro's references to 'mystical softness' and 'heavenly purity', such notions are undermined (once again) by Ribeiro's exaggerated rendering of bucolic imagery ("enchiam as colinas da brancura fragrante dum campo de açucenas") and his parodic likening of the chapels to "velhas mendigas cobertas de velhas capuchas" (*ibidem*). Above all, the author regularly attributes Biblical significance to *natural* landmarks within the novel's diegetic environment, with a particular focus on the various rocky outcrops and mountainous peaks visible

[163] As I shall argue presently, both of these characteristics apply to the highland communities of *Lobos* and, specifically, to the characterisation of Teotónio Louvadeus.

on the horizon. In chapter II, for instance, the reader encounters the following panorama: "Os picotos, recortados na brancura espacial, tinham o ar expectante de ser alguma vez Sinai, enquanto os penedos dormiam os sonos brutescos, letárgicos, dos primeiros monstros da criação" (*idem*: 49). In addition to the awe and trepidation that this towering image inspires, Ribeiro's comparison of the peaks to Mount Sinai,[164] and to the "penedos" as 'the first monsters of creation', seemingly imbues the Beira Alta highlands with a 'divine' character (cf. Fernandes 2013: 85). In this sense, the mountain tops appear to act as "locations of hierophany" which, according to Tuan, are "sacred places", "identified with some form of divine manifestation or with an event of overpowering significance" (1974: 146). Nonetheless, given that the *penedos* are simultaneously portrayed as 'lethargic' and 'monstrous', such an interpretation should be treated with caution. Similarly, although chapter II links a mountainous outcrop to Moses's leadership of the Israelites through the desert ("um penedo que, pela linha majestosa, podia muito bem ser a rocha em que já ignorados e primitivos Moisés, condutores de tribos, viessem bater com a ludibriante vara de bronze" [Ribeiro 1983b: 59]), Ribeiro's use of the plural here ("ignorados e primitivos Moisés") subverts the singular Biblical reference and broadens the scope of these peaks' significance in ancient human history.

The ambiguities outlined above, then, imply that *Faunos*'s author is not concerned with projecting an image of divine purity onto the Beira Alta highlands, but with restoring a sense of "superiority and centrality" to the inhabitants of this area (Tuan 1974: 31-32). In addition to Ribeiro's evocation of *mountainous* territory – which, according to Tuan, was once considered to be "the central point, the world's axis" (*idem*: 70) – the novel's repeated comparison of the *serras* to 'seas' and 'oceans' re-configures the region's place within Portuguese (and global) history. This image first appears as a simile in chapter II ("Aloiravam ao longe as searas, lembrando, ao descoser da serra, a fímbria de espuma dum mar de leite" (Ribeiro 1983b: 49), and becomes a blatant metaphor in chapter VI, when Baltasar alerts Pedro Jirigodes to the highlands' *wave-like* movement: "Jirigodes apercebeu-se-lhes do movimento nas lombas,

[164] According to Christian, Jewish and Islamic doctrine, Moses received the ten commandments from God at Mount Sinai's summit (in Egypt).

ora crespas, ora ondulosas, na estirada das colinas, no esgalgar tropeçante dos desfiladeiros, e nas articulações das cordas comparáveis a centopeias no jogo rítmico da marcha" (*idem*: 144; cf. Mourão-Ferreira 1985: 78). As is the case with several other novels studied within this thesis,[165] the tension that Ribeiro establishes here between rural and 'oceanic' imagery has a highly symbolic function, in its suggestion that the Beira Alta highlands are intimately connected with Portugal's history of maritime exploration (and Empire) and, more generally, with external dynamics that these *serras* are presumed to be 'isolated' from. On the contrary, several comments by the narrator explicitly associate the highlands with 'great' moments and battles over thousands of years of human history: "O mundo caía no solene colapso das grandes horas: a morte de Cristo, a batalha dos campos Cataláunicos, a tomada de Constantinopla" (*idem*: 47).

Returning to the attitudes and assumptions of the local Catholic clergy, then, it is clear that Ribeiro's narrative destabilises the premise, articulated by several priests at the Viseu synod, that these Beira Alta *serras* "não têm história nem vêm nos mapas" (*idem*: 251). Rather, during this sequence in chapters IX and X Ribeiro establishes a principle of moral equivalence between sexual behaviour in 'civilised urban centres' and in so-called 'rustic' environments ("Sejamos indulgentes! A harpa eólia de Eros vibra em todos os tons por esses mundos além, tanto entre rústicos como civilizados" [*idem*: 255]), leading Dâmaso to somberly reflect in the novel's final chapter that: "O que nas aldeias serranas se cometia a céu descoberto, a favor dum ardil selvagem e por isso mesmo desconcertante, grassava nas cidades, nas grandes metrópoles da civilização, com outro estilo, mas não com menos denodo" (*idem*: 259). On this basis, the author confronts efforts by Portugal's religious (and, later, political) establishment to confine the country's inland communities to a state of isolation, detatchment and discursively produced 'moral purity'.

Consequently, Ribeiro's ideological project throughout *Faunos* contains multiple (and seemingly irreconcilable) facets. The first of these is the contestation of externally imposed political *caciquismo* and Catholic doctrinal hegemony which, in the author's view, collaborate in order to subordinate and

[165] See III.2. (on Lídia Jorge's *O dia dos prodígios*) and IV.1. (on Saramago's *Levantado do chão*).

subdue inland peasant communities. Coupled with this dynamic is a systematic, self-conscious deconstruction of existing bucolic literary projections onto inland Portugal (and fetishished female subjects), which Ribeiro problematises in his violent and conflict-ridden rendering of the Beira Alta highlands. The second of these ideological aspects is an unmistakable insistence on topophilic sentiment and characteristics, which the novelist weaponises to counter pressumptions of 'rural remoteness' and to re-centre the *serranos*' notion of their existence within Portugal and in a global context. In doing so, however, the author becomes open to charges of complicity with a reactionary 'ruralist' discourse and preoccupation with 'village' purity that would come to define salazarist propaganda over subsequent decades. Following this analysis, it is reasonable to affirm that *Faunos*'s 'concealed' ideologies are more prominent and substantial than its 'visible' ones. Conversely, *Lobos*'s political statements are more overt and combative, although the novel implicitly articulates more subtle and complex ideological dynamics in its portrayal of Beira Alta peasant existence, as I shall now demonstrate.

II.2. The anxiety of conservatism, or, *Quando os lobos uivam*

For some sectors of the anti-salazarist opposition, Ribeiro's political and literary activity before 1958 was insufficiently 'committed' to overt resistance against the *Estado Novo*. This was particularly true of the Communist stalwart, future PCP leader and novelist Álvaro Cunhal, who accused the author of giving 'prestige' and 'credence' to the regime as a public intellectual: "tornar-se-ia um sujeito pacato e inofensivo cidadão, dando esplendor ao regime como notável homem de letras, oficialmente honorificado" [*apud* Vidigal 2009: 212). In particular, a preface that Cunhal wrote for *Lobos* in 1963 states that Ribeiro's public dedication to popular struggle throughout his life was questionable ("[n]a sua longa vida de trabalho, Aquilino nem sempre foi claro, com frequência se mostrou reservado e arisco às solicitações da luta popular" [2008: 7]), while much of his fiction prior to the late 1950s was oblivious to the country's socio-economic realities: "Aquilino não era um romancista social. Os heróis populares apareciam tratados superficialmente, no seu pitoresco, como que desligados da realidade viva do país. [...] Salvo nas suas últimas obras, Aquilino não pode ser

considerado um escritor realista" (*idem*: 9, 19). Cunhal's comments here are a somewhat injust and myopic comparison of Ribeiro's narratives to contemporary neo-realist literature,[166] and, as I have outlined above in my examination of *Faunos*, they do not necessarily apply to the author's earlier novels. Nonetheless, *Lobos* – one of Ribeiro's "últimas obras" – certainly contains an explicitly *political* tone and subject matter that distinguishes it from many of the novelist's other works.

The diegesis – set at a non-specific moment during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship – begins as Manuel Louvadeus returns to his family home in the village of Arcabuzais, within the fictional Serra dos Milhafres and the Bouça do Rei municipality (Beira Alta), having emigrated to Brazil ten years prior. Upon Manuel's return, he instantly hears from neighbours about the government's plans to carry out afforestation of the 'baldios' [communal lands] in the *serra*, and agrees to support the locals' opposition to the project. A public meeting takes place at which Lisbon-based agronomists (Streit and César Fontalva) present their plan to the local peasants, who voice their strong disapproval. While Fontalva develops some sympathy for the villagers' perspective, Streit shows little interest in their objections. Fontalva befriends Manuel, who shows him the *Rochambana* - a dilapidated farm in the highlands belonging to his hermit-like father Teotónio Lovadeus, in an area that is coveted by the authorities for its afforestation project. Later, the government presses ahead with its afforestation plans, leading to violent confrontation in Sector 1 (Streit's sector), in contrast to the peaceful reconciliation that takes place in Sector 2 (Fontalva's sector). Following this violent showdown, the authorities subsequently round up local agitators to use as scapegoats, while small-scale sabotage of the afforestation continues. A *Tribunal Plenário* (essentially a show trial) takes place in Porto, against the rebel peasants, with the authorities attempting to label the *serranos* as 'communists', despite little evidence that these peasants have any concrete awareness of Marxist doctrine. Many of the peasants are defended by Dr. Rigoberto, a trusted and liberally-minded local lawyer, who uses his platform to launch a diatribe against the *Estado Novo*'s behaviour towards these Beira Alta communities. All rebels – including Manuel

[166] See I.2.

– are found guilty and most are given long sentences in jail; the government proceeds with its afforestation, hastening the demise of the Louvadeus family's farming activity. Teotónio causes trouble by murdering a local *guarda florestal*, and later destroys the government project completely by committing arson across the highlands. The novel's final scenes take place some years later, after the *serra* has become a barren wasteland; two wolves search for food and stumble across the bones of the guard murdered years before.

This controversial narrative by Ribeiro – described by Henrique Almeida as the literary work "que mais o implicou nesta dimensão de intervencionista e revolucionário" (1993: 117) – has the (dubious) distinction of being the only novel studied within my corpus to have been subjected to salazarist censorship. Its publication also led the author to be put on trial by the dictatorial authorities in 1959, charged with "apologia de crimes contra a segurança do estado", "desprestígio do país no estrangeiro", "ofensas à honra e consideração do Presidente do Conselho de Ministros" and "ofensas à Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado" (*apud* Almeida 1993: 117).[167] In his capacity as defendant, however, Ribeiro attempted to separate the novel from political controversy, arguing that it depicted 'abstract' characters and events: "O declarante colheu impressões destes e daqueles acontecimentos sucedidos na nossa terra; norteou-se por conhecimentos adquiridos na leitura de casos similares sucedidos aqui e no estrangeiro, e de tudo isto compôs uma cena em que todos os figurantes são abstractos" (*apud* Caldeira / Andringa 1994: 104). The author was particularly eager to rebut the authorities' claims that *Lobos* amounted to little more than a piece of transgressive propaganda, in an attempt to posit his novel as 'apolitical' art despite claims to the contrary: "Quem possua o mais elementar conhecimento do que é o trabalho de um escritor de ficção reconhece a diferença incomensurável que há entre um romance, como é "Quando os lobos uivam", e um panfleto" (*idem*: 109).

The authorities' rather simplistic understanding of *Lobos*'s ideological content is particularly apparent in José Martins Nazaré's *relatório de censura*,

[167] Ribeiro was eventually acquitted by a general amnesty in 1960. For futher details on the 1959 trial, see *Quando os Lobos Julgam a Justiça Uiva: Texto Integral da Acusação e Defesa no Processo de Aquilino Ribeiro* (1960), and *Em Defesa de Aquilino Ribeiro* (1994).

which protests that "[o] autor intitula este livro de romance, mas com mais propriedade deveria chamar-lhe um romance panfletário, porque todo ele foi arquitectado para fazer um odioso ataque á [*sic*] actual situação política" (2014: I). In addition to this superficial equation of fiction and political propaganda, the censor comments on Ribeiro's 'undignified' treatment of political institutions and government representatives: "Escrito numa prosa viril, classifica o Governo de 'piratas' e descreve várias Autoridades, Funcionários, Polícia, Guarda Republicana e Tribunais em termos indignos e insultuosos" (*ibidem*). Here, the censor's references to "várias Autoridades" indicates his awareness of the *multiple* layers of local and national government that, as we shall discover, *Lobos* seeks to scrutinize. At the same time, Nazaré's remark "basta folhear o livro, encontra-se logo matéria censuravel [*sic*] em profusão" (*ibidem*) – suggesting a rather careless reading of Ribeiro's narrative – undoubtedly offers opportunities for a significant re-appraisal of its ideological potential. Similarly, the regime's adversaries have generally limited their readings of Lobos to analysis of its most *visible* attacks on the political and social *status quo* in Salazarist Portugal, as the Marxist Cunhal exemplifies: "Pela primeira vez na sua vida, [Aquilino] pôs então abertamente essa arma ao serviço da luta popular. O estilista, o prosador regionalista, transforma-se num romancista social, realista e revolucionário" (Cunhal 2008: 13).[168] Thus, critical comments on this novel have often been based on the narrative's most overt passages and on the *Estado Novo*'s adverse reaction to them, rather than on a sustained, detailed analysis of its political potential. Later scholars of *Lobos* have made similarly problematic statements: Fernandes, for instance, claims that *Lobos* is the closest novel in Ribeiro's *oeuvre* to a neo-realist narrative, on account of its 'binary' division "entre as forças do bem, os serranos, e as forças do mal, encarnadas nos representantes do Estado" (Fernandes 2008: 85). Certain observations, though, have illuminated the more contemporaneous (and less explicitly 'political') aspects of Ribeiro's novel, including its relevance for ecologically conscious and post-humanist thought (cf. Fernandes 2008: 84; Vidigal 2009: 219), and its

[168] Tellingly, the 2008 fiftieth anniversary edition of *Lobos* was produced by Edições Avante – the PCP's publishing arm – with Cunhal's 1963 preface added.

'prophetic' anticipation of demographic decline within inland Portugal, from the 1960s to the present day (cf. Rodrigues 2001: 41-48; Fernandes 2008: 95).

In light of such comments, my analysis of *Lobos* shall firstly address the novel's overt "matéria censur[á]vel": its satirical depiction of State / governmental authorities, its explicit critique of an anti-democratic system that disregards the wishes and needs of Portugal's inland communities, and its proposals for alternative political models that, nonetheless, do not give credence to the Marxist political solutions proposed by the PCP (the most influential and strident force of anti-salazarist opposition at the time of *Lobos*'s publication). I will then examine the multiple *concealed* (or, at least, less blatant) ideological processes at work within Ribeiro's 1958 novel, which include its ironic treatment of supposedly bucolic Beira Alta landscapes (and, simultaneously, of the peasant woman that reside within them), and its expression of *conservative anxiety*, in the face of territorial transformation and agricultural decline catalysed by *modernising* political and economic forces. It is my contention that these more complex aspects of *Lobos* have been systematically ignored and obscured due to the novel's reputation, as a classic and paradigmatic example of anti-salazarist literary rebellion.

II.2.1. "[O] espelho da realidade ambiente": Lobos's visible ideological critiques

Turning first to the novel's preface – tellingly, dedicated to the renowned physician and political opposition figure Francisco Pulido Valente –, several remarks clearly criticise the *Estado Novo*'s strict controls on freedom of expression, with Ribeiro explicitly referring to "[e]sta hora, em que andamos todos com grilhões nos pulsos" (Ribeiro 2014: 11). In addition, one can interpret the author's comments in this paratext as an admission of 'guilt', for having written 'selfishly', and for not having used his literature sufficiently for the benefit of Portuguese society or the anti-dictatorial struggle:

> A meia grosa de livros que escrevi foram de facto para mim, em tanto que obra de criação e exalçamento […]. Permiti ainda, levado na minha obsessão, que os

> gatunos oficiais e de mister me metessem as mãos nas algibeiras, [...], e toda a canzoada humana me ladrasse impunemente. [...] Em minha consciência não sei responder. (*Idem*: 7-8)

In this light, Ribeiro's narrative can be read as an attempt to 'ease' the author's conscience, through a sustained attack on the institutions and circumstances affecting his native region and the nation as a whole.

Certainly, this novel contains overt (and highly satirical) allusions to the governing regime's manipulation of apparently 'autonomous' municipal government institutions through corruption and collusion, and via the systematic insertion of political allies into positions of local authority. This issue is apparent from chapter II, which depicts an open 'consultation' meeting attended both by Streit and Fontalva, authority figures from the municipality, and by representatives of the surrounding peasant communities. Here, the narrator is particularly unflattering and cynical with regards to Dr. Labão (nicknamed Dr. *Lambão*), the *Presidente da Câmara Municipal* of Bouça do Rei: "O Dr. Labão, lídimo representante da política nova e seu arauto" (*idem*: 52). This description of the Mayor as the 'legitimate representative' and 'herald' of the 'new politics' (particularly ironic, given that Salazar's 'New State' was twenty-five years old in 1958) inextricably ties the character to a Lisbon-based political leadership, thereby undermining any notion of sovereign municipal authority; indeed, despite his initial promise to defend the highlanders' ancestral rights, Labão refuses to intervene during the meeting (or subsequently) to safeguard his constituents' interests. Rather, over the course of this chapter the narration repeatedly highlights the Mayor's overriding concern with his own career prospects:

> [U]m oportunista de primeira, dobrado a todos os ventos [...]. [...] Além de presidente da Câmara, era conservador do Registo Predial *in partibus infidelium* e politicão. Querendo deixar abertas todas as perspectivas à vidinha, pois que Streit era tido por homem influente, e parece que de facto com grande audiência nas esferas governamentais, ronronava agora à sua volta melhor que gato maltês. (*Idem*: 52, 82)

This excerpt humouristically demonstrates the ambivalent position that Labão occupies, between ostensibly acting as a 'representative' for his *municipal* constituents and pursuing his political ambitions on a *national* level, 'purring like a Maltese cat' in the presence of an apparently powerful civil servant from Lisbon. Simultaneously, this character is referred to as the "crónico presidente da Câmara" (*idem*: 66), suggesting that his occupation of the Mayor's Office – and of the *malaise* that his management of Bouça do Rei has caused – is a perennial, paralysing and 'chronic' condition. At other points in the narrative, the narrator describes Labão as a 'big-wig' ("essa espécie de manda-chuva dos sítios" [*idem*: 150]), and as "o protótipo do ratazana da vila constitucionalmente ancorado na autarquia municipal" (*idem*: 289), thereby openly lampooning local government structures during the *Estado Novo*, and the 'top-down' manner in which career politicians were imposed on inland Portugal's municipalities throughout this regime (cf. Riegelhaupt: 1979: 169).[169] Similarly, other facets of the dictatorship's local and national governmental structure are satirised through the local political establishment of Bouça do Rei, which, controversially, includes the municipal head of the *União Nacional*: "o Dr. Basílio Esperança parecia, hermético e fixe, cortado num tabuão de cerejeira. A sua força dentro da União estava naquela tendência para a imobilidade" (Ribeiro 2014: 56).[170] Ribeiro's depiction of the (ironically named) Esperança – as 'hermet-like', as if 'cut from the trunk of a cherry tree' and as 'tending towards paralysis' – manifestly mocks the so-called "política nova" that Labão purports to embody, and emphasises the reactionary intransigence inherent to the dictatorship's political project.

In addition to these obvious parodies of *Estado Novo*-era political figures, Ribeiro's critique of local government structures in this novel extends further back, to the historical precedents of *caciquismo* and clientelistic practices

[169] See I.1. for this historical context, and Vidigal's outline of these circumstances as a backdrop to Ribeiro's fiction (cf. 1992: 97).

[170] In the 1958 first edition, the salazarist party name oscillates between "União Nacional" and "Liga Nacionalista" (see 2014 fascimile, pp.56, 294); this 'lapse' was mentioned by the prosecution during Ribeiro's trial (cf. Nunes 2020: 267-268).

seen in Portugal during the Monarchy and First Republic (and, as discussed above, are lampooned in referenced by the author in *Faunos*). This corrupt system of influence peddling is clearly outlined by Manuel Louvadeus's comments to César Fontalva in chapter IV, in relation to the *Presidente da Câmara Municipal*:

> [Labão] não se cansava de oferecer jantares aos magistrados e burocratas do concelho, como não imolava em casa todos os presentes de lamber o beiço que da serra não despegavam de lhe mandar [...]. Muitas destas peitas arrepiavam logo marcha para casa do senhor juiz, do senhor delegado, do conservador ou do presidente da União Nacional, que enchiam o barrigão e ficavam a arfar por mais. No concelho, [...], assente em arnelas feudais, predominava, como em todos os da mesma índole, o nepotismo obrigado à perna de vitela e ao balaio de trutas. (*Idem*: 150)

In the passage above, one can in fact identify two levels of 'bribery': the various gifts in kind that Labão receives directly from his highland constituents – most of which eventually find their way to the stomachs of local and national *Estado Novo* figures –, and the informal dinners that the Mayor offers to those same individuals, in pursuit of professional advancement. In this sequence, Ribeiro not only links the acceptance of bribes on a *localised* level with a *national* epidemic of nepotism and subornment ("como em todos os [concelhos] da mesma índole") but also suggests that this is recourse to the "peita" is a mere continuation of medieval, 'feudal' practices ("assente em arnelas feudais"), as the etymology of that term suggests.[171] Furthermore, during the trial of the peasant rebels in chapter IX, Dr. Rigoberto repeats the term "peita", and also establishes a connection between the 'local politics' of Bouça do Rei and a broader prevalence of corruption: "se me disserem que é lamentável que a *política local* de Bouça de Rei se faça a poder de pernas de vitela, responder-lhes-ei que é *um estilo como outro qualquer*. Realmente quem manda ali é a peita" (*idem*: 295, my emphasis). In this instance, Rigoberto seeks to generalise

[171] The original / archaic meaning of "peita" denoted a tribute payable to nobles (cf. Priberam 2021c: definition 2).

"a política local" in relation to the entire Portuguese nation, and to imply that such clientelistic behaviour exists within every *Junta de Freguesia* and *Câmara Municipal* as well as the *Terreiro do Paço*.

Moreover, *Lobos* depicts some Beira Alta *serranos* as colluding with the Lisbon-based regime, with a particular focus on Julião Barnabé (to which the locals assign the comical nickname "Lêndeas" [louse]). In chapter IV, for instance, César Fontalva's visit to the Barnabé household reveals to the reader that Julião (the authorities' local "bufo") has secured an agreement for his two sons to be appointed as *guardas florestais*, as Bruno's conversation with the agronomist indicates: "Metem muita gente? O senhor director Streit prometeu a meu pai contratar-nos para guardas, a mim e a meu irmão Modesto... [...] Sim, senhor, a proposta está para Lisboa" (*idem*: 119-120). This exchange highlights the nepotism permeating local and national layers of authority, with Fontalva's remark that 'the proposal is being considered in Lisbon' indicating a contractual relationship between political power based in the national capital and 'collaborators' facilitating government policy on a localised level. Ribeiro's description of Julião Barnabé in chapter IV is equally noteworthy for its explicit use of the word "cacique": "A tacanhez e atraso do homem rural nestas latitudes dava origem a tais monstros. Depois, pela própria condição de caciques muito perto da natureza, volviam a verdadeiras feras" (*idem*: 151-152). Unlike *Faunos*'s deployment of that term, however, Ribeiro's reference to *caciquismo* and "atraso" here evokes the (supposedly) 'primitive' and 'tribal' *caciques* originating in pre-Hispanic America (cf. Priberam 2021a: definition 1), while maintaining a regional specificity within Portugal ("[o] homem rural *nestas latitudes*"). This intimation of collusion between national state representatives and local citizens and / or institutions is reinforced by the relationship of mutual support that exists between *Estado Novo* ministers and the Catholic clergy, with parish priests championing the government's afforestation project during their sermons: "Em algumas freguesias, a rogo do ministro, que era grande amigalhaço da Igreja, os padres tinham subido ao púlpito: - *Deixem lavrar a serra que é para vosso bem!*" (*idem*: 148). In this excerpt – which recalls the 'Estado e Igreja' partnership that characterises *Faunos* – the informal term

"amigalhaço" associates centralised *political power* with locally implemented *religious authority*, in an evidently satirical manner.[172]

In fact, it is often unclear as to whether the hostility articulated by the Serra dos Milhafres peasants against external interference (or 'invasion') is directed against Lisbon or against the very notion of nationally imposed authorities. On the surface, Ribeiro's narrative seemingly constructs a dichotomous tension between the Beira Alta's *serranos* and malicious *lisboetas* seeking to destroy the highlanders' way of life. This is evident from chapter I, when Manuel Louvadeus and other local peasants discuss the afforestation plans in Nacomba's tavern and express hostile attitudes towards what "Lisboa" is proposing: "a serra é nossa e muito nossa. Queremo-la assim, estamos no nosso direito. Desta forma é que nos faz arranjo. *Os de Lisboa* querem-na coberta de pinhal...?" (*idem*: 34, my emphasis). Justo Rodrigues's reference to 'those from Lisbon' in this passage, in direct contrast to the possessive pronoun "nosso", underlines the binary opposition that the locals establish between *their* way of life and the impositions on this existence that hail from the capital.[173] Later in this same discussion, a young man makes the following assessment of the afforestation plan: "Qual *nosso* bem?! É para bem *deles*. Os pinheiros cortam-nos *eles*, quando forem medrados. As estradas que se propõem fazer pela serra fora só para *eles* é que servem. [...]. Põem telefones, mas é para *uso próprio*" (*idem*: 39-40, my emphasis). In this instance, Ribeiro linguistically distinguishes between two opposing 'camps', through his juxtaposition of the first-person plural possessive "nosso" and the third-person plural pronoun "eles", followed by a reference to "uso próprio". The highlanders' separation from the interloping Lisbon functionaries is reinforced at the end of chapter II, when Streit departs from the consultation meeting and is met with aggressive outbursts from the *serranos*: "Nós também não vamos a Lisboa cobiçar os relvados, que lá há, para pastagem das nossas vacas – [...] – Pois podia-se-lhe chamar aproveitar terra! [...] Em nossas casas mandamos nós!" (*idem*: 85). The highlanders' humouristic

[172] A similar collusion between Church and State (+ *latifúndio*) is apparent in Saramago's *Levantado* – see IV.1.

[173] A comparable tension can be seen in Saramago's *Levantado*, between "os do norte" and "os do sul". See IV.1.

riposte to the agronomist, in response to what they regard as a 'Lisbon incursion', is reinforced in chapter III, when one of the peasants proposes violent insurrection as a response to the *lisboetas*' plans: "Então temos batalha [...]. A batalha da serra dos Milhafres com *os rifenhos de Lisboa*" (*idem*: 95, my emphasis). Calhandro's allusion to the "rifenhos" from Lisbon is provocative in two senses: while it can have the pejorative meaning of 'cruel', 'malicious' or even 'riff-raff',[174] it also has a racially-charged significance, in relation to natives of the Rife mountains in Northern Morocco (cf. Priberam 2021d: definitions 1, 3). As a result, the highlanders' attitudes toward the Lisbon-based agronomists from Lisbon indicate a perception of *ethnic difference* between Portuguese citizens of the rural North and those of the southern capital – or, alternatively, between 'Celtic' whiteness and Lisbon-based 'Moors', the latter of which are posited as 'barbarian' foreign invaders of an 'authentically Portuguese' rural community.

Nonetheless, the binary manner in which *Lobos*'s characters distinguish themselves from the (generically defined) *lisboetas* is complicated by the fact that Lisbon is not the sole location to be associated with political authority in this narrative. Namely, Porto is depicted as a significant urban centre from which the dictatorship's power emanates. For instance, following the violent confrontation between the *serranos* and the government afforestation team and the peasants rebels' arrest, in chapter VII they are transported from Bouça do Rei's municipal prison to the northern city where they will be judged: "E de repente, patratrás, surgiram, uma bela manhã, as camionetas celulares e transportaram para o Porto as vinte e quatro feras" (Ribeiro 2014: 224-5).[175] This movement from the municipality to the northern capital is associated with a need to subject these *serranos* to the full force of the *Estado Novo*'s judicial system, with the implication that it would be too onerous or inconvenient for the Public Prosecution service to travel to a Beira Alta municipality. The trial therefore takes place within Porto's *Tribunal Plenário*, with the rebels being forced to

[174] This is Patricia McGowan Pinheiro's translation of the term (1963: 61).

[175] A comparable scene appears in Saramago's *Levantado*, when João Mau-Tempo and other strikers are unceremoniously dispatched from the Montemor-o-Novo prison to Greater Lisbon. See IV.1.

complete their jail sentences in that city's *Cadeia de Relação*, far from their families. In this way, Ribeiro's critical positioning is not directed at the generic "urbe", or at metropolitan society, but at the disproportionate power wielded and exercised *from* urban environments in Portugal, far removed from the remote daily realities and conditions experienced by Beira Alta highlanders and other inland communities.

This attack on authoritarian power structures throughout *Estado Novo* Portugal, rather than on the urban centres within which such power is concentrated, is complemented by the novel's repeated references to anachronistic models of absolutist political control: Streit, for example is referred to as "o delegado do Poder absoluto" (*idem*: 68); whereas Rigoberto comments during the *serranos*' trial that "[o poder está] a ponto de se tornar em pensamentos e obras uma caricatura de califato" [*idem*: 326]);[176] finally, the narrator remarks at the end of the diegesis that "Um engenheiro silvicultor reinava em toda a extensão como em domínio feudal" (*idem*: 388). Indeed, the notion of medieval feudalism is inherent in the municipality's name Bouça do Rei [the King's fallow field], which associates the novel's plot set during the salazarist dictatorship with Portugal's Monarchical legacy.[177] In this way, Ribeiro reflects national preconceptions of the Beira Alta's 'primitiveness' and 'underdevelopment' back onto the dictatorship's own autocratic conduct within the region's *serras*.

In addition, *Lobos* repeatedly deploys spatialised and geometric imagery in order to denounce the political *status quo* and its indiscriminate administration of 'justice' within mid twentieth-century Portugal. This is apparent from the prosecution's motives, outlined at the beginning of the highlanders' trial in chapter VIII: "Todos os fenómenos de natureza social têm o seu epicentro e aqui era-o o poder, sempre a tiritar as maleitas da autoridade, distribuindo, às cegas, pancadaria do cobarde" (*idem*: 260). The narrator's reference to judicial power as the 'epicentre' of a 'social phenomenon' is significant; although it is devoid of any geographical precision, the passage nevertheless weaponises terminology

[176] A potential allusion to the Islamic Moorish Empire's control within the Iberian Peninsula prior to the *Reconquista* – see I.1.

[177] Similar allusions are made in Jorge's *O dia dos prodígios* – see III.2.

related to *centrality* in its critique of the *Estado Novo*'s abuses of power. Moreover, Dr. Rigoberto's speech to the municipal meeting in Chapter II utilises imagery related to 'the swelling of waves' in order to condemn the behaviour of law enforcement officers within geographically remote communities:

> Há tirante mais despótico nestes tempos que um guarda, um regedor, o simples polícia dum jardim?! Como a ressaca, que deixa o cisco miúdo, isto é, o cisco do cisco, precisamente a partir do ponto mais distante a que chega a ondulação, assim sucede com os abusos da autoridade. Quanto mais reles, mais longe do poder central, mais prepotentes. (*Idem*: 65)

Through this oceanic simile, comparing the oppressive behaviour of local policemen to tiny specks on the furthest point of the tide, Rigoberto suggests that the further away such figures are from centralised power, the greater their ability to abuse the authority that they have received from the State. Further, the *advogado*'s exclamation implies that centralised authorities have failed in their supposed duty to protect peripheral communities, and that the Lisbon-based government only takes an interest in such areas when those territories (and / or their resources) can be exploited.

In a similar manner, one can observe several attempts made by the dictatorship's representatives to abdicate responsibility for their actions against the will of Beira Alta highland communities. Specifically, chapter VI depicts Streit's ill-fated attempt to defuse a developing (and subsequently violent) confrontation with the *serranos* by claiming that he is 'simply following orders': "Eu sou apenas um mandatário. [...]. Que posso eu? Os senhores deviam dirigir-se às autoridades do distrito, ao administrador, ao governador civil, e expor-lhes as suas razões. [...]. A mim não, que sou uma espécie de cabo de ordens" (*idem*: 209). The agronomist's instructions to the highlanders to complain to the 'district authorities', 'administrator' and 'civil governor' are particularly insincere, given that, as mentioned, these regional leaders are shown to be in collusion with Streit and with other 'delegates' of the *Estado Novo* political establishment throughout the diegesis. Streit's deflection of responsibility is further contradicted by his declaration at the *beginning* of the altercation with

the peasants that "responsável pelo que aqui se está a fazer, pessoalmente, não é ninguém. Quer dizer, é toda a gente, o Estado, o senhor, eu" (*idem*: 207). Hence, while the agronomist initially conflates his individual authority with that of the State, he then backtracks and attempts to dissociate himself from those same governmental institutions in order to escape conflict with hostile *serranos*. Finally, despite Streit's indignant dismissal of the peasants' concerns during the consultation meeting, the character disingenuously claims that he does not wish to 'defy the local population's will' or cause any 'harm' to their way of life ("Eu, pessoalmente, não tenho prazer algum em contrariar a vontade das populações e muito menos em fazer mal a quem quer que seja"), despite the fact that he does not *know* these peasants, understand their daily experiences, or show any attempt to engage with them: "Eu não os conheço, moro muito longe daqui" (*idem*: 209).

In contrast to his unflatteringly depicted colleague Streit, César Fontalva – whose loyalty to the dictatorship's doctrine is questionable – presents a productive alternative to the *Estado Novo*'s coercive exercise of authority. After avoiding bloodshed in sector 2 of the afforestation territory (by ordering the work to stop), this agronomist makes a highly revealing statement at the highlanders' trial:

> [E]u sei muito bem que a tendência hoje é impor a vontade de cima pelas armas e outros meios de violência, pois que partem do princípio que exercem a missão mais esclarecida e patriótica. [...] Uma gradação desta autoridade discricionária vem desde o mais alto, o chefe, até o mais ínfimo, o regedor. Eu [...] entendo que cumpro um dever de cidadão obtemperando a tais desmandos. (*Idem*: 215-216)

Fontalva's testimony in this scene can be viewed as a direct challenge to prevailing political orthodoxy which, in his view, regards 'imposing one's will from above with weapons and violence as a 'patriotic mission'. Describing the regime's arbitrary authority as extending from the very core of national government to the most insignificant representative within each *freguesia*, Fontalva regards it as his responsibility to act as a moderator and conciliator between these 'stakeholders' in Portuguese society. However, following his inflammatory suggestion that the dictatorship's methods are 'not patriotic', the

agronomist is unceremoniously removed from the afforestation project and from his post.

In fact, Fontalva's statements are particularly controversial given that they strike at the very heart of a key *Estado Novo* contradiction: its inability (or refusal) to reconcile localised needs and desires with the dictatorship's national economic objectives, implemented via the *Planos de Fomento*, the *Campanha de Trigo* and various other centrally planned initiatives from the 1930s onwards.[178] The narrative's central premise – of an afforestation project being imposed on these Beira Alta highlands by the national government – exposes the regime's utter disregard for the *serranos*' use of the *baldios* when confronted with the economic potential that these lands offer to the State (and to private enterprise). This attitude is highlighted in Streit's presentation at a municipal consultation meeting: "O espaço bravio interjacente representava no plano nacional prejuízos económicos intoleráveis. Não se justificava a sua manutenção, tal qual, a título de que fornecia umas tantas carradas de tojo ou carqueja a este e àquele povo ou pastavam nele umas dúzias de ovelhas tinhosas" (*idem*: 55). The operative words here are "no plano nacional", which imply that for such civil servants, national development plans must override the consent and concerns of citizens residing in marginal *regions*. Later, Dr. Rigoberto's comments during the rebels' trial makes this criticism explicit: "o sentido nacionalista de omnisciência de que está imbuído o poder, já há algumas décadas, tolheu-o de procurar um compromisso em que se conciliasse com a letra do seu programa o interesse local" (*idem:* 324-325). In this character's juxtaposition of "o sentido nacionalista" with "o interesse local", Ribeiro suggests that for all the 'regionalist-nationalist' claims of Salazarist doctrine, 'national interest' is deemed by the authorities to be completely incompatible with 'local concerns', making compromise and conciliation between these two competing entities seemingly impossible.

At times, this critique of the governing regime assumes an *anti-colonial* tone, with Rigoberto's diatribe against enforced afforestation alluding to the Beira Alta native as "[o] aborígene" (*idem*: 78), and to the State's interventions within the region as 'colonization' – "É verdade, porque não retiram para outras

[178] See I.1.

regiões a população dos lugares que pretendem colonizar?" (*idem*: 79) – which inevitably evokes the overseas 'colonies' of the Portuguese Empire. Despite the proximity of *Lobos*'s publication to the outbreak of Portugal's Colonial Wars, however, the more explicit historical referent for this novel's denunciations of 'colonialism' is the *Estado Novo*'s aforementioned *colonização interna* policy, which involved the controversial afforestation of *baldios* relied upon by northern peasants for basic subsistence and 'communitarian' farming practices (cf. Nunes 2020: 257-258).[179] Accordingly, Ribeiro's literary riposte to this political strategy includes a playful questioning of the Beira Alta highlanders' position within the Portuguese nation-state: while Streit insists that "O serrano da serra dos Milhafres é um português como qualquer outro português. Temos de tratá-lo em conformidade" (*idem*: 79-80), Rigoberto later argues the opposite: "O serrano da serra dos Milhafres é um português muito à parte. Onde se viu já dois conceitos opostos coexistirem num tipo como ele?" (*idem*: 327). In this way, key characters within the narrative (representating the State and the Serra dos Milhafres communities, respectively) espouse conflicting perceptions of the Beira Alta *serranos*' membership of (or *distinction from*) the national body politic, as discursively constructed by the dictatorship.

A final relevant aspect of this novel's *explicit* ideological message is its portrayal of adverse socio-economic conditions within a specifc *regional* space of continental Portugal, while overtly rejecting a conventional Marxist ideological critique. Certainly, *Lobos* highlights material deprivation and a lack of amenities / investment within the Serra dos Milhafres, as evidenced by César Fontalva's testimony to the highlanders' trial:

> A região carecia de estradas, de água potável, de comunicações telegráficas e telefónicas, de postos sanitários, em suma, dos rudimentos de que se acham dotados por toda a parte os agregados similares. Não se fala em estabelecimentos de diversão, teatro, cinema, bibliotecas. Isso para a terra é música celestial. (*Idem*: 305)

[179] See I.1.

In this association between the "região" and a lack of rudimentary infrastructure, the novel links the highlanders' 'primitive' existence to insufficient attention paid by the State – an implication that Fontalva then makes explicit: "Se o serrano levava uma vida bastante primitiva é porque era pobre e pouco favorecido pelo Terreiro do Paço" (*idem*: 305). Nevertheless, the extent to which Ribeiro attributes responsibility for these circumstances to the occupants of the Terreiro do Paço is less categorical, given that Manuel Louvadeus blames *multiple governments* for the local area's lack of amenities: "Governos sórdidos não o fazem, faço-o eu" (*idem*: 116). Although Louvadeus's use of the present tense here implies contemporaneity, his pluralisation ("Governos sórdidos") has two potential readings: a) a conflation of *local* and *national* forms of political authority, or b) a generalised lack of confidence in the regimes that had governed Portugal thus far in the twentieth century (Monarchy; Republic; *Estado Novo*), and in those successive governments' commitment to raising living standards within periperhal communities. In either case, his remarks reveal a comprehensive disdain for geographically (and culturally) distant forms of government, and a desire to alleviate, through individual initative the public services gap left by those national authorities.

Indeed, Ribeiro's novel is manifestly concerned with regional inequalities and imbalances within continental Portugal, which are mainly articulated through courtroom testimony provided to the highlanders' trial from multiple witnesses. The agronomist Fontalva's remarks, for instance, evince a considerable unease with rural poverty as viewed from a *lisboeta* perspective: "O baixo nível de vida bradava aos céus. Como podia coexistir no nosso tempo a sua miséria com o esplendor, bem que relativo, isto é, segundo a escala portuguesa, do Estoril, Figueira, Lisboa, Espinho, etc. etc.?" (*idem*: 306). While taking care to avoid an excessively crude dichotomy, through the qualifier "bem que relativo", Fontalva nevertheless juxtaposes the "miséria" of this diegetic environment with the luxury of the national capital and of fashionable coastal resorts (favoured by the affluent political and banking classes, and by foreign elites). This monologue can therefore be interpreted, to a certain degree, as a *geographical reading* of poverty and economic inequality within the nation, with the Serra dos Milhafres functioning as a (rather generic) representation of Portugal's *interior*.

Notwithstanding these clear condemnations of *regionally concentrated* material poverty in 1950s Portugal – and the name *Serra dos Milhafres*, which recalls the "milhanos" and "milhafres" that often evoke revolutionary hope in neo-realist works (Ferreira 1992: 153)[180] – it would be mistaken to draw excessive parallels between *Lobos* and neo-realist fiction. Rather, only one of the rebel *serranos* (João Rebordão) is denoted as a PCP member, and Ribeiro's narrative openly contests the conflation of anti-salazarist opposition with a 'Marxist' or 'Communist' worldview. This dynamic is first made apparent in Julião Barnabé's comments to Fontalva regarding the most efficient way to deal with local agitators ("[a] esses o que havia a fazer desde já era deitar-se-lhes o gatázio...dá-los como comunistas" [Ribeiro 2014: 123]), with the author employing the un-capitalised "comunistas" (to signify a generic ideological outlook rather than PCP membership). The authorities' adherence to this advice becomes particularly evident during the highlanders' trial, when the narrator outlines the prosecution's strategy: "como era de esperar, saiu-se com a razões costumadas, já clássicas, [...], o pressupor em qualquer levantamento das populações, qualificado em direito de «desobediência colectiva», o dedo de agitadores comunistas" (*idem*: 267).[181] In the judicial authorities' equation of all 'collective disobedience' against the *Estado Novo* with 'communist agitation', the author attacks the (deliberate) simplicity with which the regime pursued dissident Portuguese citizens of all regional origins and political beliefs. In addition to labelling Manuel Louvadeus as a "criptocomunista" (*idem*: 310),[182] and unsuccessully seeking a confession of Soviet indoctrination from the defendent ("o réu foi alguma vez a Moscovo? [...] Sabe o que é o comunismo?" [*idem*: 274]), it is telling that the Public Prosecutor arranges for what Rigoberto lambasts as a "homogenização de matéria criminal": the *serranos* are tried alongside a completely unconnected group of factory workers, suspected of a 'Moscow-directed' mutiny: "E, modo de completarem o ramalhete subversivo, haviam-lhes adjungido um feixe de operários de Riba do Pisco, acusados pelos patrões multimilionários de terem, à ordem de Moscovo, pregado a rebelião"

[180] See also I.2. and IV.1.

[181] See also my comments on *Levantado do chão* in IV.1.

[182] A possible reference to the Catholic Inquisition's "criptojudeu" terminology.

(*idem*: 260). Particularly significant here is the way in which the Riba do Pisco workers are indiscriminately 'adjoined' to the *serrano* rebels, which implies a determination on the author's part to *separate* these two experiences, rather than promote a sense of solidarity or trans-geographical class consciousness.

Much to the prosecution's dismay, though, it is prevented from simply 'forging' Marxist revolutionary scapegoats out of these defendants, due to the highlanders' patent lack of engagement with political doctrine: "O Ministério Público teimou em forjar comunistas daqueles labregos incultos [...] [.] O fraco deles era saber menos de doutrinas políticas do que do dogma da Santíssima Trindade" (*idem*: 287). With regards to the individual *serranos* on trial, it is significant that Alonso Ribelas (accidentally or intentionally) pronounces the word "política" incorrectly, linking that term to printed propaganda with which he claims to be unfamiliar: "Saiba Vossa Senhoria que eu de *políticas* não percebo patavina. Não leio gazetas" (*idem*: 283). Following this, Ribelas articulates his community's intense hostility towards the *Governo*, while expressing an apparent disinterest in the identity of these national rulers: "agora cortaram-me o nome para não votar contra o Governo. Nós todos na serra estamos à uma contra o Governo. [...]. Quem governa o mundo, sempre ouvi dizer que é o Raimundo; deve ser sempre algum filho de má mãe, que as coisas vão de mal a pior" (*ibidem*). In the above passage, the highland defendant denies all knowledge or awareness of what the dictatorial authorities define as "a política", while simultaneously repudiating the "governo" that rules him; the reader is therefore confronted with a peasant conceptualisation of "políticа" that, in Hobsbawm's view, coexists in the modern world alongside erudite ideological doctrines.

In this sense, Ribeiro's interest clearly lies the ontological foundations for the *serranos*' political attitudes and actions, which are consciously distinguished from 'erudite' ideological doctrines and epistemologies. Although Manuel Louvadeus regards the peasants' inability to verbally articulate their political opinions as a *limitation* in the first half of the novel (" "[p]ara nós serranos [a restrição] é sempre opressão, ainda que se não proteste, ainda que não saibamos exprimi-la" (*idem*: 142), this supposition is proved incorrect by the highlanders' violent protest against the afforestation – an event that the paternalistic and classist authorities cannot bring themselves to interpret as

'spontaneous' or 'independent': "Lá admitir que nas massas pudessem fermentar princípios de revolta, *sponte sua*, ao sentirem-se lesadas nos interesses ou contrariadas, não queria admitir e negava-se a compreender. Tudo era obra das organizações clandestinas" (*idem*: 267). As Fontalva's courtroom testimony suggest, this 'independence of thought' also applies to the relatively informed and 'well-travelled' Manuel Louvadeus, whose *moral* principles are distinguished from the strict prerequisites of political 'doctrines' and 'systems':

> [E]ste homem professa a doutrina do bom senso e dos deveres morais que todos temos uns para com os outros e certa mágoa pela desigualdade das condições humanas. Mas estas doutrinas tanto se podem enxertar nos mandamentos da lei de Deus como nos preconceitos de Tolstoi. *Não há maneira de ver que se não encontre à margem de qualquer sistema político ou filosófico...* (Ribeiro 2014: 310, my emphasis)

Thus, the agronomist irritates the authorities with his opinion that Manuel's worldview is *apolitical*, in the sense that it does not pertain to identifiable party doctrines or ideological frameworks, which directly conflicts with the prosecution's McCarthyite insistence on an underlying Communist motivation.

To this end, the Beira Alta peasants' 'resistance' to the *Estado Novo*'s afforestation project is often portrayed as *sporadic* and *inconsistent*, in contrast to the uniformity that might characterise mass adherence to a coherent ideological doctrine. This notion can be observed in chapter II, for instance, from the narrator's account of the different peasants' reactions to the government's proposal: "nas aldeias referidas, condensava-se uma certa resistência, mais latente aqui, mais explosiva além, contra o regime que se pretendia instaurar, regime que, se por agora as privava de certas zonas baldias, lhes trazia vantagens incalculáveis no futuro" (*idem*: 55). Ribeiro's use of the verb "condensar-se" here denotes a quasi-*chemical* process of periphrasis – a diluted volume of local public opinion in favour of resistence –, whereas the qualifying adjective used to describe the peasants' political commitment ("uma *certa* resistência") highlights a lack of consensus or common purpose amongst the highlanders. This inconsistency amongst the perspectives of the Serra dos Milhafres's

peasant communities continues into chapter IV even as the agronomists and the highland rebels head towards violent confrontation:

> Se em algumas aldeias os moradores eram solidários em face da intromissão do Estado, que consideravam lesiva ao último ponto, já noutros a cizânia invadira o campo, apartados para uma banda os resistentes, para a outra os contemporizadores. [...] De modo que levantarem-se as dez aldeias, [...], como um só homem, não era coisa absolutamente inevitável. (*Idem*: 152-153)

Accordingly, in a similar manner to the *serranos* of *Faunos*, the highlanders of *Lobos* are depicted as a heterogeneous group that cannot be categorised as a singular political unit; once again, Ribeiro's conception of 'resistance' appears to be a Foucaldian one – "distributed in irregular fashion" along a "multiplicity of points" (Foucault 1978: 95-96) – in a direct challenge to Marxist theorisation of proletarian revolutionary behaviour.

Dr. Rigoberto's outburst at the end of the highlanders' trial, "a política deve ser o espelho da realidade ambiente" (*idem*: 326), is key to understanding this novel's divergence from Marxist political (and literary) theory. While the notion of a 'mirror held up to reality' gestures towards Lukacsian and neo-realist concepts of art as *mimesis* and *documentary*,[183] it is noteworthy that Ribeiro, through Rigoberto's words, does not posit *fiction* as "o espelho da realidade ambiente" but rather *politics* itself. Rather than favouring a model of dialectical materialism leading to socialist revolution, the "política" that Rigoberto outlines champions democratic decision-making and a concern for the "realidade ambiente", which I interpret as a reality 'surrounded' or 'enveloped' by the Serra dos Milhafres. It is on this note that I will turn to the *veiled* ideological aspects of *Lobos*, which are intimately related to Ribeiro's treatment of the Beira Alta diegetic environment.

[183] See I.2.

II.2.2. "[A] obsessiva eternidade ao lance dos olhos": concealed ideological dynamics

First of all, in line with *Lobos*'s implication that the *Estado Novo* only seeks to exploit the traditional social formations of rural Portugal, the novel sardonically mimics romanticised bucolic discourse to expose the hollowness of the dictatorship's 'pastoral ideology' and idyllic propaganda. This strategy can be ascertained, for instance, when the agronomists Streit and Fontalva arrive in Bouça do Rei for the first time:

> Enlevaram-se depois no *bonito panorama* do horizonte próximo. Dos montes, se não escorria o leite e mel das terras da promissão, […], um sol regaladamente musical arrancava da terra negra, do arvoredo versicolor e das vinhas retardadas pelo Inverno *uma geórgica da mais espectacular agronomia*. Uns segundos apenas se detiveram em êxtase. Distraíram-se ainda outros tantos segundos com as roseiras das platibandas, cujas lindas e frescas flores dir-se-ia se tinham postado ali para lhes darem as boas-vindas em nome da botânica local, desvanecida. (*Idem*: 53, my emphasis)

In the extensive passage above, the reader is initially given the impression of an inviting, colourful, plentiful and vibrant rustic 'panorama'. However, these images, like the descriptions of Beira Alta highlands in Ribeiro's 1926 novel, simultaneously undermine and ridicule extant 'bucolic' notions of rural existence emanating from the national dictatorship. While the narrator's clinical reference to "agronomia" alludes to Virgil's *Georgics* (as opposed to the more idyllic *Eclogues*), Ribeiro's allusions to "terra negra" and to "vinhas retardadas pelo Inverno" cast doubt on the region's fertility, as does the acknowledgement that the 'milk and honey of the promised land' do not derive from these *serras*. In parallel, the narrator suggests that the alluring *flora* with which these outsiders are confronted has been staged and arranged for their benefit by "[a] botânica local", in order to 'welcome' them into the remote municipality. This image is then juxtaposed with Streit's exit at the end of the chapter, when he is threatened by the *serranos*' "brado ancestral de fereza" (*idem*: 86). In a similar manner to his 1926 novel, then, Ribeiro's portrayal of the Beira Alta highlands in *Lobos*

deploys 'bucolic' aestheticism but articulates an awareness of how such problematic, illusory stereotypes had been exploited and co-opted into the salazarist regime's reactionary discourse.

Furthermore, *Lobos*'s satirical treatment of the regime's 'ruralist' doctrine in this novel extends to the novel's depictions of Beira Alta peasant women. Taking as an example Jorgina Louvadeus (Manuel's daughter), one can note that this character is clearly objectified by the male gaze – namely, that of the agronomist César Fontalva, who later marries Jorgina despite his instinctive disdain for 'highland girls' ("Estas moças da serra às vezes são umas bisarmas encimadas por um capitel bonito" [*idem*: 129]). In a particularly telling passage from chapter IV, Fontalva instantly becomes besotted with Jorgina when he first encounters her in Arcabuzais: "Ouviu uma chocalhada de passos e, logo após, um bonito rosto, olhos pretos, dentes brancos, se mostrou à janela na moldura dum lenço vermelho […]. E *foi como se descesse sobre aquele acervo de tintas soturnais uma chuva de rosas*" (*idem*: 127-128, my emphasis). In this excerpt, *Lobos* echoes *Faunos* in its "fetishised" equation of "Woman" and "natural" (Ferreira 1996: 140), with Jorgina being compared to a 'shower of roses'. Notwithstanding protestations to the contrary (cf. Rodrigues 2014: 78-79), Fontalva's 'intentions' with this young woman are presented as being largely *sexual*, as can be ascertained from his lascivious contemplation of her body: "[P]erguntou-se: Como será ela de corpo e de maneiras? [...] Mas só com a ideia de que ia poder vê-la à vontade e que ela saía por sua causa, sentiu uma onda cálida brotar-lhe na cabeça, descer ao coração, inundá-lo todo de graça, ternura, voluptuosidade" (Ribeiro 1983b: 129). Following this, he interrogates his chauffeur regarding the 'beauty' of Beira Alta peasant girls and their openness to casual sexual intercourse: "E em matéria de femeaço, que tal? As raparigas são bonitas? [...] Fáceis? Era onde queria chegar" (*idem*: 130-131). Such passages demonstrate the author's conscious use of discursive tendencies to objectify (in a quasi-sexual manner) Portuguese peasant women and to associate them with 'fetishised' images of domesticity and 'natural' fertility.

At other moments, this problematic discourse is more systematically challenged and lampooned, as indicated by the narrator's juxtaposition of Jorgina's 'natural beauty' with an environmental 'roughness' and 'infertility', in the eyes of her father: "Com quem se pode parecer a Primavera…? Lembrava-

lhe, fragrante e risoteira, a flor dum cacto, de certos cactos martirizados dos chapadões incandescidos, que desatam numa flor tão bonita que fazem pasmar os ares e chamam todos os moscardos à volta" (*idem*: 19). While it is perhaps to be expected that Manuel, having spent a decade working in the *chapadas* of Mato Grosso, associates his daughter with the cactus – a desert plant –, this reference to a 'beautiful blooming' that 'attracts large flies' conjures up images of *bounty* and *decay* in equal measure, thereby problematising the dictatorship's 'fetishistic' discursive practices.

Furthermore, at certain key moments, *Lobos* humouristically upsets national stereotypes and centripetal preconceptions of 'regional identity' within continental Portugal. This is apparent from the fundamental distinction that the narrative establishes between the Beira Alta *serrano* peasant and the generically defined "saloio" – a word commonly used by *lisboetas* to denote any kind of "camponês", despite the term's geographical specificity: "[q]ue ou quem é dos arredores [rurais] de Lisboa, a norte do rio Tejo" (Priberam 2021e: definitions 1, 2).[184] In chapter III of Ribeiro's novel, the narrator distinguishes the "saloio" from the "camponês do Norte" represented by Teotónio Louvadeus: "O parecer bem, que no saloio é regra, no camponês do Norte nem sempre é letra morta. Com o velho Teotónio não era" (Ribeiro 2014: 96). This alienation of the "camponês" from the "saloio" is recalled during the highlanders' trial in Porto: following the *desembargador*'s irritated remark that "[o] réu está-nos a sair um grande maloio" (*idem*: 281), Alonso Ribelas comically mishears and responds: "Saloio, não senhor. Sou serrano" (*ibidem*). The indignation that Ribelas expresses here, at being apparently referred to as a "saloio" rather than as a "serrano", reinforces the significant differences of perception and understanding between inhabitants of Portugal's capital and the communities of Portugal's rural interior.

Notwithstanding these multiple ways in which Ribeiro's narrative subverts and challenges regional and bucolic stereotypes, there is a more ideologically ambivalent aspect to *Lobos*'s portrayal of the Beira Alta serras, and of the local peasants' relationship to that environment. Specifically, several highland characters within this novel express a strong sentiment of *topophilia*,

[184] See also IV.1. regarding *Levantado*'s strategic deployment of this term.

in a manner often homologous to that of *Faunos*. For example, this emotion is evoked during the municipal consultation meeting in chapter II, when Rigoberto repeatedly stresses to the agronomists the centrality of these mountainous lands to the peasants' character, to the 'fibre of their being', and to their psychology:

> [Nessas penedias] [h]á um não sei quê de indefinido, um complexo de filáucia ibérica e frenesim que se comunicou ao homem, e parece ser uma involução ao mesmo tempo do seu carácter. [...]. E aldeias e serras estão consubstanciadas até a sua fibra mais íntima. [...] A serra, em tanto que realidade geográfica, é uma coisa e [...] em tanto que factor psicológico é outra. (*Idem*: 69, 76)[185]

This 'topophilic' paradigm is particularly apparent with regards to the men of the Louvadeus family, (particularly Manuel and Teotónio) who maintain a fierce attachment to remote and 'wild' highland peaks of the Serra dos Milhafres. Firstly, after his return from years spent in the Brazilian desert, Manuel demonstrates an intense psychological attachment to the solitary outcrops of his *serra* home: "No meio da serra, livre debaixo do Sol e das estrelas, livre na terra e no céu, é que eu gosto de me ver. [...] afinal a minha alma ficou cá nos penedais" (*idem*: 46, 72). Moreover, the religiously-named Louvadeus, like Baltasar in *Faunos*, regards the "penedo" to be "sagrado" (*idem*: 99), and associates his own distaste for murder with the 'sanctity' of the Beira Alta landscape surrounding him:

> Matavas? Olha que matar um homem é coisa muito séria. [...]. Destruir esta máquina tão admirável que é a vida de um homem, uma máquina que ninguém sabe dar corda a valer, tão perfeita que se tornou, não há nada no mundo que o justifique. [...] Por isso, estoirar com ela antes do tempo é grande pecado perante o sol, as estrelas, as serras ao longe a olhar para nós […]! (*Idem*: 43)

Alongside this echo of Baltasar's refrain "Aqui não mata", Manuel is shown to develop a physically and spiritually 'healthy' relationship with these highlands,

[185] See also pp.68, 69, 76, 77, 81.

after his return from Brazil: "Manuel Louvadeus, nesta vida de ermo e monasticidade, retemperava-se. Já tinha melhor pinta" (*idem*: 91). Finally, this member of the Louvadeus clan refuses to consider the Serra dos Milhafres to be a 'remote' and 'detached' corner of the world, comparing the imposing "penedos" and peaks to Brazilian landmarks ("bronco e imponente, um Pão de Açúcar traduzido para português" [*idem*: 99]), and associating them with his experiences in Brazil: "Veja como é planinho na face que está a olhar para as nuvens… Pode-se lá dançar o samba" (*ibidem*). In this way, Manuel insists on the *centrality* of the Beira Alta highlands and their inherent connection with global metropolitan centres, which, according to Tuan, is "necessary" if such peasant communities are to survive and thrive.

Manuel's father Teotónio exhibits a similar degree of intense territorial attachment to his son, but this elderly *serrano* is depicted as a considerably less benevolent figure. In contrast to his granddaughter and daughter-in-law, who reject the intimidating 'wildness' of the *serra* (*idem*: 46, 107, 109), Teotónio eagerly identifies with the desolate highlands and displays "uma relação espontânea, intensa, radicular, do homem com a terra" (Fernandes 2008: 88), which extends to his identification with the local wolves and with the dog *Farrusco*: "O *Farrusco* fazia-lhe companhia, animal de ar livre, tão misantropo como ele. [...]. As ameaças saíam-lhe da garganta involuntariamente como o arruaçar do Farrusco quando sonhava" (Ribeiro 2014: 91, 226). In parallel to this display of reverse anthropomorphism, the elderly highlander's well-being is made conditional on his continued residence in the *serra* which, given the turn of events that force Teotónio to abandon the Rochambana and sell his land to the State, posits Teotónio as a 'martyr' within the diegesis: "Tirá-lo de lá é tirar-lhe a vida [...]. [...] O velho não queria outra casa, nem dormia bem senão ali na sua enxerga de palha. Tirá-lo da serra era roubar-lhe anos de vida" (*idem*: 21, 88).[186] Teotónio's 'topophilia' differs from that of his son (and of Baltasar), though, in the violence that he perpetuates onto human beings within these 'sacred' highlands, and onto the serra landscape itself. Specifically, in addition to murdering a *guarda florestal* and burying his body under a stream ("Quedou

[186] N.B. this sentimentality is not apparent in Filomena or her daughter Jorgina – who eventually abandon the Beira Alta for Lisbon, never to return.

de cara para o céu como os fiéis defuntos na terra santa" [*idem*: 375]), the fact that the elderly Louvadeus sets fire to the *serra* after he is forced to leave it (*idem*: 399) gestures towards the sinister and menacing potential of topophilic 'atavism', and of the State's inability to comprehend such sentiments.

The powerful topophilic emotion that *Lobos*'s protagonists experience and articulate, then, does not uniformly coincide with the more ambiguous attitudes of the narrator and of the implied author towards the novel's diegetic environment of the Beira Alta highlands. This relates to a further ambivalence in the ideological message of Ribeiro's narrative: its attitudes towards continuity and change within Portugal's rural interior. On the one hand, certain passages in this novel can be read as emphasising 'conservative' or 'traditionalist' values, and rejecting rapid modernisation or socio-economic transformation on the terms favoured by successive Lisbon-based governments (cf. Vidigal 1992: 100). For instance, several passages of the diegesis make direct reference to the rural North's historical precedent for anti-liberal revolt, as evidenced by a *serrano*'s reference to "Traulitânia" (a Monarchist political / paramilitary movement active in Porto and the rural North during the First Republic [Priberam 2021f]): "Ouvi dizer que [as carabinas] eram dos trauliteiros e estavam escondidos num palhal" (Ribeiro 2014: 36). This historical allusion seemingly associates the *serrano* rebels with reactionary political precedents, as does the narrator's description of the highlanders' revolt as a "nova Patuleia" (*idem*: 259). Meanwhile, César Fontalva seeks to exonerate the rebels by equating their motivations with the government's, affirming that both entities are driven by a desire to defend and 'conserve' an existing state of affairs: "A força arrogava-se de manter *uma ordem determinada*, os populares *uma antiga tradição*" (*idem*: 311, my emphasis). Hence, the agronomist posits the *Estado Novo*'s desire to maintain 'order' over the more remote areas of its territory and the *serranos*'s efforts to *preserve* their ancestral rights as homologous, with an inherently 'conservative' outlook guiding the rebels' political opinions and actions: "A aldeia [...] queda indiferente à aventura. [...] [O] que condiz é a serra como está" (*idem*: 78-79).

However, this impression of 'peasant conservatism' is problematised by the prosecution's contradictory assertion that Manuel Louvadeus has incited unrest within "uma das serras mais adustas e pertinazmente conservadoras do

Portugal laborioso" (*idem*: 271-272). In fact, it is the *serranos*' steadfast resistance to radical change that has caused them to revolt against the *Estado Novo*'s 'modernising' afforestation project.[187] Accordingly, the "forças atávicas" (*idem*: 152) of the Beira Alta highlands are pitted against Streit's (and, by extension, the New State's) determination to arbirtrarily bring technological 'progress', 'development' and 'renovation' to the 'backwards' Serra dos Milhafres – an area that, according to Streit is inhibited by anachronistic 'poetry':

> O progresso não é um ferro de engomar. Alguma coisa vai cilindrando na sua marcha. Sempre assim foi. O comboio matou o almocreve; o automóvel está a matar o comboio; amanhã o automóvel será vítima do avião. Entravar a renovação do mundo em nome de coisas que apenas têm de recomendável a poesia de que as cerca a madureza dos nossos hábitos não é de admitir. (*Idem*: 68)

Through this assertion, the agronomist articulates the *Estado Novo*'s contrarian stance of enforcing economic "progresso", while simultaneously perpetuating a reactionary social discourse, averse to the empowerment of women, obsessed with the traditional nuclear family, and concerned with the rigid maintenance of a romanticised, a-historical "casa portuguesa [rústica]".

There is, then, a reticence on the author's part to depict the Serra dos Milhafres peasantry as an entirely 'retrograde' populace, or, indeed, to defend a 'conservative' socio-economic *status quo* against all attempts at modernisation. In fact, *Lobos*'s strategic positioning between continuity and change is best described through César Fontalva's words at the *serranos*' trial: "Ao contrário da opinião corrente, os habitantes da serra dos Milhafres e o meio donde provinham não lhe parecerem bravios e muito menos improgressivos" (*idem*: 305). Moreover, Manuel Louvadeus's valiant eagerness to develop amenities and infrastructure within the Serra dos Milhafres ("Quero dotar a terra em que nasci com escola digna, hospital, luz eléctrica, telefone, água potável, civilizá-la, pois que está bem na barbárie" [*idem*: 116]) suggests that Ribeiro favours equitable development in Portugal's *interior*, but, significantly, not the

[187] See I.1., Silva 2020: 340-341, and Saraiva 2016: 68.

undemocratic alteration of rural territory that the *Estado Novo* had, by 1958, been implementing for several decades. One can therefore trace a development in the author's thinking from an "atavismo de rija e obsessa alma beiroa" in 1926 (*Faunos*), to a more problematic and *anguished* attitude towards tradition and transformation in *Lobos*.

Accordingly, my final remarks on Ribeiro's 1958 narrative will address this anxiety towards 'the wrong kind of change', which is encapsulated at the beginning of the diegesis (when Manuel Louvadeus returns to his family home):

> Com a breca, achava tudo tal qual! Os dez anos de ausência apagaram-se como um sopro perante *a obsessiva eternidade que se lhe oferecia ao lance de olhos*. [...] Que distância, anos e anos que correram na levada do tempo, e as coisas conservarem-se ali iguaizinhas, estáticas, teimosas no seu ar de encantamento (Ribeiro 2014: 13-14, my emphasis).

Ribeiro's intriguing notion of "obsessiva eternidade" here offers a number of potential interpretations: while the word "eternidade" gestures towards the unflinching permanence of Manuel's family homestead and of his native community within the Serra dos Milhafres, the reference to 'obsession' simultaneously evokes *anxiety* and *uncertainty* regarding the ability of these Beira Alta highlands to forever remain 'static' and 'stubborn' within their 'air of enchantement'. Indeed, the novel frequently alludes to demographic and agricultural decline within inland Portugal (cf. Fernandes 2008: 98), from the opening chapter onwards:

> A falperra, mal. Àquela altura já se havia de andar a semear o milho nas terras de sequeiro, mas o codo não o permitia. O calendário há muito que não regulava. O solo não produzia, cansadinho, cansadinho a mais não poder! [...]. Também ninguém mais queria amanhar a terra! O solo era negro e sujava as mãos. A gente sumia-se na emigração. (*Idem*: 29)

This initial reference to the highlands' struggle for survival is reinforced by the repeated apocalyptic imagery of *judgement* and *fire* throughout the diegesis (cf.

idem: 196, 352, 399), Dr. Rigoberto's mournful comparisons of the serra to "uma lápide cujas letras se não apagaram de todo" and to an "infinito rebotalho arqueológico" (*idem*: 329), and the Serra dos Milhafres's near-total abandonment in the novel's final chapter: "Os rapazes e mais gente válida desertaram. Para quem há-de ser tal escola?" (*idem*: 392).[188] It is perhaps on this score that Ribeiro's fiction (*in general*) has been read as an attempt to memorialise a 'dying way of life' (cf. Lourenço 1985: 18-21; Saramago 1985: 99-100), and, to a certain degree, *Lobos* can be read as a denunciation of neglectful and callous government practices that the author (correctly) predicted would contribute to rural de-population, forest fires and landscape transformation over subsequent decades.

Nevertheless, I contend that *Lobos*'s treatment of rural 'atavism' and 'nostalgia' – two distinct, yet inter-connected responses to socio-economic transformation – can be understood as politically transgressive and *radical*, rather than simply *reactionary*.[189] On the one hand, the anxiety of *regional loss* that this novel espouses defends a kind of "local patriotism" that, according to Tuan, "rests on the intimate experience of place, and on a sense of the fragility of goodness: that which we love has no guarantee to endure" (1974: 101). If, in Tuan's view, this localised patriotic sentiment contrasts sharply with ultra-nationalistic, imperial patriotism – which "feeds on collective egotism and pride" (*ibidem*) –, then the territorially limited patriotic emotion evoked in Ribeiro's narrative offers simultaneously explicit and implicit ideological readings. On a more overt level, the novel challenges the dictatorship's *intra-colonial* exploitation of inland regions such as the Beira Alta, through afforestation projects and other 'internal colonisation' projects.[190] By extension, though, this denunciation of the *Estado Novo*'s destructive and extractivist colonialism can be read as a subtle critique of the regime's *international* imperialist project, focused on Portugal's African and Asian overseas colonies. In both cases, in its recognition that "topophilia rings false when it is claimed

[188] For more details on *Lobos*'s apocalyptic imagery, see Peter Haysom, "'Obsessiva eternidade': o fim do mundo rural, segundo Aquilino Ribeiro" (2017).

[189] See also my comments on Bessa-Luís's *A sibila* (III.1.) and Saramago's *A caverna* (IV.2.).

[190] See I.1. and Silva 2020.

for a large territory" (*ibidem*), the narrative politically weaponises emotional attachment to a *limited* territorial space (and fear of its eventual decline).

On the other hand, the author's nostalgic 'mourning' for a disappearing rural existence can be viewed as ideologically "radical" in Bonnett's terms, given that in Ribeiro's narrative "nostalgia works within and against the present [...] reconstitutes modernity, [...] is not just reactive but reaches out and down to shape our hopes for the past and the future" (2010: 169). Namely, *Lobos* does not simplistically reject all attempts at modernisation; democratic and humanistic (albeit non-Marxist) solutions for ensuring the Beira Alta region's survival are envisioned by such *serranos* as Manuel Louvadeus, but never realised, whereas the *Estado Novo*'s determination to construct "fascist modernist landscapes" within inland Portugal (Saraiva 2016: 54-75) is shown to result in apocalyptic and irrevocable levels of decline and destruction. Hence, this novel's project is not purely atavistic, nor does it conform to a politically and socially regressive conception of nostalgia within a rural context. Instead, a delicate and complex reconciliation of past and future takes place, involving anti-fascist, democratic and incremental proposals for the Beira Alta's potential development and survival.

Ribeiro's "rebeldia barata" in both *Faunos* and *Lobos*, then, is only fully appreciated as a complex ideological project when the *explicit* political critiques of these two novels (against clerical and governmental corruption) are considered alongside the more subtle facets of these narratives: their treatment of Beira Alta highland landscapes and of the *serranos* that reside within them. While these two novels demonstrate an awareness – and rejection – of reactionary 'pastoral' and 'bucolic' stereotypes within twentieth-century Portugal, they nevertheless display a certain "atavismo" in their evocation of topophilic sentiment which, despite its productive capacity to convince inland peasant communities of their own 'centrality', nevertheless converges with the *Estado Novo*'s "ideologia ruralizante" and fixation on the quintissential Portuguese "aldeia" to an uncomfortable degree. That said, while *Faunos* espouses such topophilia in its narration and paratext as well as its characters, *Lobos* distinguishes between the topophilic emotions expressed by key protagonists and the narrator's ironic perspective, which outlines the more problematic (and, potentially, *dangerous*) aspects of this "affective bond"

between inhabitant and territory. Furthermore, Ribeiro's 1958 novel is much more ambiguous regarding its treatment of rural 'atavism' or 'nostalgia', given that it simultaneously defends the right of highland rebels to contest enforced modernisation, and refuses to paint those same *serranos* as "improgressivos" or entirely resistant to development, summarising this predicament as an "obsessiva eternidade". While these issues will recur in Chapters III and IV, Ribeiro touches upon, but does not completely subvert, other significant ideological concern within twentieth-century Portugal: namely, the ambivalent position and problematic discursive portrayal of 'regional' women, which my analysis of Agustina Bessa-Luís's and Lídia Jorge's fiction will address, and the role of class consciousness and anti-capitalist strategies in 'regionalist' political resistance, which Saramago's novels explore in a more systematic manner.

Chapter III: "Sou muito pouco participante [...] desse provincianismo feminista": regionalism and sexual politics in Agustina Bessa-Luís and Lídia Jorge

Mulher sem homem é como terra baldia
e forno de pão a alumiar sem préstimo.

The Three Marias,
Novas Cartas Portuguesas

While Aquilino Ribeiro – writing before and during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship – simultaneously evokes and lampoons extant tendencies to 'fetishise' women within rural communities, certain novels by Agustina Bessa-Luís and Lídia Jorge in the mid-to-late twentieth century articulate a much more systematic 'regionalist sexual politics', which explore regional dynamics through an evidently *gendered* ideological lens. Specifically, although these narratives do not invite explicitly 'feminist' readings, both Bessa-Luís's best-known narrative *A sibila* and Jorge's first novel *O dia dos prodígios* (henceforth *Sibila* and *Dia*) present innovative, ambivalent and subversive *regionalist* perspectives on the position of women within Portuguese society , during the authoritarian regime and in the immediate aftermath of the Carnation Revolution. On the one hand, these narratives present ironic perspectives on regional eccentricities and tensions between regional and national politics, with socio-economic change in distinct areas of rural Portugal assuming a decidedly feminine dimension. On the other hand, regional identity and sexual politics are intricately intertwined within the two novels: while *Sibila* – through a bourgeois female protagonist – systematically destabilises superficial preconceptions of a 'northern matriarchy' and replaces this problematic model with a 'telluric Sibyl' archetype of future female agency, *Dia*'s array of Algarvian peasant women critiques dubious stereotypes of female 'power' and offers the positive alternative of a counter-patriarchal lineage, accompanied by the potential for subsequent female triumph.

A preliminary point to make regarding these two authors is their placement, by several literary critics, within a 'genealogy' of twentieth-century women's writing in Portugal, alongside the aforementioned 'regionalist' tradition that forms the basis of this thesis. In *Antigone's Daughters? Gender, Genealogy, and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing*, Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso compellingly argue that "the possibilities afforded by matrilinear genealogy in the struggle against paternal canons are often, in Portugal, greeted with ambivalence and resistance" (2011: 18-19), evoking the figure of Antigone from classical Greek tragedy "to conjure both a symbolic defense of genealogical connection through the bonds of kinship, the gods of the hearth and the household", due to that character's "potential for enabling alternative spaces of feminine self-recognition" (*idem*: 19). In this sense, it is productive to interrogate the degree to which my aforementioned claim of a *regionalist* ideological tendency within twentieth-century Portuguese fiction interacts with the 'alternative genealogy' represented by successive women writers publishing before and after the 1974 revolution. More to the point: to what extent do *Sibila* and *Dia* offer a *gendered* perspective on regional dynamics within continental Portugal, and how are their respective sexual politics articulated in a 'regionalist' manner?

Accordingly, some theoretical considerations related to the problem of 'women and regionalism' are necessary. Firstly, one can consider the 'fetishised' "association of the 'natural' with Woman" (Ferreira 1996: 140) in early to mid twentieth-century political discourse and cultural production in Portugal,[192] and a more prolonged historical tendency to "associate the rustic woman with purity, spirituality, and submissiveness" (Kendrick 2003: 134) – however generic Carolyn Kendrick's understanding of the 'rustic woman' might be. More broadly, Doreen Massey identifies several problematics within the 'male-dominated' discipline of geography. The scholar's chief contention is that the "intersections and mutual influences of 'geography' and 'gender' are deep and multifarious" (1994: 177), with the result that particular locations are invariably attributed 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics. Specifically, Massey identifies a long-standing "association between place and a culturally

[192] See Chapters I and II.

constructed version of 'Woman'" in geographical discourse which, in her view, takes place on two levels: "the first is an association between place and 'Home' and the second imbues place with inevitable characteristics of nostalgia" (*idem*: 10). These comments clearly correspond to a systematic construction of 'gendered' regional spaces in modern Portuguese cultural production – which becomes particularly explicit during the *Estado Novo* era – and, as this chapter shall outline, to Bessa-Luís's and Jorge's ironic treatment of such discourse.

A second (and related) notion that is relevant to both *Sibila* and *Dia* is that of perceived or actual 'female authority' within specific regional environments, which in some circumstances might be described as 'matriarchal' structures. The term 'matriarchy' – popularised by Robert Briffault, Helen Diner and other anthropologists[193] – generally corresponds to a society or community in which women, *rather than men*, hold / exercise economic, domestic, public and spiritual authority and positions of leadership. This social framework is often accompanied by features such as *matrilineality* (the transfer of wealth, property and kinship through the female line [cf. Rich 1995: 59-60]), *matrilocal marriage* (in which a husband is assimilated into the family home of his bride [cf. Rich 1995: 58; Briffault 1931: 114-116]) and *matrifocality* (the primacy of the mother in domestic and family-related social affairs [cf. Brøger/Gilmore 1997: 13]). According to Briffault, "matriarchal theory" has often been interpreted as "an hypothesis concerning a form of society existing at some undetermined period of the past in which women, instead of men, ruled" (1931: 100), but it can also be understood as a continuing set of social norms in certain 'isolated' societies in the twentieth century – for instance, in Kenya and Pacific island nations – that the anthropologist (problematically) refers to as "lower cultures":

> Almost every variety and degree of feminine influence and power is to be found in the lower cultures, […], [in which] superstition has invested the women with

[193] See, for instance, Briffault's *The Mothers* (1931), Helen Diner's *Mothers and Amazons* (1930) and Evelyn Reed's *Woman's Evolution: From Matriarchal Clan to Patriarchal Family* (1975).

> the imaginary monopoly of magical and supernatural powers, sometimes amounting to little more than a status of social equality [...]. (*Idem*: 180)[195]

Although such conceptions of 'matriachy' imply that this system is an 'anachronism' or a primitive stage of human development, scholars have continued to note the apparent 'authority' of women within isolated rural communities within specific regions, from the so-called Estonian 'Isle of Women' in the Baltic Sea (Cosslett 2020), to the "myth of matriarchy" in Galician regional identity (Kelly 1994). In particular, one can consider the mystical matriarchal paradigm that Millicent Bell identifies within nineteenth-century US regional women's fiction. According to Bell, imagery associating nature with 'female strength' (and, simultaneously, with woman's attachment to the domestic sphere) is a repeated trope in women's literature during this period:

> The immemorial sphere of women - the household, the kitchen garden, the arts of nurturing and healing, remained intact in the denuded rural world. Indeed, they gained in importance, making the not-quite-deserted village a matriarchal stronghold where female strength preserved the bonds of community and the vital relation of humanity to nature. (1986: 473)

Despite Bell's concentration on a nineteenth-century American context here, the connection that the critic establishes between domesticity, rustic environments and matriarchal assumptions could equally apply to twentieth-century Portugal, on account of the dictatorship's reactionary socio-political discourse that authors chose to conform to or react against (or, in some instances, both approaches simultaneously).

Concerning modern Portuguese society, numerous national and international ethnographers have identified such features within agricultural

[195] Clearly, there is a distinction to be made here between these so-called 'matriarchal' social structures and feminist political projects; as Briffault himself acknowledged in 1931, "[t]he questions raised by the claims of feminism rest upon entirely different grounds" (*idem*: 313-314).

communities: Caroline Brettell stresses the "matri-centrality" of northwestern villages due to male outward migration (1986: 9); Margarida Durães outlines the responsibilities placed upon rural Minho women with regards to domestic tasks, agricultural labour and financial management (cf. 1986: 122); Jan Brøgger and David Gilmore describe the social and economic organisation of Nazaré (on the western coast) as "matrifocal" (1997: 21); Joyce Riegelhaupt notes the "informal" decision-making powers of *saloio* women in the rural outskirts of Lisbon (1967: 124-125). Finally, Jorge Dias claims – in his rather superficial comments on the "estrutura social do povo português" – that "[n]o Alentejo há mesmo inúmeros vestígios de matriarcado" (1955: 4), and that "[a] mulher tem grande preponderância social" in the Algarve (*idem*: 5), plus "algumas regiões de outras províncias" (*idem*: 12).[198] Regardless of the (questionable) accuracy of such anthropological observations and their lack of attention to socio-economic class, literary critics have commented on the 'matriarchal' features of Natália Correia's *Matrismo* (cf. Carlos 2004: 71-80) and, as I shall outline presently, on the presence of a "matriarcado do Norte" within Bessa-Luís's fiction.

A final element that I will incorporate into this chapter's theoretical framework is the notion of female 'wisdom', prophecy and 'sybilline' characteristics that are, in many cases, closely affiliated with 'telluric' imagery. Once again referring to regionalist women's writing in the late nineteenth-century United States, Bell makes the following observations:

> Female regionalism celebrates an older source of life-vigor which has been forgotten or exhausted by modern society. The close emphasis on nature [...] has more than a descriptive function - it is a reminder of the immemorial linkage with all life which female wisdom preserves. It is often represented, [...], in the person of the herb-gathering wise-woman who is veritably a mythic figure. This white witch, sybil, earth-mother, [...], maintains the forgotten powers and knowledge of the Mothers [...]. (1986: 473)

[198] Such generalisations have been challenged in recent decades, however, particularly in Miguel Vale de Almeida's *Senhores de si: uma interpretação antropológica da masculinidade* (1995), which focuses on masculinity within an Alentejan village.

Following this reasoning, it is useful to consider the female "Sibyl" archetype, a recurring figure in Greek, Roman and African mythology depicted as a girl or childless woman with the gift of prophecy, often acting as an 'oracle' to passers-by and channelling the voices of gods (cf. Daly 2009: 132-133).[199] As several scholars attest, Sibyls in "ancient tradition" are frequently located within isolated locations, such as caves and rocks (Manetti 1997: 246), or, more generically, within the "rural domain" (Kendrick 2003: 136). According to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the mythological, "revolutionary" and "anti-hierarchical" Sybil myth "gained ground in the Romantic period", through such "primordial prophetess" writers as Mary Shelley (2000: 97-99). They also contend that typically Syblline dwellings (such as caves) have the potential to act as subversive or resistant spaces of female self-affirmation: "the cave is a female space and it belonged to a female hierophant, the lost Sibyl, the prophetess who inscribed her 'divine intuitions' on tender leaves and fragments of delicate bark" (2000: 96). If one is to extend this analysis to 'remote' or insulated environments within continental Portugal, a connection can be established between regionalist discourse, Sybilline fictional characters and dissident sexual politics.

Accordingly, this chapter will conduct an analysis of *Sibila* and *Dia* that evaluates the presence of the following characteristics within these two novels: (a) their critical exploration of regional dynamics, bucolic discourses and fetishised images of 'rural women' in northern and southern Portugal; (b) the extent to which these narratives support or destabilise existing preconceptions of 'matriarchal' practices; (c) the subversive, anti-patriarchal potential of Sybilline or 'prophetess' female characters within the novels' respective regional (Entre-Douro-e-Minho and Algarve) settings. In this way, I shall demonstrate that Bessa-Luís's and Jorge's sexual politics interact with

[199] A compilation of mythical 'Sybils' can be found within the *Oracula Sibyllina*, published between the sixth and seventh centuries CE. Furthermore, Kathleen Daly lists numerous 'Sybilline' figures in Greek and Roman mythology, including the daughter of Zeus and Lamia, the Sibyl of Erithea and the Sibyl of Cumae (cf. 2009: 132). See also William Kinter and Joseph Keller's *The Sibyl: Prophetess of Antiquity and Medieval Fay* (1967) and Jorge Guillermo's *Sibyls: Prophecy and Power in the Ancient World* (2013).

regionalist ideological dynamics to produce ambivalent and complex images of the 'rural woman' and her agency within twentieth-century Portuguese society.

III.1. *A sibila*'s gendered North

Much has been written about the relationship between Bessa-Luís's Entre-Douro-e-Minho roots (she was born in Vila Meã, spent much of her childhood in the Douro valley and lived most of her adult life in Porto) and the Minho / Douro settings of her novels, particularly *A sibila* and *Vale Abraão* (cf. Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 97). Regarding the relationship between *region* and *ideology* in her work, Bessa-Luís's own comments are extremely telling, given that, in a 1986 interview, she deploys the term "provincianismo" to express her disagreement with contemporary feminist agendas: "Sou muito pouco participante das ideias feministas, desse provincianismo feminista que existe e que se desenvolve por toda a parte, hoje" (*apud* Portela 1986: 48). Although Bessa-Luís noticeably fails to specify *which* manifestation of contemporary feminism she is opposed to (liberal; Marxist; radical etc.), her use of the word "provincianismo" provides an intriguing in-road for discussing her fiction's treatment of sexual politics and regional dynamics. The term itself has several relevant meanings in Portuguese: it can refer to the "usos ou maneiras" (or vocabulary) of a specific geographical province (Priberam 2021g: definitions 1, 2), to a 'backward' mindset that derives from unfamiliarity with 'cosmopolitan' social norms, or, conversely, to the "síndroma provinciano" of fascination with large urban centres and superficial symbols of modernity, as critiqued by Fernando Pessoa (1980: 159). Bessa-Luís's allusion to "provincianismo", then, is incredibly enigmatic, with further confusion sown by her claim that this 'feminist provincialism' is developing "por toda a parte". Above all, the author's comment invites readers of her fiction to eschew a conventional 'feminist' critical approach, and to view her novels' sexual politics as intrinsically linked to 'provincial' (read: 'regional') characteristics and imagery.

Furthermore, it is relevant to consider the ideological contradictions that the author exemplified in relation to the political events and debates of her lifetime: although the writer consistently avoided direct commentary on the *Estado Novo* regime while it was in power, she later claimed that dictatorship-

era censorship had been "mais vivido [...] em Lisboa do que propriamente na província" (*apud* Portela 1986: 45). Following Portugal's democratic turn, Bessa-Luís publicly supported Presidential candidates associated with both the Left and the Right, and claimed post-revolutionary socialist ideology had had a *inhibiting*, rather than *liberating*, effect on Portuguese public life: "o 25 de Abril, com todos os benefícios que trouxe, trouxe também uma enorme inibição às pessoas [...]. [...]. Vão-se sentindo apertadas, numa espécie de colete de ideologia de que elas não podem fugir" (*idem*: 14). Alongside this denunciation of radical political ideology as a pernicious influence within Portuguese society after 1974, the author openly defined herself as 'conservative' *from a certain point of view*, on account of her preoccupation with 'rootedness' ("[e]m certo aspecto, sou o que se chama conservadora. No que se refere a um enraizamento que constitui o melhor da minha cultura" (*apud* Novo 2019: 290), and as ambivalent towards so-called 'progressive' ideologies: "São úteis, possivelmente, mas não quer dizer que sejam sábias" (*apud* Portela 1986: 71).

On this cryptic note, I shall now turn to *Sibila*. The novel's plot outlines the succession of several generations within the Teixeira family, residing within the "casa da Vessada" agricultural estate within an enclosed Entre-Douro-e-Minho valley. The narrative begins in the mid-twentieth century, as Germana ('Germa') – the heiress who has recently inherited the property – recalls her aunt Joaquina ('Quina') Augusta. The diegesis then shifts back to the late nineteenth-century (to when her grandfather Francisco Teixeira had married her grandmother Maria da Encarnação), and follows the gradual rise of their daughter Quina in terms of her financial control of the estate, and within the social and economic hierarchy of her local community. Key to Quina's enhanced status is her reputation amongst her peers as a 'Sibyl', with supposedly magical powers of clairvoyance, alongside her shrewd consolidation of the family's wealth and property (while her sister Estina relocates to her new husband's property, and her brothers João and Abel move to Porto). As a young girl, Abel's daughter Germa visits the provincial casa da Vessada and 'learns' from her aunt and grandmother, before keeping her distance during adolescence. In the novel's second half, Quina suffers an Icarian fall into timidity and ill-health after she adopts the illegitimate child of her old friend's manservant. This boy (nicknamed Custódio) grows up to be physically and emotionally 'weak' and

maladjusted, and yet increasingly psychologically domineering over his adopted mother, to the alarm of Germa and others. The narrative's final chapters raise speculation as to whether the ageing Quina will make her niece Germa the chief heiress, thus maintaining a *matrilineal* line of inheritance, or change her will to favour the un-related Custódio; on her deathbed, she chooses the former option. As Custódio's failure to accept this decision leads to his violent suicide, Germa assumes control of the Teixeira estate (and her late aunt's position), in an ending that maintains the female line of succession within the family. Finally, the narrative returns to the present day, with Germa now the owner of the estate and sitting pensively in Quina's old rocking-chair.

While *Sibila* was critically acclaimed at the time of its publication and has consistently occupied a significant role in Portugal's literary canon ever since,[202] scholars have been more circumspect with regards to the novel's portrayal of female agency and subversion of patriarchal norms. Certain studies have summarised the narrative's equivocal approach to sexual politics as "uma superação inconclusa" (Bulger 1990) or as an "inconclusão superadora" (Owen 1998); according to Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso, "[i]t is not hard to find in *A sibila* an exemplary, antifeminist parable against women's overachievement" (2011: 107). Due to the unusually 'powerful' female character of Quina and the central role that women play in governing the casa da Vessada, critics have described the diegetic environment of the novel as 'matriarchal' (cf. Bulger 1990: 85-90; Barroso 2017: 69), while others have identified a "matriarcado do norte" corresponding to the social, economic and demographic specificities of Portugal's Northern countryside (Lopes 1955: 57; Costa 1990: 21; Owen 1998: 203). However, many of these studies surpass a surface-level analysis of key passages in the narrative, and / or critically unpack the ideological implications of this 'northern matriarchy' concept. Carolyn Kendrick makes some questionable comments on *Sibila*'s representation of the "rustic woman", using Brettell's anthropological observations to make sweeping generalisations regarding Portuguese womens' "greater possibility of economic independence in the country[side]" (Kendrick 2003: 134). Owen reads the

[202] *A sibila* won several national prizes upon its publication, and has been on Portugal's *Plano Nacional de Leitura* for many years.

novel's allusions to an "historically referenced rural matriarchy" in the light of Durães's observations (1998: 203, 211), but seldom considers how *Sibila*'s 'matriarchal' regional archetype might be viewed as problematic. My analysis of Bessa-Luís's narrative will complement the studies above, following the following bipartite structure: (a) an analysis of how this novel offers a gendered (but not *binary*) perspective on regionalist dynamics and social, economic and demographic change within twentieth-century rural Portugal; (b) a critical evaluation of *Sibila*'s sexual politics, through a re-appraisal of the novel's apparent 'Northern matriarchy', and a discussion of the ideological implications of Bessa-Luís's (regionalised) 'Syblline' archetype.

III.1.1 "Circunscrito, fechado e sem horizonte": Bessa-Luís's gendered regional imagery

First of all, it is relevant to consider *Sibila*'s construction of a specifically Northern 'provincial' environment: although the fictional casa da Vessada's exact location within the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region is never indicated, multiple topological references evoke the city of Porto (Bessa-Luís 2014: 51), the Douro River (*idem*: 248-249), the Serra do Marão (*idem*: 63) and the Minho coast (*idem*: 77), alongside allusions to regional folklore. These regional customs include, for instance, the "menino do fole" superstitious practice used by Quina to alleviate Custódio's dumbness (*idem*: 153), and the "chapéu de palha" worn by Estina (*idem*: 53) which, as Kendrick notes, recalls the humble peasant clothing described in Camilo Castelo Branco's fiction (Kendrick 2003: 134-135). Bessa-Luís's novel goes beyond simple references to regional settlements and practices, however: when the famous nineteenth-century bandit José do Telhado appears in chapter II ("[o] famoso quadrilheiro" [Bessa-Luís 2014: 29]),[203] as a friend of Francisco Teixeira who temporarily hides in the house, the narrator alludes to the historical propensity of northern Portuguese rural communities towards the defence of property rights and the rejection of

[203] José (or Zé) do Telhado (1818-1875) was responsible for multiple robberies within Entre-Douro-e-Minho rural communities, and is often described as a Portuguese Robin Hood. See Marianne Wiesebron, "Two Portuguese bandits: José do Telhado and João Brandão" (1994: 85).

'socialist' incinations: "A verdade é que entre o povo e a noção de propriedade está por demais arraigada para que um ladrão, por mais heróico ou altruísta, não seja julgado como infame" (*idem*: 31). In addition, like the *serranos* of Ribeiro's *Lobos*,[204] the inhabitants of the casa da Vessada and their neighbours are linked to the *Revolução* / *Guerra da Patuleia*,[205] with Quina singing an old war song as a child: "cantava com a vozinha trôpega quadras irreverentes a respeito da Patuleia, em cujas trincheiras combatera o marido de Narcisa Soqueira" [*idem*: 23]). This link to the nineteenth-century wars is further bolstered by Maria da Encarnação's recollection of "a luta com a guarda que viera sufocar a revolta do povo que não quisera entregar os celeiros, numa altura de revolução e de guerrilhas" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 42) – a direct reference to the Patuleia conflict (cf. Novo 2019: 189) that positions the reader to empathise with the Minho peasants' historical perspective.

Concomitantly, the narrative highlights this rural community's engagement with *national* historical events and circumstances, in an often humourous manner. Firstly, the protagonist's nickname Quina (meaning 'group of five') directly corresponds to the "quinas" on Portugal's coat of arms, which are visible on the nation's monarchical and republican flags and alluded to in Fernando Pessoa's poem "As quinas".[206] Furthermore, the national turbulence and revolutionary fervour of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth is displayed in the behaviour of Maria da Encarnação's brother José, who uses his nearby estate ("o Folgozinho") to host Republican activists and other revolutionary intellectuals: "Entusiasta dos ideias efervescentes da República, tinha a casa muito frequentada por políticos, homens de futuro, paladinos de movimentos revolucionários, sumidades das letras, duma época em que a arte estava bastante circunscrita aos bons sentimentos e a profecias de falanstérios" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 51). Although José's "escapadas à província" are "pouco frequentes" (*ibidem*) before 1910, in the wake of the Republican Revolution he deposits his daughters at this provincial estate to ensure their safety, and returns

[204] See II.2.

[205] See I.1. for a fuller explanation of this nineteenth-century conflict and its relevance to regionalist political dynamics in Portugal.

[206] From Pessoa's *Mensagem* (1934).

to Porto to take care of urgent political affairs: "Estalara a revolução, e ele viera do Porto instalar as filhas na propriedade, receoso de sedições, turbulências. Mas tornou à cidade, onde tinha o seu posto, [...], [e] a sua célula de amigos, iluminados, sinceros, oportunistas" (*idem*: 63). Further, *Sibila* highlights the political divide between Portugal's second largest city (notorious for its Republican agitation) and the inland village and small towns of northern Portugal that, on the whole, were more likely to support the Monarchy.[207] For instance, when José arrives at the casa da Vessada from Porto, announcing "Temos a República!" (*ibidem*), his sister Maria appeases him by hiding all Monarchical symbols in her rustic house: "mandou serrar as coroas que encimavam os escudos" (*ibidem*), suggesting an aristocratic / ancestral link to the toppled regime. Finally, Bessa-Luís makes an ironic allusion to the 1917 Virgin May apparition in Fátima – a key component of the *Estado Novo*'s ultra-Catholic doctrine –,[208] with the narrator mentioning a supposed Northern sighting of the Virgin that the Catholic Church has not yet officially recognised: "certa virgem cujo aparecimento na região não fora confirmado pela Igreja" (*idem*: 125). On account of this dynamic relationship between *Sibila*'s regional diegetic environment and events of national political importance, some critics' claims that the novel's setting is a "universo fechado e clânico" (Bulger 1990: 91), "alheio à história, nacional e internacional" (Costa 1990: 41-42) appear somewhat misplaced.

What *can* be said about the casa da Vessada agricultural estate and its surroundings, though, is that it is a *self-contained* diegetic environment. In particular, chapter II evokes an atmosphere of proximity and unity amongst the local inhabitants:

> [N]aquele despertar estremunhado, a aldeia toda parecia fundida num só lar, os apelos e as pragas elevavam-se no ar limpo e gelado, com uma clareza rude e familiar; o rangido dos colchões de palha, o rapar dos socos nas soleiras, a água que se despeja de golpe nos charcos lamacentos dos quinteiros, distinguiam-se dum vizinho ao outro. (Bessa-Luís 2014: 32-33)

[207] See I.1., concerning the *Monarquia do Norte* uprising.

[208] See I.1., regarding Fátima.

Here, Bessa-Luís's depicts the noisy 'hustle and bustle' of Entre-Douro-e-Minho village life, as well as the relaxed (and *rooted*) familiarity of the *aldeões* ("a aldeia toda parecia fundida num só lar"), which reinforces the concern for "enraizamento" that the author would refer to in later life. This dynamic complemented by the fact that, as Germa observes in chapter IX, the "mulheres da casa da Vessada" are constantly kept abreast of all occurrences within the parish: "Toda a freguesia, com suas casas, seus campos e suas gentes, e as origens deles, e também todos os seus pensamentos e movimentos todos, passavam naquela lareira" (*idem*: 115). The author hereby constructs an environment of Northern rural intimacy that is associated, above all, with the Teixeira family's *female* members.

Closely related to this environment of 'rural intimacy' is the novel's evocation of *seemingly* bucolic imagery and its *apparently* romanticised descriptions of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho countryside, particularly in the vicinity of the Texeira family estate. This tendency can be detected at the very beginning of the narrative, immediately prior to Germa's recollection of her family's history: "O tempo estava morno, impregnado dessa quietude de natureza exaurida que se encontra num baque ondulante, de folha, ou na água que corre inutilmente pela terra eriçada de canas donde a bandeira de milho foi cortada" (*idem*: 9). Equally evocative and sensorial depictions of the landscape surrounding the casa da Vessada appear at the end of chapter II ("Era dia claro. A luz entrava no quarto como que em novelos de vapor resplandecente, e as carradas de mato chiavam pelos caminhos do monte, já de regresso" [*idem*: 34]) and in the closing sentences of chapter III, when Quina is praying in the moonlight: "Os mochos piavam no monte, que era como um paredão onde quebravam todos os sons. Pelas portadas de vidro, […], viam-se as nuvens prateadas, como vagas, e a lua esverdeada, que parecia deslocar-se pelo firmamento, velozmente" (*idem*: 47). In this latter example, Bessa-Luís portrays the nearby hill as a place of biodiversity and natural harmony (due to the array of animal noises emanating from that direction), and associates the 'emerald moon' in the sky above with divine providence ("parecia deslocar-se pelo firmamento").

At other moments in the diegesis, the 'natural purity' of this Entre-Douro-e-Minho environment is explicitly *feminised*, as can be seen in chapter V's description of 'floral' and 'virginal' vegetation within the casa da Vessada estate: "as bermas todas onde nasciam morangos-bravos, as «pascoinhas» lilases com que se enfeita a mesa da visita pascal, juntamente com alecrim, a «coroa de virgem» que cresce em florações entre os lódãos" (*idem*: 61). Within this same paragraph, the fertile soil of the estate is directly associated with the childbirth experienced by generations of rural women, alongside an enduring tree: "Aquela terra negra, aqueles lugares onde viveram tantos amigos e onde soam ainda os seus passos, onde tantos jovens lançaram os seus primeiros risos, onde a mesma árvore foi fiel e deu durante tanto tempo o seu fruto, onde tantas mulheres gritaram a sua hora de parto" (*ibidem*). Accordingly, Maria do Carmo Mendes's eco-critical analysis of Bessa-Luís contends that 'nature' and 'women' are inextricably linked in *Sibila* (and in other novels): "conceitos como campo, tradição e fidelidade estão intimamente associados ao universo feminino: a mulher confunde-se com a terra" (Mendes 2017: 150). However, this understanding of the interaction between femininity and the (Entre-Douro-e-Minho) natural world is rather simplistic and a-historical; as suggested earlier, it would be more productive to read the excerpts above in light of extant tendencies to 'fetishise' female characters residing in rural environments.

It would be misleading, though, to argue that Bessa-Luís reproduces such tropes unconsciously or a-critically, in line with the prevailing doctrine of the period. In fact, a number of seemingly 'bucolic' passages in *Sibila* can be viewed as self-consciously trite, sardonic and bordering on satirical. This tendency is particularly apparent from Quina's 'pastoral prayer' in chapter III, which the narrator describes using excessively effusive and idyllic language, and an ironic reference to 'primitive clans': "Era um clamor doce, imperativo e quente, um alento de fé tão cheio de pura espiritualidade como só se encontra nesses clãs primitivos, para quem a solidão e a natureza são excelsas formas de pensamento" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 46-47). Moreover, the actual words of Quina's prayer are tinged with facetiousness, in her references to deceitful friends and rent-dodging tenants on the Casa da Vessada estate:

> Abençoai os nossos campos, para que eles tenham água e nos dêem pão. Abençoai a nossa casa, o nosso gado, os nossos criados. Abençoai os nossos homens, os nossos frutos, que tudo aconteça para bem. Levai para longe a fome, a peste, a guerra e os amigos que mentem. [...] Abençoai também os nossos moinhos e os caseiros deles, que não pagam a renda há tanto tempo… (*Idem*: 47)

In this excerpt – which invites comparisons with Levantado's satirical treatment of bucolic doctrines ("começai o canto bucólico" [Saramago 1994: 276])[212] – Bessa-Luís's humouristic approach is palpable, with its implication that the protagonist's adherence to *performative* religious ritual is accompanied by hard-nosed pragmatism. Moreover, Quina's entreaty to God, to "levar para longe" exterior threats such as hunger, plague and war, has two significant effects: firstly, this appeal satirises preconceptions of 'rural remoteness', given that the protagonist is afraid of such external tribulations; secondly, the passage reminds the reader that rural Entre-Douro-e-Minho communities were indeed severely impacted by armed conflict and illness, given the enlisting of local men to fight in the First World War, and numerous deaths due to the 1918-20 Spanish Flu pandemic (cf. Brettell 1986: 20-21).

In other parts of the novel, idyllic preconceptions of the rural Entre-Douro-e-Minho are undermined through Bessa-Luís's landscape descriptions and choice of adjectives. This is evident within a key sequence from chapter VI, in which the new local Abbot comes to dine at the casa da Vessada and observes the panoramic (yet *austere*) view from the window:

> Bonito é isto – disse ele. E apontou com o garfo os campos em declive […] e que estavam reluzentes de chuva, ressumando uma frescura ligeiramente depressiva, inquietante, pois tudo parecia demasiado circunscrito, fechado e sem horizonte, naquele vale onde a água cachoava sem fazer torrente, onde as árvores tinham parado de crescer e os próprios vultos dos jornaleiros que passavam, de sacho ao ombro, comunicavam solidão. (Bessa-Luís 2014: 76)

[212] See IV.1.

The passage above is significantly bleaker than the 'bucolic' renderings of the surrounding valley elsewhere in the narrative, with its depiction of a 'slightly depressing, disconcerting freshness' – in stark contrast to the Abbot's claim that the environment is "bonito". Moreover, the narrator's suggestion that this atmosphere is 'restricted', 'closed' and 'horizon-less' deviates from depictions of spatial 'openness' at earlier points of the diegesis, whereas the references to 'stunted trees' denote a barren landscape filled with "solidão",[213] thereby contradicting images of feminine fertility seen elsewhere in the narrative. This scene also undermines romanticised, 'fetishised' and quasi-sexualised notions of Portuguese 'rustic women', with the narrator recalling the abbot's grotesque female devotees at his previous *minhoto* village parish: "[um] lugarejo do Minho, à beira-mar, onde tinha por rebanho um punhado de sargaceiras que comungavam antes da confissão e que aos vinte anos eram velhas, os dentes apodrecidos, as pernas deformadas pelo salitre" (*idem*: 77). As a result, *Sibila*'s portrayals of agricultural communities (and of rural women) within Portugal's Northern countryside oscillate between *conforming to* and *reacting against* bucolic tropes and 'rustic' literary archetypes, with descriptions of drab scenery, undesirable livelihoods and repugnant peasants.

Simultaneously, Bessa-Luís both evokes and challenges common urban *vs*. rural dichotomies and preconceptions within mid-twentieth century Portugal, through the the novel's depiction of several female characters. Specifically, several women connected to Quina and to the Casa da Vessada estate vehemently reject the urban environments of Lisbon and Porto, as demonstrated by the disinterest of Narcisa Soqueira (the Teixeira family's neighbour) in visiting the national capital: "Precisava de dez vidas ainda para conhecer isso tudo tão bem como conheço a minha freguesia"; "[Augusto] Arrastou-a ainda para a capital" (*idem*: 41). Moreover, Elisa Aida Fattoni (Quina's local friend who is married to a foreign aristocrat) favours the seemingly relaxed, leisurely pace of the northern countryside over life in Lisbon: "Fora porque ela amava essa existência desleixada, sem deixar de ser dissipadora, que não se acostumara

[213] A parallel can be drawn here with Portuguese neo-realist fiction's portrayals of the Alentejo as an austere and arid working environment – see, for instance, Manuel da Fonseca's short story "Campaniça", in *Aldeia Nova* (1942).

nunca à capital" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 81). In fact, this character develops a quasi-fetishistic relationship with the rural Entre-Douro-e-Minho, while her husband looks on disapprovingly: "Enquanto rapariga, ela tomava como divertimento mascarar-se de camponesa e, com uma toalha de renda pelo rosto, comparecer nas eiras das esfolhadas. [...] Que *chica pueblana* você me saiu! – recriminava o conde" (*idem*: 28). One can detect a degree of class snobbery here, in that the Elisa's husband voices displeasure and embarassment at the fact that his wife looks like a 'peasant'; in this way, Bessa-Luís issues a pointed challenge to extant discourses of rural poverty and humble rustic contentment within Portuguese society.[214] Lastly, while there is a clear gulf between the attitudes and lifestyles of the Teixeira sisters and those of their Porto-dwelling relatives, these distinctions are shown to be based on questionable premises and regurgitated doctrines. While Estina's and Quina's cousins maintain an a-critical, idealised view of the northern countryside ("elas vinham tomadas dessa adoração romântica pelo campo, a curiosidade do rústico, a pretensão do simples" [*idem*: 51-52]), they also to appear to enjoy greater sexual freedom than their provincial relatives, as indicated by their "meias curtas, a cintura muito baixa, marcada com faixas de *liberty*" (*idem*: 51). *Sibila*'s juxtaposition of female characters in contrasting environments hereby critiques the strategies and organisations developed by the Salazar regime, designed to minimise migration to urban centres that it regarded as the home of 'threatening' sexual politics and norms.[215]

In parallel to this deconstruction of rustic stereotypes and presumptions encouraged by the dicatorship, Bessa-Luís's portrayal of Porto, while unflattering, rejects a basic juxtaposition between urban and rural communities. This is particularly apparent in the experiences of Quina's brothers (João and Abel) of residing within the city, as outlined in chapter XI: "João, que vivia na cidade uma existência de pobre, engavetado num prédio de andares e tendo por horizonte as varandas onde se arejavam tapetes velhos e as mulheres

[214] This message is articulated, for example, in the well-known fado track "Uma casa portuguesa": "A alegria da pobreza / Está nesta grande riqueza / De dar, e ficar contente" (Fonseca/Ferreira/Sequeira 1953).

[215] See I.1.

papagueavam com uma familiaridade mais obscena do que a própria licença" (*idem*: 138-139). Here, although the adjective "engavetado" gestures towards overcrowding within an urban setting, the author's reference to João's abode as "tendo por horizonte as varandas" directly recalls chapter VI's depiction of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho's agricultural landscape as "circunscrito, fechado e sem horizonte". In addition, the passage's allusion to women chattering across Porto's rooftops with "familiaridade" – directly recalls the "clareza rude e familiar" associated with the village surrounding the casa da Vessada in chapter II. Far from simplistically contrasting rural beauty and urban unseemliness, then, the narrative *equates* the city and the countryside on several occasions, whilst taking care not to idealise either environment.

Sibila creates further ambivalence and cynicism through the explicitly feminine link it establishes between (regional) space and *nostalgia* – a trait identified by Massey in her critique of "the culturally constructed version of 'Woman'". Although the narrative has been described as "a classic piece of rural nostalgia" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 103), which tallies with Bessa-Luís's allusions to her own cultural "enraizamento", nostalgic sentiment in this narrative is frequently laced with irony. Let us consider, for example, Elisa Aida's intimate attachment to the rural community of her childhood, as outlined in chapter VI:

> [E]la sempre voltava para a província, aos lugares onde se criara e, de pernas nuas, correra aos carreiros todos que levavam à igreja ou à mestra. Ficara-lhe da infância um gosto bravio pelas coisas do campo, as estradinhas poeirentas que percorria agora na sua caleche verde-escura, fazendo pasmar os aldeões que regressavam das feiras [...]. (*Idem*: 74)

In this excerpt, the narrator explicitly links Elisa's fascination for 'rustic pleasures' with her idealised infancy as a peasant child, which contrasts sharply with the shock that her aristocratic comforts (e.g. her *calèche*) cause to local agricultural workers when she returns as an adult. This cynical tone with regards to the value of childhood nostalgia is also apparent in chapter VIII, when Quina's cousin Adriana shelters from the fallout of a marital scandal in her father's old

provincial estate: “Um escândalo do marido, [...], fizera-a buscar refúgio na velha mansão de província onde o pai morrera e onde todos os lugares tinham um bafo de infância” (*idem*: 96-97). In this instance, Adriana’s “velha mansão da província” becomes a place of convenient escape as well as a *locus* of comforting sentimentality, in the face of social embarrassment and / or family strife.

Above all, as the diegesis progresses the author increasingly depicts the casa da Vessada as a relic or fossil of a declining rural existence “always on the verge of disappearing” (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 103), due to “migration to the city and bourgeois urbanization traditions” (Owen 1998: 203). What is equally apparent, though, is the heavily gendered lexicon that Bessa-Luís deploys in reference to this increasingly ‘redundant’ way of life, as indicated by the adult Germa’s memories of her family’s rural estate: “de súbito, Germa sentiu uma saudade imensa da casa da Vessada, [...], [...] cujo encanto, originalidade, perfume e graça se lhe revelavam agora, como acontecia com uma matéria fóssil, morta, carvões sepultados na terra” (*idem*: 162). This passage, which associates romanticised images of femininity (“encanto”; “perfume”; graça”) with death, burial and commemoration, is followed by the ageing Quina’s realisation that the casa da Vessada is nearing its demise: “Pela primeira vez, Quina via aquela casa fechada e vazia, como amarrotada entre a treva e já feita ruína, recordação, passado. E teve a impressão de estar a assistir a alguma coisa irremediavelmente acontecida, e afastando-se dela” (*idem*: 227). The imagery of irrevocable decay here is intensified by the past participle of “acontecer”, which suggests an irretrievable point in history from which Quina is becoming increasingly estranged – a notion also expressed by Germa at the end of the diegesis: “A família chegou, pois, ao seu auge – é preciso que pereça, então” (*idem*: 276). As a result of such instances, Isabel Allegro de Magalhães comments that, within *Sibila*, “[a] ligação à terra é de certa maneira excessiva e atávica. Leva as mulheres a uma quase imobilidade total, à permanência no local de origem [...], enquanto os homens [...] partem” (1987: 217). I would caution against this simplistic reading, however; although the *narrator* appears to espouse essentialism at certain moments, describing *all* women as inextricably tied the past (“Ainda que simulem obedecer e optar pelo vanguardismo dos costumes, as mulheres são rebarbativas às inovações. No fundo da sua natureza,

há um apelo ao primitivo, ao antigo, ao passado" [Bessa-Luís 2014: 71]), the tone of this gender dichotomy is arguably too trite and over-simplified as to signify the only possible interpretation of this imagery.

Indeed, other sections of *Sibila* problematise potential interpretations of demographic transformation as a simple dichotomy of female (rustic / agricultural) and male (urban / industrial) destinies. It is telling, for example, that despite the decision of Quina's brothers to relocate to Porto, João stubbornly maintains a meagre and shabby *quintal* behind his city abode, suggesting a difficulty in completely abandoning his agrarian roots: "Uma faixa de terreno, com um eriçado de estacas de feijoeiro, via-se em baixo. Era exíguo e pobre" (*idem*: 170). Additionally, while Abel regards the family's agricultural practices to be in a state of irrevocable deterioration, he clearly articulates jealously and resentment at Quina's control of that heritage: "O nosso futuro não está na lavoura, vê-se. Entretanto, Quina conseguiu apropriar-se da representação de todo o nosso passado de lavradores" (*idem*: 171). Accordingly, male members of the Teixeira family express a bitter, disgruntled realisation that the casa da Vessada has now been appropriated into a female genealogical line, to be inherited at a later date by Germa. As a result, the "espécie de aristocracia *ab imo* [...], da terra" alluded to by Germa's cousin Bernardo Sanches (*idem*: 7) operates in accordance with seemingly matriarchal precepts, although, as I shall now outline, Bessa-Luís's evocation of the 'Northern matriarch' archetype is far from a-critical.

III.1.2 The Matriarch vs. the Sibyl

On one level, *Sibila* certainly alludes to a number of matriarchal features / characteristics within its agricultural diegetic environment. 'Matri-centrality', for instance, is alluded to when Quina's extended family is described as a "corte feminina" (*idem*: 25), and when the narrator affirms – rather generically – that 'customs' are passed down through the maternal line: "os nomes das casas transmitem-se pelos filhos varões, mas os seus costumes são herança de mulheres" (*idem*: 215). Equally, specific aspects of matrilineality are associated with the Teixeira dynasty, including the fact that Quina's brother Abel is accidentally baptised with Maria da Encarnação's surname ("Maria, […], [...]

fulcro de continuidade e de calor, mereceu do destino uma irónica compensação, pois seria o seu nome que se perpetuaria no único dos filhos que deixaria descendência" (*idem*: 36), meaning that Germa is destined to carry her grandmother's surname: "Seria com o nome dela que a casa da Vessada continuaria" (*ibidem*). In this context, it is significant that Quina designates Germa – rather than Estina or any surviving male relative – as the principal heiress of her estate, thereby securing matrilineal control of the casa da Vessada over successive generations. Indeed, an unmistakeable female genealogical line between Quina and Germa is established when the protagonist designates her niece as the estate's "herdeira absoluta" (*idem*: 273), explicitly recalling the narrator's earlier reference to Quina as the property's "senhora absoluta" (*idem*: 63).

In parallel to this construction of a seemingly 'matriarchal' familial paradigm throughout the diegesis, the presence and actions of men are frequently depicted as detrimental to the estate's fortunes ("os homens tinham sido sempre fatais para a casa da Vessada" [*idem*: 60]), with Francisco Teixeira in particular described as incompetent, lazy and disloyal to his wife:

> Começavam a fazer-se visíveis os resultados da fanfarronice estróina de Francisco Teixeira. O desequilíbrio doméstico tomava, com o tempo, uma feição mais grave. Os gastos do amo, o seu profundo desleixo das terras, obrigavam agora a família a uma estreita temperança. Às vezes o dinheiro faltava para pagar as jornas, para comprar o gado necessário à lavoira. (*Idem*: 36-37)

Similarly, Quina's brothers João and Abel are depicted as indolent and wayward like their father before them, contributing little to the casa da Vessada and leaving the 'women of the house' to carry out agricultural labour alongside domestic tasks: "Os rapazes cresciam e mostravam um gosto de mándria, de frívolos costumes, de prazeres. Deixavam às mulheres os cuidados da lavoura, [...], e saíam a flanar pelas freguesias, deitando sortes aos amores. Eram muito do pai, eles" (*idem*: 59). As mentioned, both brothers abandon the estate at the earliest opportunity, with Abel described as an indolent moneygrubber: "acicatado por ideias de luxo, de vida larga [...]. O trabalho na terra aborrecia-

o" (*ibidem*). Finally, Custódio – Quina's pampered adopted son – shocks the casa da Vessada's visitors with his idleness: "Meu Deus, Quina! Porque não pões uma enxada nas mãos deste rapaz! Estás a criar um vadio na tua casa" (*idem*: 180). In these instances, Bessa-Luís ridicules common images of male leadership, dilligence and patriarchal virtue (accompanied by female submission and dedication to domestic tasks) within the salazarist dictatorship's socio-political discourse and propaganda.[217]

Nonetheless, I would object to previous 'matriarcado do norte' readings of *Sibila* on several counts. The first, and most obvious of these is that is that there is little regional specificity attached to the Teixeira dynasty; although the aforementioned perpetuation of female inheritance has been linked to matriarchal 'remnants' in some parts of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho (cf. Costa 1990: 21), no concrete details within the narrative make this association explicit. Indeed, there has been little critical consideration of whether *Sibila* claims to represent an objective 'matriarchal' social reality in Portugal's rural north, or whether the novel is a metonomy of an established 'Northern matriarchy' stereotype in Portuguese cultural memory. I would argue the latter: overwhelmingly, the author is concerned with destabilising, re-configuring and re-shaping the 'myth of matriarchy' rather than simply *reflecting* it.

Secondly, the central role of women within the Teixeira household does not imbue the female members of the family with 'matriarchal' authority; on the contrary, their freedom to pursue their own passions and career paths is diminished by male idleness or the absence of men from the estate: "As mulheres viam-se a braços com toda a responsabilidade, o que não era novo para elas" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 59). Concomittantly, the commitment of the casa da Vessada women to agricultural labour, administration and management is not uniform, given that Quina's sister Estina is 'preferred' and indulged by her mother during her childhood, in contrast to the the physical demands imposed upon Quina: "Estina recebera uma educação cuidadosa, era cheia de prendas [...]. [...] Enquanto ela optava pelas tarefas que lhe permitiam permanecer sentada nos

[217] See, for instance, the regime's *Deus, pátria e família: a trilogia da educação nacional* poster (Barata 1938), in which a male head of household returns from agricultural work carrying a sickle, while his home-bound wife concentrates on domestic tasks.

bancos da cozinha, [...], Quina ficava entregue dos trabalhos que exigiam maior actividade e energia" (*idem*: 35). Estina's position within the narrative's supposedly 'matriarchal' framework is further undermined by her marriage to Inácio Lucas; despite Lucas's physical abuse of her ("torturara-a sempre, tentara aniquilá-la" (*idem*: 89), she refuses to leave him (*idem*: 91), thereby complicating the novel's apparent juxtaposition between authoritative women and indolent, submissive men. Finally, the fact that the Teixeira household employs numerous female domestic workers (such as Libória) functions not only as a reminder of class differences within twentieth-century Portuguese society, but also as an indication of the northern matriarchy's limits as a political possibility for *all* women within that environment.

Above all, it is Quina who most explicitly embodies the limitations and contradictions of the 'matriarchal' female archetype within the Entre-Douro-e-Minho countryside. On the one hand, *Sibila*'s protagonist demonstrates considerable financial and entrepenurial acumen, within the casa da Vessada and in her wider regional community ("Quina era imprescindível com o seu tacto político a respeito de relações, negócios, contratos. Nas feiras fizera-se conhecida, [...], cumprimentando aqui, escolhendo gado mais além" [*idem*: 62]), with the result that the entire estate gradually comes into her possession: "Aos poucos, a casa da Vessada ficou entregue nas mãos de Quina" (*idem*: 63). Accordingly, Quina has been described as a "Promethean woman", on account of her daring entry into traditionally male spheres of activity, including "aspirations for material gain and personal renown" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 102-105), with the implication that her characterisation represents an example of unusually robust female authority within mid-twentieth-century Portuguese society.

On the other hand, from an early age this character develops a sceptical attitude towards supposedly 'matriarchal' frameworks, particularly when she contemplates the women of her extended family in chapter II:

> A corte feminina sempre tão numerosa em que vivia, incluindo suas tias e casas continuadas por elas, causava-lhe irritação, pois ela lastimava desde menina o ser considerada um número entre a descendência de raparigas submissas e incapazes

> que se destinam a uma aliança tutelada, e que, mesmo atingindo o matriarcado, eram vencidas. (*Idem*: 25)

This excerpt – which, incidentally, is the only explicit use of the term "o matriarcado" in the novel – reveals Quina's belief that the system of apparent female dominance in her family produces submissive female subjects who find themselves "vencidas". Significantly, the protagonist's cynical view of seemingly 'matriarchal' practices continues and intensifies during her adulthood, as exemplified when Quina expresses despair at what she considers to be the 'captive' condition of all other women: "havia nessa condição de escravas regaladas alguma coisa que a fazia sentir-se frustrada como mulher" (*idem*: 110). Here, one can read the oxymoron "escravas regaladas" as an almost direct critique of social policy under successive Portuguese governments (and particularly under the dictatorship), which sought to maintain a dutiful female population through the illusory promise of domestic authority.

In fact, throughout the diegesis Quina expresses a complete disinterest in embracing her *femininity* as a means of achieving financial success and independence ("sentia mais prazer pelas honras feitas ao seu nome de proprietária, do que pela galanteria dedicada à mulher" [*idem*: 93]), and, in a phrase that has intrigued several critics, states her determination to "superar a sua própria condição" (*idem*: 110)[219] or, in other words, to overcome the limits of her sex within an extremely patriarchal society. Indeed, at certain moments this protagonist appears to endorse male authority, although her support for the traditional family figurehead is problematised by her generalised ridicule of men, and by her own determination to "vencer" male *and* female 'weaknesses':

> Na generalidade, amava o homem como chefe de tribo e pelo secular prestígio dos seus direitos. Mas ria-se de todos eles, um por um, pois lhes encontrava inferioridades que ela, pobre fêmeazinha sem mais obrigações do que as de chorar, parir e amar abstractamente a vida, pudera vencer [...]. (*Ibidem*)

[219] See Bulger (1990) and Owen (1998).

The passage above evinces further contradiction with regards to Quina's opinion of both sexes, in its suggestion that the protagonist *loves* the male patriarchal archetype but does not *respect* men (or women) on an individual level. The character's personal ambitions thus concern the attainment of historically anomalous levels of familial and social authority, as indicated by the narrator's comparison of Quina to Abraham – the quintessential patriarch of several world religions:[220] "as suas ambições proliferaram como a tribo de Abraão e encheram a terra inteira – que não era um globo ligeiramente achatado nos pólos, mas todo o espaço até aos limites dos seus conhecimentos" (*idem*: 66). In reference to this passage, Owen and Pazos Alonso describe Quina as "usurping the founding power of Old Testament patriarchy, the power of God", and as seeking to "possess the phallus" (2011: 105); there is certainly a suggestion of this objective in Bessa-Luís's repetition of the term "tribo", in relation to the protagonist's aspirations. Alongside this interpretation, a spatialised reading of Quina's ambitions is also possible, through the narrator's allusions to "a terra inteira" and to "todo o espaço". Here, the author indicates the protagonist's desire for limitless territorial expansion, across 'the entire earth' and across 'all space', with the caveat that this geography is not *planetary* but rather contingent on the character's *awareness* of the world around her ("até aos limites dos seus conhecimentos"). The potency of Quina's patriarchal ambition is therefore hinted at, and simultaneously problematised, through geographical imagery.

In addition to this character's reverance for the historic 'tribal' patriarch, Quina and several other female family figures are characterised by traditionally masculine attributes, giving rise to claims of a "phallogocentric ventriloquism" and a "*virilização* of the womens' voices" within *Sibila* (Owen 1998: 204). In chapter III, for instance, the protagonist is characterised by a 'manly haughtiness' that surpasses that of Maria da Conceição's sons: "mesmo dos três rapazes que lhe nasceram, nenhum trouxera aquela marca de máscula altivez, aquela consciência para ser livre juiz" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 36). Similarly, in chapter V the narrator affirms that Quina and Maria are perfectly capable of

[220] The story of Abraham appears in Christian, Jewish and Islamic texts: in most versions, Abraham leads a 'tribe' from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan. This patriarchal figure is also alluded to in Bessa-Luís's 1991 novel *Vale Abraão*.

managing the casa da Vessada estate without male support, but that they have developed stereotypically 'masculine' physical and behavioural characteristics in the process:

> Elas tinham-se habituado [...] a serem mulheres sós, sem a confiança dum ombro másculo a que se arrimassem [...]. Por isso o seu carácter *não podia deixar de adquirir acentos viris*, assim como as suas mãos tinham ganho calos e nodosidades, como o seu espírito se abstinha de manifestações supérfluas. (*Idem*: 60, my emphasis)

This depiction of 'virile' women, with plentiful experience of agricultural responsibility and intense manual labour, is also associated with previous generations in the Teixeira family, such as Quina's estranged aunt, who is described as "[uma] musculosa amazona que, ela só, bastava para jungir uma parelha de bois a um carro carregado de mato, e sem que a respiração se lhe alterasse" (*ibidem*). In describing Francisco's sister as a "musculosa amazona", Bessa-Luís links multiple generations of Teixeira women to mythical notions of matriarchy,[221] and yet simultaneously signals an appreciation of physical prowess – a quality that is overwhelmingly associated with masculine strength.

As a result, a key question arises regarding *Sibila*'s intimations of a matriarchal dynasty (which *happens* to be situated in northern Portugal): are Quina, Maria, Germa and several other female members of this family simply men with vaginas, relying on patriarchal norms and practices to provide them with authority and respect? The protagonist's upbringing undoubtedly involves a certain level of "social and cultural masculinization" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 104-105), resulting from her father's affection as well as mother's demands: "Entre Quina e o pai foi aos poucos surgindo uma espécie de aliança secreta"; "Quina, desde muito nova, lidava sob o estímulo da mãe, que a exigia activa e responsável" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 24). Nevertheless, Quina appears to have little respect for patriarchal societal expectations, choosing never to marry

[221] See, for instance, the female warrior tribes of Greco-Roman mythology, referenced in Diner's *Mothers and Amazons.*

and advising Germa against the 'error' of matrimony: "não te cases nunca. É a maior desgraça que pode acontecer a uma mulher" (*idem*: 133). Most significantly, the narrative posits motherhood as a detrimental and even dangerous fate for the female protagonist: Quina's "desvario todo maternal" (*idem*: 169) – her decision to adopt Custódio – results in a noticeable drop in her self-confidence ("[Germa] deparou com uma mulher constantemente acabrunhada por uma certa timidez" [*idem*: 159]), with her adopted son "aprend[endo] depressa a dominar Quina" (*idem*: 173). The eventual destiny of *Sibila*'s protagonist, then, is that of an atypical woman who is punished by an exploitative adopted son, for her earlier achievements in traditionally male spheres: "venceu e foi vencida" (*idem*: 283). The verb "vencer", repeated by the narrator at several key moments in the diegesis (*idem*: 25, 110) is here rendered in the active voice followed by the passive, suggesting a double bind of Quina's initial success and subsequent downfall, the latter of which derives from her acceptance of a maternal role. In this way, Owen's and Pazos Alonso's claim that "[i]t is not hard to find in *A Sibila* an exemplary, antifeminist parable against women's overachievement" (2011: 107) can be brought into question, given that the protagonist's decline is explicitly associated with her decision to parent an adopted son. If, to quote Adrienne Rich, "[p]atriarchy depends on the mother to act as a conservative influence", having "created images of the archetypal Mother which reinforce the conservatism of motherhood and convert it to an energy for the renewal of male power" (1995: 61), it is equally apparent that *Sibila* portrays motherhood – and the questionable 'northern matriarchy' – as destructive prospects for Portuguese women already residing within an ultra-patriarchal political and social *status quo*.

Accordingly, it can be argued that *Sibila*'s problematic treatment of a prevailing "matriarcado do norte" archetype is *not* its most politically subversive aspect, although the novel's destabilisation of that image can be read as ideologically potent. Rather, Bessa-Luís's portrayal of the Sibyl – a wholly distinct mythological model to that of the 'matriarch' – emerges as the narrative's most significant (and most explicitly *regionalised*) challenge to official gender roles within mid-twentieth-century Portugal. Admittedly, several critics have questioned this novel's fidelity to the Sibyls of classical mythology (cf. Kendrick 2003: 137), and the author certainly appears to reject the

archetypal cave-dwelling Sybil of Greek and Roman texts[222] - in a rather gruesome manner, given that Estina's daughter is found dead in a cavern-like mine shaft: "uma mina abandonada, covil de morcegos" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 137). In addition, the protagonist's power of Sibylline foresight significantly wanes when she reaches old age, as evidenced by the vapid advice that she gives to her house-servant Libória ("Quina, que fora oráculo da geração anterior, limitava-se a encher de advertências moralistas aquela rapariga" [*idem*: 203]), thereby ironically inverting the classical Sibylline model of an *elderly* prophetess (cf. Kendrick 2003: 137). That said, it has already been noted that "Bessa Luís's treatment of sexual mythologies is characterized by an all-pervading sense of irony" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 102) and, in any case, it is rather unproductive to focus on *Sibila*'s *exact* faithfulness to mythological Sibyls. Instead, one should be concerned with the subversive potential that Bessa-Luís's rendering of that archetype offers, through the *regionalised* figure of Quina.

On one level, the protagonist assumes an explicitly 'telluric' Sibylline persona, intimately connected with the rustic surroundings from which she derives her 'wisdom' and prophetic powers: "Mercê dum sentido finíssimo para se embrenhar nos fenómenos da natureza, humana ou simplesmente do meio vital, [...], depressa adquiriu uma sabedoria profunda acerca de todos os ritmos da consciência, do instinto, das forças telúricas" (*idem*: 56). Further, through the use of simile Quina's gift of anticipation is linked to her attunement with the natural environment around the casa da Vessada:

> Como o que distingue para lá das montanhas qual a sombra de fumo, de pó ou de nuvem; como o que na floresta conhece o rasto do animal em tempo de caça ou tempo de amores; como o que aspira no vento o perigo, como o que pressente na atmosfera a confiança ou a traição, assim ela vivia [...]. (*Ibidem*)

In addition, throughout the narrative, the protagonist frequently uses her 'soothsaying' abilities to manage agricultural tasks within the casa da Vessada estate ("Um sorriso fazia-a pôr-se em guarda, assim como uma aranha que tecia

[222] See, for instance, the Sybil of Cunae who appears in Virgil's epic poetry.

a sua teia duma folha a outra dum pé de malva a decidia a mandar espelhar o grão na eira, ou os carolos de milho ainda húmidos da debulha" (*idem*: 56), or to interpret the dreams of her friends involving farm animals: "Olha, sibila, sonhei esta noite com galinhas [...]. Que será que me espera?" (*idem*: 144). Finally, Quina's Sibylline persona is associated with telluric sensations, through repeated references to the smell of apples and other fragrant flora (cf. Magalhães 1987: 208), with this motif first evoked at the beginning of the diegesis: "aquela sala, de tecto baixo, onde pairava um cheiro de pragana e maçã" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 9). These fragrances are then linked to the presence of Quina within the family home ("[a]quela sala que cheirava a maça e a folhelho" [*idem*: 51]), and, ultimately, to Germa, at the moment that she inherits the 'Sibyl' sobriquet from her late aunt: "Ela move-se ritmicamente, baloiçando-se naquela sala onde se recolhem em pilhas as maçãs; todo o ar rescende a maçã que suga da própria pele a frescura [...]. Eis Germa, eis a sua vez agora e o tempo de traduzir a voz da sua sibila" (*idem*: 284). To a certain extent, this semi-bucolic imagery feeds into the dominant ultra-conservative, pastoral discourse of the period, through its "fetishised" equation of female Sibylline characters with "natural" imagery (Ferreira 1996: 140).

Nonetheless, what is overwhelmingly apparent in this novel is Bessa-Luís's use of Sibylline figures (particularly Quina) for the purposes of dissidence and social transgression. One can consider, for instance, Quina's life-long "chastity" – also "frequently associated with sybils" (Kendrick 2003: 137) –, which conflicts with the dictatorship's insistence on marriage and motherhood as a 'respectable' position for women in Portuguese society. In addition, the narrator ironically posits the protagonist's prophetic abilities as primitive or 'savage', in contrast to modern man's 'civilised' nature: "assim ela vivia, intensamente adaptada com essa capacidade selvagem de defesa, de astúcia, de previsão e pré-conhecimento da vida e das coisas e que o homem civilizado, [...], vai perdendo ou nunca desenvolve por completo" (Bessa-Luís 2014: 56). While Bessa-Luís's juxtaposition of "selvagem" and "civilizado" here is a geographical dichotomy as much as it is a gendered one, it should be remembered that, as noted above, such territorial stereotypes are systematically questioned throughout *Sibila.* Hence, one can assume that the narrator's tone in this particular passage is similarly ironic, and that the essential function of

Quina's "previsão" and "pré-conhecimento da vida" is that of a sophisticated female defence mechanism within a regional setting, as oppposed to "a quasi-mystical representation of Portugal's rural, preurban past in terms of intuitive, prerational [...] sybilline thought" (Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 104).

A further indication of the political possibilities offered by Bessa-Luis's Sibylline characterisation of Quina lies in the way in which *Sibila*'s male characters are threatened by her abilities, leading them to mistrust and disparage her. Quina's misogynistic brother-in-law Inácio, for example, refers to her as a "bruxa", thereby recalling cultural stereotypes (and fears) of prophetic rural 'witches': "Foi aquela bruxa que veio augurar isso? Foi esse rato com asas?" (*idem*: 132). Moreover, after having listened to the protagonist's life story through Germa, Bernardo Sanches ridicules Quina's divinatory skills at the end of the diegesis, vehemently challenging the importance that his cousin has attributed to those abilities: "Com a nossa falecida Sibila, uma medíocre criatura cujo sentido de previsão e de augúrio dependia duma vareja que zumbe pela casa, ou dos gatos que lavam a cara com a pata, você faz uma espécie de detentora de secretas potências, alguma coisa que ultrapassa o humano" (*idem*: 280-281). This outburst might suggest that Sanches has underestimated his late aunt's prophetic abilities, or that he is that he is disturbed or even intimidated by these faculties, and with good reason. At an early point within the novel, the narrator outlines Quina's ease in establishing 'spiritual ascendency', especially over those that belittle her Sibylline qualities as 'primitive magic': "Simples era [...] para ela atingir uma ascendência espiritual sobre todos aqueles para quem essas qualidades inatas só poderiam significar símbolos de magia" (*idem*: 56-57). In this way, Bessa-Luís recuperates some key emancipatory possibilities of the Sibylline archetype: the "revolutionary 'mother-goddess myth' which allows power and dignity to women" (Gilbert/Gubar 2000: 98-99), and, in the context of 'regional women's writing', the Sibyl's "female wisdom", "life-vigor" and "forgotten powers and knowledge" (Bell 1986: 473). Overwhelmingly, it is this 'prophetess'-like vision of female authority, rather than simplistic stereotypes pertaining to the 'matriarch', that informs *Sibila*'s sexual politics.

Critically, though, several limitations and caveats are suggested in this narrative's exploration of Sibylline social transgression. The first of these is the fact that Quina lacks the power to *interpret* and *understand* her predictions,

thereby preventing her from avoiding destructive future events (such as Custódio's eventual domination of her): "Estava perfeita no seu cargo de sibila, pois conhecia a alma humana de dentro para fora, [...], sem, porém, chegar a compreendê-la" (*idem*: 153). This juxtaposition of the verbs *conhecer* and *compreender* exemplifies the gulf between the protagonist's ability to *see* significant problems within Portuguese society (such as rigid gender roles), and her capacity to digest and act upon those issues. Accordingly, the protagonist is described as *unwittingly* gathering knowledge of the male sex ("Conhecia os homens sem o aprender jamais" [*idem*: 56]), whilst being unable to grasp and realise the full potential of her 'soothsaying' faculties: "Acima de tudo, Quina nunca soube até que ponto a sua condição espiritual era poderosa" (*idem*: 57). Therefore, Bessa-Luís's Entre-Douro-e-Minho recreation of the Sibylline myth has revolutionary *potential* with regards to sexual politics in mid-twentieth-century Portugal, while remaining, ultimately, a "superação inconclusa": an unfulfilled opportunity, insofar as the protagonist herself is concerned.

Despite these caveats regarding the political potential of Quina's supernatural powers, *Sibila*'s reader is left with a certain anticipation of future social change at the end of the diegesis, particularly when Germa assumes her aunt's Sibylline legacy: "quem é ela para ser um pouco mais do que Quina e esperar que os tempos novos sejam mais aptos a esclarecer o homem e a trazer-lhe a solução de si próprio?" (*idem*: 284). Thus, despite the novel's ambivalent ending – with Germa assuming ownership of the casa da Vessada estate while having no intention of continuing its agricultural heritage – the narrator's pointed reference to "os tempos novos" gestures towards the possibility of future modifications within Portuguese society, towards a more harmonious (yet not necessarily *equal*) relationship between the sexes. *Sibila* can hereby be interpreted as a prolepsis of sorts, but one that is fraught with ambivalence; whether Germa will make full use of the revolutionary tools that her Sibylline aunt had at her disposal (but had never completely understood) remains an open question at the end of the diegesis. Regardless, it is clear that Bessa-Luís's (regionalised) manipulation of the mythological 'matriarch' and 'Sibyl' female figures posits the latter as a more promising prospect for female advancement within dictatorship-era rural Portugal.

In this analysis of *A sibila*, I have consciously avoided a reading of the novel along the lines of 'feminist criticism', not only because the author explicitly rejects what she regards as "provincianismo feminista", but also because a critical reading of this narrative through the lenses of regional women's writing, matriarchal stereotypes and Sibylline archetypes allows for a productive understanding of how Agustina Bessa-Luís constructs a gendered regionalist discourse. Specifically, the author exploits and challenges idyllic stereotypes of the rural Entre-Douro-e-Minho through a (destabilised) male vs. female dichotomy, deconstructs preconceptions of a "matriarcado do norte", and recalls the classical 'Sibyl' in a regional context as a way of *anticipating* social change, rather than as an emancipatory figure *in itself*. Many of these dynamics are equally apparent in Lídia Jorge's *Dia*, which explores and problematises gender relations within the rural Algarve.

III.2. *O dia dos prodígios*: the 'remote' southern woman

In several interviews, Lídia Jorge has alluded to the direct influence of her rural childhood and native environment – the Algarvian village of Boliqueime – on her fictional output (cf. *apud* Peixoto 2019; *apud* Ferreira 2020), having pointedly remarked: "Ninguém nasce livre da terra. Não vale a pena fugir" (*apud* Owen/Pazos Alonso 2011: 191). Nonetheless, Jorge has been equally adamant in her rejection of a 'regionalist' epithet, instead describing her fiction as a 'transcendent' form of 'rootedness':

> [N]ão escrevo sobre regiões ou cidades, […], mas sim sobre outra coisa mais vasta que nasce a partir deles. [...] [A]cho que a essência do literário é um fantasma que se levanta sobre os horizontes da Terra, e que se eleva o mais possível do solo sem nunca a perder de vista. (*Apud* Ferreira/Hutchinson 2009: 341)

Indeed, this author brings her distinct life experiences – a university education in Lisbon, followed by her residence in Mozambique alongside her army officer husband, during the 1964-74 Colonial War – to bear on her various novels located within the inland and coastal Algarve (*Dia* [1980], *O Cais das Merendas*

[1982], *O Vale da Paixão* [1998], *O Vento Assobiando nas Gruas* [2002]), in Lisbon (e.g. *Notícia da Cidade Silvestre* [1984], *Jardim sem Limites* [1995] and in colonial-era Mozambique (*A Costa dos Murmúrios* [1988]). Hence, there is a certain tension in Jorge's fiction between rootedness and efforts to *surpass* (rather than 'escape from') geographical origins.

Ideologically speaking, although Jorge's publicly affirmed political standpoints are perhaps not as controversial as those of Bessa-Luís, they can be understood as idiosyncratic to a certain extent. While the author's negative view of Portuguese colonialism in Africa (as informed by first-hand experience) is clearly articulated in *Dia* and *A costa dos murmúrios*, she has recently stated that her political ideology rejects both the Left and Right: "a minha posição não é nem da direita nem da esquerda. Ela é, pura e simplesmente, uma posição humanista" (*apud* Campos Ferreira 2020). With regards to sexual politics within Portuguese society, Jorge's commitment to women's rights and to the dismantling of long-standing social restrictions is evidenced by her high-profile support (alongside Bessa-Luís, no less) for the legalisation of in Portugal's 2007 referendum (cf. Pereira 2006). Notwithstanding this activism, the author's perspective on the female characters within her fiction is complex and, significantly, *geographically situated* in a Southern Mediterranean (rather than Atlantic) context: "my novels take stock of a Mediterranean image of woman. Their strength is powerful and subversive, more invisible than socially apparent" (*apud* D'Orey 1999: 168). In this same interview, Jorge resists a simplistic female vs. male binary that she attributes to 'traditional feminist' literary practices: "As I am not a feminist writer, in the traditional sense, I don't portray them [women] as victims; neither do I give them good characters to contrast the evil ones. I'm not constructing a simplistic dichotomy" (*ibidem*). Although the author's understanding of 'feminist' is somewhat reductive here, her comments nonetheless gesture towards an analysis of *Dia* along similar lines to my reading of *Sibila*, according to which images of 'female authority' within a "Mediterranean" (or, more specifically, Algarvian) regional environment offer a productive line of enquiry.

I have selected *Dia* from Jorge's oeuvre given that, by the author's own admission, this novel has acted as a kind of model / template for her subsequent works of fiction: "até hoje nunca mais deixei de escrever esse livro" (Jorge

2007). This narrative – written in an unconventional form, devoid of chapters, and mainly (but not totally) using the period / full stop as its primary method of punctuation – takes place in the fictional Algarvian village of Vilamaninhos between the summers of 1973 and 1974. The novel's key structuring occurrence is the appearance, in the centre of the village, of a snake that, after it has apparently been beaten to death by the local woman Jesuína Palha, flies into the air and disappears. After many months of discussion amongst the villagers about possible explanations for this episode, news of the Carnations Revolution filters through to the community, and is then followed by the fleeting visit of soldiers from Lisbon as part of the *Movimento das Forças Armadas*'s *Campanha de Dinamização Cultural*, during the *Processo Revolucionário em Curso*. When the soldiers fail to conduct a meaningful exchange of perspectives and ideas with the villagers, or to provide an explanation for the flying snake incident, the locals disregard their brief appearance in the village, and continue to act as if nothing whatsoever has changed, at which point the diegesis concludes. Between the flying snake incident and the final scene, the diegesis oscillates between the intimate lives of different peasant households within the community, including those of Carminha Rosa and her daughter Carminha (illegitimate daughter of the former parish priest), who courts the young soldier Manuel Amado, followed by Sergeant Marinho, and finally the local Macário; the elderly José Jorge Júnior (descendent of the village's founder) and his wife Esperança Teresa, who constantly reminisce over their family's history; Branca and Pássaro Volante, the latter of whom represses and abuses his wife while she gradually acquires supernatural powers of perception and clairvoyance (while embroidering a dragon outline onto a quilt); the unmarried Jesuína Palha, who toils in the fields and appears to exercise control over other villagers' behaviour; Matilde, who runs the village store-cum-tavern that functions as the local meeting place; and José Maria, the non-native *cantoneiro* ("street cleaner") who pines for Branca, frequently criticises the intransigence of Vilamaninhos's inhabitants, and ultimately leaves the community in frustration.

Two main characteristics have guided previous readings of this narrative: (a) the 'under-development' and 'isolation' of Vilamaninhos, within a rural Algarvian diegetic environment; and (b) the sexual politics that can be inferred from the novel's various female characters (specifically, Carminha Rosa and

Carminha [Parda], Jesuína Palha, Esperança Teresa and Branca Volante). Concerning (a), according to Darlene Sadlier, this narrative "attempts to describe how a relatively primitive section of the [Portuguese] culture responds to modernity and revolution", by establishing a "preindustrial community" as its "protagonist", with a "certain 'folklorist' quality" (Sadlier 1989: 49-50). Subsequent scholars have overstated the apparent 'remoteness' and 'passivity' of this fictional village, arguing that "nothing ever happens" within the community (Silva 1999: 21-22), that *Dia* presents an "Algarve arcaico", "parado no tempo" by "isolamento" and "ignorância" (Gouveia 2010: 14; Saldanha 2020: 180), and that the novel's "medievalised" peasants "remain absorbed in their own internal dynamics and fundamentally distant from [urban] modernizing processes" (Ceroni 2016: 247). Helena Kaufman conducts an innovative reading of *Dia* along the lines of the socially (female; regional; class-based) 'marginal' and the literary 'minor' within late twentieth-century Portugal (cf. Kaufman 1997: 172-176), although she perpetuates the notion that Vilamaninhos's inhabitants are inherently under-developed, in binary opposition to Portugal's capital (cf. *idem*: 173). Only Ana Margarida Martins and Ana Paula Ferreira explicitly acknowledge *Dia*'s attempts to integrate "subaltern" and 'structurally excluded' agricultural communities into Portugal's national history, up to and including the *PREC* political crisis of the mid-1970s (Martins 2012: 11; Ferreira 2020: 55-56).

Regarding (b), the extent to which the female inhabitants of Vilamaninhos offer 'transgressive' potential has been hotly contested: Lígia Silva argues that, with the sole exception of Branca, these female characters "conve[y] an essentialist conception of gender, identifying women as victims of patriarchy who conform to their fixed roles as wives and mothers" (1999: 27), whereas Sara Ceroni's understanding of *Dia*'s fictional Algarve as a "temporalized and spatialized Middle Ages" (2016: 241-242) is associated with "a particular kind of medieval world dominated by patriarchal values in which women [except for the emancipatory Branca] are subaltern, under-represented and oppressed" (*idem*: 250-253). In contrast to Silva's arguably generalising analysis, Martins insightfully notes that depictions of peasant women and of the rural Algarve combine in this novel to produce a "strategic exoticism" of Portugal's southern coastal communities: "what gets exoticized is a southern

gendered local" (2012: 217). Notwithstanding this comment, most critics have neglected the intimate relationship between *Dia*'s regional diegetic environment and models of 'female authority'.

This study's objectives in examining Jorge's first novel will therefore be two-fold, in line with my analysis of *Sibila*. Firstly, I shall outline the narrative's construction of a regionalist ideological project that is explicitly *gendered*, by re-assessing Vilamaninhos's apparent 'isolation' from national and international events, and by highlighting the significance of *Dia*'s female characters in its depiction of continuity and change within specific areas of rural Portugal (in this case, the Algarve). Secondly, I will evaluate the narrative's portrayal of archetypes pertaining to female authority and / or agency within an explicitly regional environment: the supposed 'rural matriarch' – which, as in Bessa-Luís's novel, is a somewhat ambivalent figure – and the 'Sibylline prophetess' represented by Branca, who, like Quina, offers some potential for *future* female liberation, whilst being associated with a regional (Algarvian; rural and coastal) environment. In this gendered regionalist analysis of *Dia* – which, like my reading of *Sibila*, avoids an anthropological and deterministic understanding of 'regional women' – I argue that just as the novel's depiction of a close-knit Algarvian community contains explicitly *female* contours, its representatives of 'female authority' are clearly *regionalised*, with significant implications for the development of women's agency within post-authoritarian Portugal.

III.2.1 "Quão cheirosa a rusticidade": the 'remote' Algarve and gender

Firstly, one should consider the ways in which *Dia* constructs (and subverts) images of Algarvian distinctiveness and isolation *vis-à-vis* urban (specifically, Lisbon-based) 'civilisation'. In addition to topological details, including references to Faro, Silves and the Serra de Monchique, regional specificities are abundant throughout the novel. For instance, several scholars have noted Jorge's orthographic reproduction of the *algarvio* dialect, through certain vocabulary and through multiple characters' use of non-standard vowels in speech (cf. Magalhães 1987: 464; Sadlier 1989: XV; Nunes 2006: 86) – both of which also pervade the narratorial voice: "Esperança Teresa falava punhões e caragos, *lavantava* o objecto do chão" (Jorge 2010: 27, my emphasis).

Simultaneously, the author's descriptions of Vilamaninhos's domed, fragile and non-insulated buildings highlight the Algarve's unique traditional architecture[224] ("as paredes frágeis, abauladas como se quisessem desabar ao menor trovão. Feitas as casas para os dias de sol, apenas para os dias de sol" [*idem*: 74]), whereas the narrator's allusions to the structure of the village clearly evoke the Algarve's Moorish heritage:[225] "o resto da antiga [estrada], da macadamizada, sinuosa e às lombas, como correnteza de telhado mourisco" (*idem*: 79-80). Nevertheless, as effective as these literary techniques are in establishing an Algarvian atmosphere, it is equally apparent that Vilamaninhos's precise location within the region is never specified, and that Jorge "warn[s] the reader" against a wholly representational interpretation of the diegesis (Ferreira 1997: 231), particularly in *Dia*'s introductory paragraph, which defines the narrative as an "história" taking place within "[o] breve tempo de uma demonstração" (Jorge 2010: 9). Hence, in contrast to the *mimetic* aspirations of previous 'regionalist' and 'neo-realist' trends in Portuguese fiction,[226] Jorge presents a constructed version of Algarvian regional identity that is conscious of its own artificiality, and prompts the reader to constantly question and problematise this premise.

For instance, the oft-repeated notion that Vilamaninhos's inhabitants are blighted by 'rustic ignorance' and 'isolation' has some foundation, but there is a certain degree of ambivalence involved in this depiction of the community. Certainly, as Sadlier notes, the villagers often appear to have "no knowledge of current national events", with news of revolutionary occurrences elsewhere "ruptur[ing]" this state of affairs (1989: 53). This dynamic is evidenced by the considerable length of time that elapses between the 25th April 1974 coup and the peasants' awareness of that event, indicated in the text by Maria Rebôla's ignorance of the revolution as she cleans the local church "[n]a antevéspera do primeiro domingo de maio" (Jorge 2010: 130), followed by her subsequent

[224] For a comprehensive analysis of the Algarve's 'built identity' before and during the *Estado Novo* regime, see Ricardo Agarez, *Algarve Building: Modernism, Regionalism and Architecture in the South of Portugal, 1925-1965* (2016).

[225] See I.1. regarding Moorish control of the Algarve.

[226] See I.2.

announcement of this belated 'notícia' to José Jorge Júnior and Esperança Teresa: "O que faz vossemecê nessa triste posição? *No dia em que se acaba de saber* que soldados e grandes chefes fizeram uma revolta?" (*idem*: 155, my emphasis). Significantly, the date that Maria Rebôla focuses on is not the date of the Carnation Revolution, but the date upon which the villagers *learn* about that event, thereby suggesting that these peasants operate within a distinct (and *deferred*) temporality when compared with the rapid pace of revolutionary developments in the capital. This impression is strengthened by the narrator's comment that "Quem uma vez não saiu de Vilamaninhos não conheceu nem conhecerá a realidade da terra" (*idem*: 35), and by Jesuína Palha's conviction that the visiting MFA soldiers hail from a place "[o]nde os séculos têm outra idade" (*idem*: 178). This passage reinforces this notion of Vilamaninhos as akin to so-called "'remote areas' of the globe", which, according to Edwin Ardener, "have been perceived to exist on a different time-scale from the 'central' areas" (2012: 521).

Nonetheless, in other sections of the novel, what appears to be total obliviousness to circumstances outside the rural Algarve is, in fact, *qualified* ignorance. For example, although the inhabitants of Vilamaninhos are generally unaware of the Colonial Wars occurring at the time within Portuguese Africa ("Guerra, que guerra? Oh gente ignorante, será preciso ter um filho ou um afilhado no serviço para se poder falar dessas coisas sem dar explicações?" [*idem*: 55-56]), the elderly villager Manuel Gertrudes can *relate* to this conflict ("Eu percebo" [*idem*: 56]), due to his experience of fighting in the First World War sixty years prior – a conflict that he pointedly describes as "[a] *primeira* guerra deste século" (*idem*: 15, my emphasis), thereby demonstrating his awareness of subsequent armed conflicts. This notion that *Dia*'s rural community is not *entirely* insulated or removed from the outside world is further developed during the MFA soldiers' brief visit, during which Manuel Gertrudes recalls local teenage boys who had fled Vilamaninhos in order to avoid conscription into the armed forces: "Nesta terra de há uns tempos para cá não há soldados. Fugiram aos quinze anos, com receio de que a guarda os viesse buscar a cavalo para serem soldados à força" (*idem*: 180). Whether or not this comment is a direct allusion to conscription at the beginning of Portugal's Colonial Wars, Jorge clearly implies that this Algarvian peasant community is not as oblivious

to external political events and dynamics as it initially appears. Indeed, even the villagers' remarks on their own 'backwardness' ("Era o novo século que estava a começar. Muito atrasado nas nossas bandas" [*idem*: 56]) suggests that this an internalised psychological condition as opposed to an objective reality; the reader is forced to consider how the peasants *know* that they are under-developed / primitive, if their ignorance of external circumstances is as complete as they claim.

A similar level of ambiguity applies to the apparent tranquillity and passivity of Vilamaninhos throughout the novel, which is constantly evoked by the narrative voice ("Vilamaninhos, [...], cozida de quietude. Mansidão." [*idem*: 36]) and by the villagers themselves ("tão pequena é esta terra. E tão grande o seu silêncio" [*idem*: 200]), to the extent of hyperbole. Specifically, when Matilde the *taberneira* and Manuel Gertrudes lament the discernible lack of activity and progress at the end of the diegesis ("E afinal nada aconteceu. [...] Não há sinais. [...] Estou em crer que tudo aparece desligado" [*idem*: 202]), their remarks are arguably too categorical and crude to reflect the opinion of the author. The reader is therefore encouraged to re-evaluate the significance of localised events that take place in the village throughout the diegesis, such as the harrowing scenes of domestic violence between Pássaro and Branca Volante (cf. *idem*: 98-103). A particularly cryptic remark by the narrator ("No ar havia um sussurro das coisas acontecidas" [*idem*: 33]) underlines the latent activity of this supposedly immobile and detatched rural community. While the past participle "coisas acontecidas" does not specify whether these occurrences took place in the *recent* or *distant* past, the noun "sussurro" gestures towards dormant and/or unnoticed movement, thereby evoking Edwin Ardener's contention that "[r]emote areas are event-rich, or event-dense" (2012: 531): "Event-richness is like a small-scale, simmering, continuously generated set of singularities" (2012: 531).[227]

Furthermore, it is telling that the villagers disagree amongst themselves as to what should constitute a 'meaningful occurrence' within their community, as indicated by the following exchange between two (unnamed) peasants: "Em setembro nada acontece. É falso. Eu tive um filho em setembro" (*idem*: 55). This lack of consensus regarding the importance of local events is further emphasised

[227] See also IV.1. regarding Saramago's *Levantado*.

by Jesuína Palha's obsessive focus on the flying snake episode, which is juxtaposed with calls to mourn Carminha's deceased fiancé: "E Manuel Gertrudes disse. Pensem antes no soldadinho morto. E Jesuína Palha disse. Pensem antes nos dias que se seguiram ao voo da cobra" (*idem*: 117). Above all, Jesuína's speech during the soldiers' visit, demanding an explanation of the previous year's incident ("Jesuína insistiu. Como é possível que passem por aqui e não expliquem o que se passou nesta terra?" [*idem*: 182]), underlines the priority given to internal activity over external events, even when the fantastical takes precedence over the factual. Palha's outburst, which uses the demonstrative pronoun "esta" (in contrast to revolutionary Lisbon, described by the villagers as "essa terra" [*idem*: 155]), certainly represents "a crucial moment in the narrative", during which Vilamaninhos competes with the visiting MFA soldiers to decide "who is the subject of history" (Martins 2012: 207), and, crucially, *on whose territory* moments of fundamental significance have occurred.

Fundamental to *Dias*'s re-centering of this fictional community's political agency is the mechanical image of the "alavanca" [lever], which emerges at two key moments in the diegesis. Firstly, this term is used disparagingly by the peasants in reference to early-twentieth century 'modernisation' (namely, motorised public transport, which had received a cool reception in the village): "Uma era de coisas rápidas, toda feita de rodas e alavancas, roncos de pressa e velocidade. Mas muita pessoa enjoou" (Jorge 2010: 56). Later, the MFA soldiers extol the *vilamaninhenses*'s role in the revolutionary process as "Nossos parceiros. Alavanca dos prodígios" (*idem*: 181), demonstrating the soldiers' reliance on concrete lived experience to complement the abstract political theory that they have digested: "nos move um i de al. Perfilhado por muita gente. E somos capazes de dar a vida pela teoria" (*idem*: 180). In this way, the simple dichotomy that critics have established between Portugal's developed capital and its 'primitive'/ 'remote' / 'disengaged' rural settlements (cf. Ceroni 2016: 245; Saldanha 2020: 182) can and should be questioned; Jorge's narrative consistently strives to undermine the national authorities' presumptions of superiority over the country's apparently docile, "apathetic" and disinterested rural populace (Riegelhaupt 1979: 187-188).

Concomitantly, Jorge establishes a tension between the peasant protagonists of Vilamaninhos and representatives of Lisbon-based authority, which is depicted as an historically recurring antagonism. Specifically, José Jorge Júnior's frequent tales of his ancestors reveal altercations between local villagers and 'emissaries' from the national capital; his great-great-grandfather, for instance, had abandoned the neaby village of Vilamurada, due to soldiers from Lisbon repeatedly 'passing through' on their way to Silves or Faro, engaging in pillaging and (implied) rape: "As tropas dum rei que morava em Lisboa passavam por ali quatro ou cinco vezes no ano, a galope, para as bandas de Silves e Faro. Pilhavam a criação, pisavam a salsa" (Jorge 2010: 31). José's (repeated) emphasis on the fact that those soldiers had been sent by 'a king residing in Lisbon' denotes a significant degree of resentment towards centralised government's incursion into the Algarve – a region that, was nominally considered to be a separate jurisdiction from the rest of continental Portugal until 1910.[228] Moreover, José's ancestor is described as categorically refusing to recognise the Monarch's authority within this territory, when a soldier comes to arrest him for having founded a settlement without an "alvará real": "disse que nunca tinha visto semelhante rei nas redondezas, e a existir, que nunca lhe tinha dado nada. Antes tirado. [...]. Por isso, que se era rei, que *reinasse na terra onde morava*" (*idem*: 34, my emphasis). At this early stage in the diegesis, then, the author posits Vilamaninhos as an independent political entity within which rustic locals are hostile to representatives of centralised power.

With this historical precedent established, José proceeds to outline the continuation of government abuse and iniquitous territorial power relations into the twentieth century, as indicated by the royal soldiers' continued pillaging until the fall of the Monarchy ("continuaram a roubar enquanto quiseram. Até que veio a república" [*idem*: 33]) and by the incursion of outsiders illegally prospecting for water resources during the 1960s, with the implicit support of the *Estado Novo*: "E pergunti. Oh vizinhos, e quem passou autorização à gente? E eles. Autorização? [...]. Você bem sabe que em Lisboa governa gente que não proíbe que se procure a água. Desde que as custas sejam por conta dos

[228] See I.1.

interessados" (*idem*: 92). In this way, Jorge's novel corresponds with the fiction of Aquilino Ribeiro and José Saramago in its denunciation of so-called *caciquismo* and corrupt political practices, and of the "highly centralized" manner in which the *Estado Novo* regime governed Portugal's regions, without engaging with or consulting local populations regarding key decisions, such as the exploitation of natural resources (Riegelhaupt 1979: 168).[229]

This dismissive manner in which representatives of Lisbon-based authorities treat marginal rural communities is complemented through Jorge's consistently ironic approach to the transcription of dialogue throughout the novel. Specifically, *Dia*'s tendency to "manipulat[e]" certain vocabulary in the novel, by dividing such terms as "li ber da de" into individual syllables, is not restricted to the "key words of revolutionary propaganda" articulated by the MFA soldiers (Ceroni 2016: 256, n.8). In fact, this strategy is repeated over the course of the diegesis and in relation to distinct time periods: it is seen in José Jorge Júnior's pronunciation of the "al va rá" that his ancestor had failed to request from the royal government (Jorge 2010: 34), and it appears in a remark made to José during the 1960s, imploring him to write a letter to the "e di li da de" [municipal council], to which he replies scornfully: "Qual quê? Mas a carta. Estrumeira com ela. Esse tal presidente. Se é que existia" (*idem*: 93). By the time of the soldiers' arrival, then, a precedent has already been established according to which Vilamaninhos's inhabitants are cognitively and linguistically alienated from terminology pertaining to local and national government bureaucracy. Accordingly, the supposed harbingers of revolutionary change that visit the villagers towards the end of the diegesis are posited as the mere descendants of earlier forces that had occupied and/or repressed agricultural communities within the Algarve: the MFA soldiers' resemblance to the "tropas do rei" of previous centuries is evidenced by the novel's use of the adjective "garboso" to describe *both* military forces (*idem*: 34, 178), whereas the villagers' reaction to the 'vision' of the MFA soldiers makes this association between the Monarchy's emissaries and the revolutionary troops explicit: "Todos tinham a certeza que

[229] Controversy regarding natural resource extraction in the Algarve has continued into the twenty-first century, as evidenced by a recent legal dispute between oil prospectors and environmental campaigners (cf. Idálio 2018).

desde o tempo dos reis nunca mais se vira de igual" (*idem*: 178). The final equivalence that is established between previous royal delegations and representatives of Lisbon's revolution-era governments can be detected in the MFA soldiers' departure towards more 'consequential' settlements in the Algarve ("Como se estivessem de partida para Faro" [*idem*: 182]), which directly links them to their monarchical predecessors, who had fleetingly passed through Vilamurada on their journey to "Silves e Faro" (*idem*: 31).

Alongside this suggestion of historical continuity between successive generations of centralised authority, Jorge's novel constructs a geographical equivalence between the apparently 'remote' Vilamaninhos and locations of significance for Portugal's imperial history. Firstly, this is evidenced during the long monologue of Sargento Marinho (the unsuccessful courtier of Carminha Parda whose name evokes the "Ultramar"), which establishes an *apparent* contrast between Portuguese Africa and his impressions and the rural Algarve: "Lá, meus senhores, a vida é outra" (*idem*: 142). This dynamic is emphasised by the sergeant's repeated juxtaposition of the adverbs "lá" and "aqui", in an almost dialectical fashion, between two (seemingly) "different worlds" (Sadlier 1989: 66). Nonetheless, Jorge introduces an element of ambivalence to this sequence, through narratorial irony that forces the reader to question Marinho's clear-cut dichotomy between Vilamaninhos and the contested colonies: "*Parecia* ser o fim do conto. Sobre o mundo distante" (Jorge 2010: 139, my emphasis). Simultaneously, the sergeant's descriptions of Portugal's African territory explicitly coincide with certain sensory aspects of the Algarvian countryside, such as the sunsets and aridity therein: "Lá. Os sol-postos são sempre amarelos *como vai ser o de hoje*. As tardes mornas e bafientas. Abre-se a boca para se engolir o ar e de pesado nem chega ao bofe" (*idem*: 138, my emphasis). Furthermore, Marinho's complaints of putrid smells and irritating insects in Portuguese Africa ("E tem de se tapar o nariz de tal forma cheira a podre e a azedo. E os bichos" [*idem*: 135-136]) are not particularly far removed from the irritating fauna and unpleasant odours of the environment surrounding Vilamaninhos, alluded to at several points in the diegesis: "Viriam as pragas. Esses bichos seriam tantos como os figos. [...]. Viam-se sair da terra. Da água. Do estrume das paredes" (*idem*: 46); "O palhuço da rua cheirava a estrume" (*idem*: 54). In this manner, *Dia* ironically subverts *Estado Novo*-era

propagandistic slogans that sought to portray the Portuguese Empire as a singular geographical identity ("Portugal uno e indivisível do Minho a Timor"), through the equivalence it draws between *African* and *Algarvian* rustic environments.

Above all, a key excerpt midway through the novel demonstrates Jorge's eagerness to "inscribe" this fictional Algarvian rural community within the "global south" (Martins 2012: 210), through the direct trajectory that it establishes between Vilamaninhos, Portugal's southern coastline and the African coast, which is depicted as the most 'extreme south' possible. This passage outlines the connection between Carminha Parda (sleeping within her village home), who dreams about her soldier fiancé Manuel Amado (stationed thousands of miles away in Portuguese Africa):

> Para além das casas, a estrada. Para além da estrada, o mato. Para além do mato os figueirais, e as outras terras, e as outras ainda. Para além de todas as terras, o mar. Para além do mar o sul, e no caminho do sul mais extremo, o bojo da terra, e para além do bojo da terra. […]. Ainda para além do sul tão extremo, que já passa a ser norte em relação ao que ainda resta, nessa direcção. (Jorge 2010: 109)

In its relentless focus on southward movement, this quotation establishes a geographical continuum between the *rural* Algarve, the Algarvian *coast*, the 'ocean' and the (ambivalently defined) "sul", eventually arriving at the "sul mais extremo" and *beyond*; as Ana Paula Ferreira notes, such passages in Jorge's fiction suggest that she writes from southern Portugal to a more comprehensive geo-political 'South' (cf. 2009: 31). Moreover, the author explicitly ties the 'remote' community of Vilamaninhos to Portugal's legacy of global maritime exploration, in the narrator's reference to Cabo Bojador: "o bojo da terra, e para além do bojo da terra".[230]

More broadly, it is through Jorge's strategic deployment of 'maritime' and 'oceanic' metaphors throughout the novel that the author constructs a

[230] Gil Eanes's passing of the Cape Bojador (Morocco) in 1434 is regarded as an important milestone in Portuguese maritime exploration and in European commerce.

productive dialectical relationship between distance and proximity, in relation to Vilamaninhos's contact with external socio-political dynamics. While certain scholars have emphasised the *detachment* of *Dia*'s rural community from the Algarvian coastline (cf. Magalhães 1987: 464; Serra 2013: 110, 166), the reality is somewhat more complicated. On the one hand, it is significant that several villagers demonstrate an ignorance of the sea's true nature, with Eusébio Volante innocently comparing it to a wheat field ("O mar é como um trigal cor do céu, azul" [Jorge 2010: 107]), and Matilde's comic unfamiliarity with marine creatures, such as the sharks mentioned at the end of the diegesis: "O arrieiro disse. Dizem que nas praias deu à costa um tubarão vivo. E Matilde Santiago disse. Isso é bicho de terra ou de mar? E Macário disse. É de mar. Mas em apanhando os de terra, trinca-os como a gente a figos" (*idem*: 200). On the other hand, when the MFA soldiers arrive the gestures of the village children suggests prior familiarity with the ocean, in that they simulate swimming strokes due to their belief that 'the sea is arriving': "Sentiam que o mar ia chegar atrás dum barco de velas alvadias e soltas, desfraldadas à levíssima brisa da tarde. E também começaram a esbracejar, esboçando gestos de natação" (*idem*: 178). This maritime imagery can also be observed in the 'submerged world' from which Vilamaninhos's dwellings appear to emerge, as Maria Rebôla cleans the abandoned church and the sun suddenly appears: "as casas apareceram resplandecentes de musgo e sombras de antiga cal. Como se acabassem de ser recuperadas de um mundo submarino" (*idem*: 131). This passage – which compares the community's buildings to the mythical submerged civilization of Atlantis –, directly contrasts with the village's arid conditions for, as José Jorge Júnior's monologue outlines, Vilamaninhos has had to contend with a dry river bed for more than a century. While Branca's sudden ability to *hear* the ocean waves having never *seen* them ("Branca ouve, mas nunca viu" [*idem*: 119]) is a key milestone in her personal transformation,[231] the novel's repeated references to its "barrocal" setting provides a further layer of ambiguity to the village's positionality. Given that, in Algarvian lexicon, the term "barrocal" signifies a "zona de transição" between the region's "litoral" and "serra" areas (cf. Região de Turismo do Algareve 2018), Jorge's emphasis on the barrocal's geographical

[231] To be discussed in more detail shortly.

liminality ("E o barrocal de carrasco e tomilho cheiroso e cinzento, fica mais lilás na banda do mar" [*idem*: 12]) can be read as an effort to problematise Vilamaninhos's apparent isolation. Hence, Jorge's narrative echoes Ardener's seemingly contradictory observation that "remote areas are in constant contact with the world" (2012: 327-328), through an ambivalently situated diegetic environment that evinces multiple degrees of connectedness with global dynamics and events.

At this juncture, it would be helpful to turn to the multiple ways in which *Dia*'s regionalist ideological discourse is *gendered*, insofar as the behaviour and descriptions of multiple female characters in this novel interact with idealised preconceptions of regional environments within continental Portugal. A certain degree of "strategic exoticism" (Martins 2012: 216) can be observed, for example, in Matilde's view from the door of her *taverna*, of the 'mysterious' Serra de Monchique landscape on the horizon: "A taberneira à porta a ver o sol meter-se com acenos de luz atrás do risco cinzento e violeta de Monchique como fumegante" (Jorge 2010: 143). However, as Martins acknowledges, "Jorge's uses of exoticism are not easily assimilated into any given system of exoticism or strategic exotic register" (2012: 217), meaning that alternative ways of conceptualising Algarvian women's relationship to their rural environment must be considered. At the beginning of the diegesis, for instance, one should note the highly sexualised manner in which the narrator describes Carminha Parda's view from her window of Vilamaninhos's rustic dwellings ("Como se uma nuvem de ocre e terracota líquida tivesse vindo das partes do mar abrir as pernas sobre a rua do empedrado" [*idem*: 12]) and her desire for an erotic release: "Apetece-lhe estender-se. Mostrar-se e sacudir o pólen da sua meninice Abrir a blusa, desapertar os atilhos que lhe seguram os seios. Adejar as ancas e dizer aqui aqui" (*idem*: 14). This passage, in which evocative descriptions of Vilamaninhos's natural surroundings overlap with allusions to the female anatomy and to Carminha's sexual desire, can be read as a yet another self-conscious, critical reflection on *Estado Novo*-era cultural production's tendency to equate "Woman" with "natural" domesticity, in a "fetish[ised]" manner (Ferreira 1996: 139-140).

Indeed, over the course of the novel Jorge emphasises the internalisation of this bucolic 'fetish' by Vilamaninhos's female residents, through several

characters' determination to maintain an idyllic aesthetic within the village. This tendency is evidenced most explicitly in Maria Rebôla's cleaning of the community's abandoned church, in the hope that an authentically 'rustic' fragrance will one day satisfy the Prior arriving from Faro: "Quando o senhor prior de Faro chegar, [...], há-de abrir as narinas para dizer. Quão cheirosa, irmãos. Quão cheirosa a rusticidade" (*idem*: 131). Moreover, a prolonged narrative arc within *Dia* involves the importance attributed to 'tidiness' within Vilamaninhos, within several scenes: Carminha Parda's preoccupation with cleaning the "detritos" from her windows (*idem*: 15); Jesuína Palha's jealousy of the well-kept street outside the Carminhas' house ("sua rua, Carminha, é a mais limpa de Vilamaninhos, e nem em Faro eu vi ruas assim" [*idem*: 40]); Carminha Rosa's rush to beautify her house and garden before Manuel Amado's arrival ("[É preciso] [d]estrinçar e unir esses despojos caseiros que atapetam o quintal e o transformam em coisa sórdida, imprópria para os olhos de quem vem de terras onde a limpeza terá um cheiro a permanente alfazema e rosmaninho" [*idem*: 60]); finally, Jesuína Palha's observation that the Carminhas' standards of cleanliness have slipped after Carminha Parda's various romantic engagements: "Então onde está a limpeza desta rua?" (*idem*: 167). As Ferreira notes, Jesuína's insistence on 'asseio' here directly derives from the salazarist dictatorship's "propaganda da boa dona-de-casa guardiã moral da pequena e grande família portuguesa" and its "consenso em torno a sua responsabilidade pela limpeza e arranjo do lar" (2020: 57-58). There is a significant contradiction in these characters' attitudes, however, in that Jesuína's standards of hygiene are based on her experiences in Faro and the tales she has heard of the national capital (cf. Jorge 2010: 165-167), whereas Carminha Rosa's attempts to adorn her rustic home are designed to meet Manuel Amado's external (and, presumably, *urban*) expectations of fragrant cleanliness. Hence, Jorge problematises bucolic, ruralist discourse that, during the authoritarian regime of previous decades, had consistently associated femininity with an idealised domesticity.

In addition to this subversion of a previously hegemonic ideological discourse, *Dia* explores significant socio-economic and demographic transformations within post-1960 rural Portugal (cf. Ferreira 2020: 55) through an explicitly *gendered* critical lens. For instance, key female characters in the

novel are associated with noteworthy socio-economic changes within the Algarve during the 1960s and 1970s, such as the burgeoning tourist industry which, despite its concentration within 'luxury resorts' on the region's coastline, had already benefited from some domestic and international tourist infrastructure further inland by 1973-4 (cf. Gouveia 2010: 36; Agarez 2013: 723).[232] Specifically, when Jesuína, Branca and Matilde discuss how to "atrair aqui os passantes da nova estrada" (Jorge 2010: 96), the "resto de ceifeira" outlines a specific plan to attract visitors to their community: "Eu queria fazer um feito que desse para todo o sempre. De tal maneira que obrigasse todas as excursões que vão para Faro e Portimão, a fazerem escalada aqui" (*ibidem*). Regardless of the feasibility of this proposal, Jesuína's remark highlights her awareness of, and engagement with, patterns of economic development and transformations of rural space in the later years of the salazarist regime.

Simultaneously, the novel alludes to the emigration and abandonment that has affected Vilamaninhos, using vocabulary related to maternal neglect and declining levels of procreation: "A povoação vai ficando um ovo emurchecido. Que fede, gorado, e não gera" (Jorge 2010: 18-19). Aside from this comparison of the village's progenitor to a 'mother hen' that is seemingly becoming barren, the author establishes a direct link between Vilamaninhos's survival and *fertility,* as evidenced by the frequent references to the village's river that, before drying up, had provided bountiful sustenance for the community: "Só em baixo o rio. Grande sulco aberto. É uma lembrança de coisa passada, onde foi possível plantar laranjeiras. Colher laranjas" (*idem*: 105). Nonetheless, there is a note of ambivalence in Jorge's apparent 'feminisation' of this Algarvian village, which is particularly noticeable in Sargento Marinho's monologue. Specifically, when Marinho describes Portuguese Africa as a 'masculinised' space in direct contrast to Vilamaninhos ("Lá. Tudo é macho. [...] Depois aqui" [Jorge 2010: 135-136; cf. Saldanha 2020: 178]), his argument is tempered by the fact that, as mentioned, the similarities between these two settings rival their differences. In this way, *Dia* can be said to highlight (and contest) male attempts to ascribe

[232] Jorge's subsequent novel *O cais das merendas* (1982) deals with tourism's problematic impact on the Algarve in a more systematic manner.

arbitrary genders and gendered imagery to geographical locations, as critiqued by Massey.

That said, female protagonists in the narrative are often associated with the preservation of this Algarvian village's agricultural heritage: while male characters such as João Martins and José Maria bemoan the decline of farming practices ("Cada vez a gente se sente mais perdidos. Já ninguém lavra [*idem*: 87]; "Em breve ninguém saberá o que é um arado" [*idem*: 124]), it is Jesuína Palha, rather than male *lavradores*, who emerges as the final remnant of agricultural labour within Vilamaninhos, as she toils in "o seu único campo de trigo" (*idem*: 174) on the outskirts of the village. Tellingly, the narrator repeatedly refers to Jesuína as a "resto de ceifeira" (*idem*: 174, 175) – the remanant of a (female) reaper or reapers – which, as scholars have noted, depicts this character as the last surviving representative of a declining agricultural profession (cf. Serra 2013: 245; Ferreira 2020: 59). This notion of irrevocable loss is reinforced by Jesuína's sudden awareness at the end of the diegesis that she is going blind ("Só agora reparo que ando a perder a vista. Começa a escurecer mais cedo" [Jorge 2010: 203]), which offers two potential readings: that this character's declining vision will henceforth prevent her from carrying out agricultural tasks, or that she has previously been unaware of the extent to which her labour has become redundant. In either case, through Jorge's characterisation of Jesuína Palha the author mediates her commentary on socio-economic transformation within the rural Algarve through a distinctly *female* perspective; just as Quina is depicted as "toma[ndo] conta do nosso passado de lavradores" in Bessa-Luís's *Sibila*, Jesuína (unsuccessfully) attempts to conserve 'archaic' Algarvian agricultural practices and traditions, in the face of accelerating demographic change. Thus, Jorge's ironic treatment of the dictatorship's 'fetishished' equivalence between 'Woman' and rural landscape finds a conduit in the fate of *Dias*'s most explicit (and most 'authoritative') peasant character.

III.2.2 Algarvian female authority: failures and successes

It is in reference to *Dia*'s portrayal of Jesuína (amongst other female protagonists) that I shall now turn to another key aspect of Jorge's gendered

regionalist discourse: her critical exploration of various potential models of female 'authority' and agency within this fictional Algarvian rural setting, through multiple female archetypes. Firstly, it is notable that Vilamaninhos, like *Sibila*'s Entre-Douro-e-Minho agricultural dynasty, has been described as a "sociedade matriarcal" (Serra 2013: 224), despite ample evidence to suggest that *Dias*'s fictional community is only an *apparent* matriarchy. Certainly, Jesuína Palha in particularly is placed in a position of local leadership from the very beginning of the diegesis, when she bombastically arrives on the Carminhas' street at the head of a group of villagers, to recount the tale of her encounter with the flying snake: "Jesuína Palha. *À frente*. Galgava de três em três as lajes como se viesse cumprir uma missão de urgência. Atrás dela muitas sem lenço. [...]. Em fileira miúda, rapazes e crianças vinham correndo lestos, acompanhando o passo da subida" (Jorge 2010: 19, my emphasis). Later, the character is described in similarly pompous terms as the vocal leader of a group of villagers reacting to news of the Carnation Revolution: "O barulho já é de passos distintos sobre as lajes da calçada, e as vozes são altas, não sendo porém nenhum nem tão, nem mais poderosa do que a de Jesuína Palha" (*idem*: 164). Finally, it is Jesuína who prevents the visiting MFA soldiers from leaving and aggressively insists that they provide an explanation for the flying snake incident almost a year before: "não puderam avançar, porque Jesuína Palha, de um pulo, postou-se *em frente*. E disse. E a cobra? [...]. E Jesuína insistiu. Como é possível que passem por aqui e não expliquem o que se passou nesta terra? [...]. É forçoso que falem" (*idem*: 182, my emphasis). Here, Jesuína pushes herself to the 'forefront' of this rural community once again, to demand clarification and resolution on her village's behalf. In addition, this character's depiction as an authoritative 'defender' of Vilamaninhos can be likened to both Bessa-Luís's portrayal of Quina in *Sibila* and the goddess-like "earth-mother" figure described by Bell (1986: 473) in terms of her rapport with the surrounding fauna: "Agora Jesuína Palha sentia-se senhora do silêncio e das cigarras, e de todos os bichos miúdos, que andando à solta, espreitavam o invasor. Uma mulher de preto, munida de arma de metal. Recurvada" (Jorge 2010: 175). This excerpt posits Jesuína as a simultaneously commanding, menacing and 'telluric' figure of female authority within this narrative, in the vein of a guerrilla fighter lying in wait for the 'invading force' of the MFA.

Nevertheless, Jorge's portrayal of this character as a 'matriarchal' archetype is arguably parodic, as indicated by the humouristic name Jesuína Palha: a female Christ / Messiah figure, which is nevertheless associated with straw and evokes the grotesque image of a scarecrow. Equally important are this character's "comportamentos tipicamente masculinos" (Serra 2013: 224); on several occasions, Jesuína is described as having 'virile' characteristics that liken her to *Sibila*'s Quina, as can be observed in her body language while she recounts the tale of the flying snake to the MFA visitors: "E Jesuína Palha, fazendo balançar as penduras das orelhas, dez vezes mais varonil do que um homem, batia no peito em frente do carro dos soldados" (*idem*: 182). In addition, her sanctimonious moral judgement of other female villagers' sexual behaviour is evidenced at several moments in the diegesis, particularly in her openly-expressed opinions of Carminha Rosa and Carminha Parda:

> Isto é o sinal próprio do mal das mulheres que abrem a porta a qualquer um. [...]. A quantos oh Carminha? A quantos tu já deste a pinquinha?" [...] eu que apenas sou vizinha, culpo-a. [...], já ela levantava as saias diante do pobre do padre, mostrando-lhe a pêra. Vocês que são homens me dirão. O que faria um padre junto duma visão desse tipo? (*Idem*: 116, 182)

As several scholars note, such exclamations by Jesuína cement her position within this community as a 'guardian of (ultra-conversative) moral values' (cf. Besse 2015: 30), defending key elements of a patriarchal – rather than *matriarchal* – social *status quo* (cf. Silva 1999: 25; Ceroni 2016: 250-251), such as the censorship of overt female sexuality through stigmatic shame.[233] In this way, Jorge's narrative comically upends 'matriarchal' stereotypes that, from the Entre-Douro-e-Minho to the Algarve, have repeatedly been associated with 'rural' / 'agricultural' women in anthropological discourse.

Above all, Jesuína's shortcomings as a supposed archetype of female authority within this fictional Algarvian village are explored through the novel's

[233] See, for instance, the dictatorial authorities' censorship of *Novas cartas portuguesas*, on account of its "conteúdo insanavelmente pornográfico" (Vidal 1974: 24).

key structuring event: her attempt to kill a snake which nonetheless survives and flies away. Specifically, this character's intense fixation throughout the diegesis on the flying snake incident and on its significance ("Eu queria tê-la matado. Mas os meus braços não têm já o viço da mocidade" [*idem*: 37]; "Pensem antes nos dias que se seguiram ao voo da cobra" [*idem*: 116]) can be interpreted as an attempt to equal (or *compete with*) Vilamaninhos's patriarchal foundations in the guise of a "female St. George" (Sadlier 1989: 53-54), given that José Jorge's ancestor had killed a snake several generations before, and had been likened to the legendary dragon-slaying saint: "és parente de São Jorge, meu filho" (Jorge 2010: 30). If, as Martins persuasively argues, *Dias*'s flying snake can be read as a "phallic symbol" (2012: 200), then Jesuína's actions and behaviour throughout the narrative represent an (ultimately fruitless) "assertion of power and domination [...] *above* the male dynasty of which José Jorge Júnior is the hierarchical guardian" (*idem*: 201), and a "desire for the authentic (phallus) which plagues the Vilamaninhenses" (*idem*: 206). In this way, Jesuína Palha holds some affinity with *Sibila*'s Quina who, as mentioned earlier, consistently attempts to "possess the phallus" within her local community.

It is not in terms of a simplistic 'matriarchal' stereotype, then, that *Dia* presents a model of female authority and political agency. Rather, Jorge establishes a productive tension between 'matrilineal' customs and 'patrilineal' generational traditions within Vilamaninhos – whose name can be read as a sardonic reference to 'brotherhood' through its use of the diminutive ("maninhos"). On the one hand, José Jorge Júnior's tale of his family's (and his community's) past can be regarded as the conservation of a patrilineal foundational myth ("Esse é o caminho empedrado, chama-se ladeira, corre de norte a sul e tem a dedada do avô de um dos passados de José Jorge Júnior. [...] O fundador" (*idem*: 80), which contain several "ressonâncias bíblicas" (Serra 2013: 174). Addressing his wife Esperança, José begins by recalling his great-great-grandfather who was apparently discovered abandoned in a basket – an allusion to the discovery of Moses on the banks of the River Nile in the Book of Exodus: "O avô do avô desse meu avô, que comigo andou ao colo, nasceu das ervinhas. Encontraram-no dentro dum balaio como se fosse uma mão-cheia de figos para dar a porcos" (Jorge 2010: 29). José then employs the Biblical language of 'begetting' (cf. Sadlier 1989: 64-65), to outline the patrilineal

progression of his clan: "E assim José Jorge cresceu, ajuntou-se e gerou a Manuel Jorge. E Manuel Jorge gerou a José Jorge. E José Jorge a Manuel Jorge que foi meu avô, e meu avô, Esperancinha, gerou a José Jorge que foi meu pai, que me gerou a mim" (Jorge 2010: 30). On the other hand, there is clear irony in the novel's portrayal of José Jorge Júnior here, for several reasons: (a) that the character never once mentions or acknowledges *maternity* in this detailed genealogy of his male ancestors; (b) that the person who makes the founding of his family dynasty possible is an elderly, 'witch-like' woman who discovers the first member of the Jorge family ("Uma velha muito velha, mais velha que saragoça" [*idem*: 30]); (c) that José Jorge consciously assumes the role of the village's self-proclaimed, Abraham-like patriarch –"Eu, seu pai, sentado com sandálias de abraão a receber os vindouros" (*idem*: 85) – in similar terms to Bessa-Luís's depiction of Quina in *Sibila*.

In parallel to this systematic undermining of José Jorge's 'patriarchal' pretensions, it is telling that this character's wife, Esperança Teresa, overtly challenges her husband's 'patrilineal' discourse, by frequently interrupting his monologue with her own memories of childbirth (particularly the birth of her still-born daughter): "eu doze vezes di à luz, José. Tu te alembras?" (*idem*: 30), thereby demonstrating her immersion in a "maternal past" (Sadlier 1989: 64). To reinforce this point, Esperança insists on the fundamental role of her own motherhood and maternal nurturing in the Jorge family dynasty, which she considers José Jorge to have disregarded:

> Tu costumavas dizer que eu deitei-os ao mundo. Mas que todos saíram de ti. Grande mentira. Tu esqueces-te José Jorge, que a gente é como a galinha? O galo gala. Mas a galinha põe o ovo, choca o ovo, bica o ovo, ajuda o pintainho a nascer. [...]. Ela chama-o para beber, comer e passeá-lo. E agacha-se em cima dele quando chove. (Jorge 2010: 34).

Esperança's deployment in this passage of 'mother hen' and 'egg' imagery to encapsulate her maternal responsibilities is highly symbolic: although her monologue recalls the aforementioned narratorial reference to demographic decline in Vilamaninhos, through the image of a 'rotting' egg ("um ovo

emurchecido. Que fede, gorado, e não gera"), it also emphasises (through a zoological simile) the centrality of the human female in producing and rearing successive generations within a family dynasty. In this way, *Dia* constructs a 'matrilineal' counterpoint to patriarchal social structures, which does not rely on superficial stereotypes of masculine women deemed to be 'matriarchs', but instead on the creation of an alternative female genealogy to rival male dynastic practices. Nonetheless, this evocation of a female genealogical line is qualified by the rotting egg metaphor, which suggests that this dynasty must contend with a state of decay or an existential threat.

The second method used by Jorge to challenge patriarchal models and to promote a positive image of 'female authority' in an Algarvian environment is her depiction of Branca Volante, described by several critics as the most transgressive female figure within the novel (cf. Ferreira 1997: 233; Ceroni 2016: 252-4). This character, whose first name suggests a new beginning, a 'revelation', or "uma ideia de luminosidade que remete para o celestial" (Serra 2013: 147), succeeds in overcoming her husband's domination by assuming supernatural powers, such as the ability to foresee future events, hear distant sounds, sleep with her eyes open and read minds (cf. Jorge 2010: 87, 173). Significantly, Branca's developing supernatural abilities are explicitly tied to her embroidering of a dragon onto a quilt – a dragon that appears to gradually come alive at the same pace that her assertiveness and autonomy develops: "De que lhe servia a colcha, esse animal feroz e escamudo com que lhe havia entretido os dias? Quanto mais a prendera mais a soltara por um recanto escondido da liberdade. Imparável" (*idem*: 173). In this passage, Jorge gestures towards the 'hidden freedom' of women residing within cloistered and isolated environments, whilst hinting at the *possibility* of substantial liberation through the adjective "imparável". In this sense, Branca's embroidered dragon – created by a patient and steady female hand, over many years (cf. *idem*: 99) – can be seen as a legitimate challenge to the "phallic" flying snake that preoccupies the village's defenders of patriarchal norms (cf. Martins 2012: 203); while this character is depicted as 'snake-like' on certain occasions ("Branca rota e nua, ágil como a cobra que vira voar sobre a cabeça de toda a família da rua, ergueu meio corpo" [Jorge 2010: 102]), her intimidating power over Pássaro develops independently of the villagers' commotion surrounding the "cobra".

Regarding the specific supernatural abilities that the dragon bestows upon Branca, one should contrast this character's capacity to make concrete (and accurate) predictions with the vague sentiment of 'premonition' articulated by her fellow villagers. Although the theme of *prolepsis* and *prediction* is introduced in the novel's prologue / introduction, with the narrator declaring "A todos atribuirei os eventos previstos" (*idem*: 9), Jorge's use of the verb "prever" is soon replaced by the more ambivalent "pressentir", which multiple male and female *vilamaninhenses* deploy throughout *Dia* (cf. Magalhães 1987: 463) to articulate their 'sense' of future events:

> Pressentimos que a cobra não era só cobra e tivemos medo de a executar. [...] Sentiam o pressentimento. O pressentimento que antecede os grandes acontecimentos. [...] Eu tenho um grande pressentimento. Que uma nova maravilha vai acontecer sobre o redondo do mundo. Uma gente nova vai povoar a terra. Purificados. (*Idem*: 22, 45, 98)

Indeed, this repeated notion of "pressentimento" is shown to have limited potency, as Jesuína's inability to anticipate her own future demonstrates: "Ah punhão. Desde ontem que me cheirava a pressentimento de coisas. Andava assim desalmada mas nunca pensi que uma coisa dessas viesse a acontecer-me" (*idem*: 24). In contrast, Branca describes her power to anticipate events within the village using the more exact and categorical terms "antever", "prever" and "previsão do futuro" (*idem*: 197). By the end of the diegesis, Branca is able to provide a precise prediction of her community's future: that José Jorge will die in the coming months, that Macário will impregnate Carminha Parda, and that 'outsiders' will eventually arrive (*idem*: 197-198). Most significantly, Branca's growing *prophetic* abilities are linked to her incremental and *unprecedented* assertiveness and power over her abusive husband Pássaro, which is demonstrated when she unexpectedly fights back against him, to the stupefaction of their neighbours: "[os vizinhos] nunca tinham pensado que Branca, uma só vez na vida, fosse capaz de outro gesto senão o da obediência, comedimento e castidade" (*idem*: 103). In turn, just as *Sibila*'s protagonist is mistrusted and belittled by her male relatives Inácio Lucas and Bernardo Sanches, Branca's

capabilities are depicted as disturbing and threatening to her peasant husband, who disparages and downplays them: "A tua virtude, Branca, de ouvir para além dos outros é falsa fantasia. [...]. Ou tu és louca ou estás tísica e forçoso é que te separes dos teus filhos e de mim próprio" (*idem*: 71).

It is precisely in this sense that scholars have labelled Branca as a subversive Sibylline figure (cf. Serra 2013: 231-232), who harks back to Bessa-Luís's depiction of Quina in *Sibila*, (cf. Ferreira 1997: 233-234). However, the 'regionalist' dynamics explored through Jorge's 'Sibyl' are equally noteworthy: while *Sibila* contains a northern, 'telluric' rendering of the mythological prophetess, Branca's association with the Algarvian natural environment is confined to Pássaro's view of his wife, whom he compares to a fugitive / stubborn mule, or other beast that requires taming through punitive discipline:

> [Pássaro] pôs-se a despontar vigorosa contra a insolência de uma mula tão louca como a mulher, e como ela perversamente misteriosa e cínica. [...] Então ele de levantar a mão para lhe chimpar a cara. Porque com as bestas, um homem dá aveia e elas comem, mas se lhes der só palha, acabam por comê-la e ainda por suspirar pelo dono quando lhe pressentem os passos. (*Idem*: 41, 122).

In addition, one can consider the following passage, which likens Pássaro's sexual penetration of his wife to agricultural labour – specifically, the 'ploughing' of land: "Pássaro cavalga. Branca é um dorso macio de aragem pelada. Pássaro cavalga como se a montada tivesse partido à desfilada pelos caminhos, e ele cego por ver a terra tremer" (*idem*: 51). In this sense, *Dia* establishes a clear separation between the Sibyl archetype and that of the 'telluric female', thereby preventing a bucolic, romanticised and ideologically harmless interpretation of Branca's Sibylline characteristics.

That said, *Dia*'s depiction of Branca as a Sibyl is explicitly *regionalised*, through this female character's sensorial connection with the Algarve's southern coast which, as mentioned above, occupies a position of productive ambivalence within Jorge's narrative. Specifically, Branca, in contrast to her fellow villagers, repeatedly hears the distant sound of waves lapping on the Algarvian shore: "Chego a ouvir as ondas. Este tam tam que vem e vai. [...] Branca acorda com

os rumores distantes. Da água caindo nas folhas muito antes da nuvem chegar. Do ruído das ondas das praias. Branca ouve, mas nunca viu. Um tumulto alagado" (*idem*: 48, 119). Hence, although this regional 'Sybil', like *Sibila*'s Quina, resides in a "rural domain (Kendrick 2003: 136), Jorge's 'maritime' rendering of this classical archetype differs from Bessa-Luís's in two significant ways. Firstly, *Dia*'s oceanic allusions emphasise Branca's transformation from a (seemingly) submissive mule-like spouse into a goddess-like figure, with the Mediterranean Sea functioning as a sublime mirror of this character's new-found omnipotence. Secondly, such references associate this character with Vilamaninhos's (and the novel's) central predicament: its *liminality*, given that, as mentioned, the diegesis takes place within the Algarvian "barrocal", thereby oscillating between presumed introspection / isolation and a relationship with the wider world. In this way, by the end of the diegesis Branca emerges as an explicitly 'regionalised' Sibylline figure, who is nevertheless the sole character in the novel to maintain an explicit connection to *global* networks of communication and exchange.

Both novelists, then, offer an explicitly gendered perspective on regionalist tensions and socio-economic dynamics in twentieth-century Portugal, with female protagonists and accompanying landscape descriptions that challenge extant geographical dichotomies (e.g. 'remote provincial community' vs. 'civilised capital' / urban space') and male efforts to project 'feminine' attributes onto regional territories. Simultaneously, these authors destabilise superficial metonymies of 'matriarchal authority' within the Entre-Douro-e-Minho and Algarvian countryside, seeking to replace these problematic models with the prophetic Sibyl. Although Bessa-Luís and Jorge explicitly discourage a conventional 'feminist' interpretation of their fiction, it is clear that both *Sibila* and *Dia* posit the 'Sibylline' anticipation of *future* female agency as the most subversive aspect of their respective 'regionalist' sexual politics. While Bessa-Luís's Quina appeared within an almost complete vacuum of serious discussion regarding the position of women within Portuguese society, Jorge's Branca emerged at a pivotal moment for women's rights in post-revolutionary Portugal: the first woman Prime Minister (Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo) assumed office in 1979, and acrimonious parliamentary debates on the legalisation of abortion would occur in 1982.

When compared with other narratives explored in this thesis, Bessa-Luís's and Jorge's regionalisms certainly hold some affinity with the visible and concealed ideological facets of *Faunos* and *Lobos*, while offering a more sustained and substantial critique of idealised gender relations than Ribeiro's sardonic Beira Alta novels. However, although *Sibila*'s and *Dia*'s regional female characters are *marginal* in some respects, neither narrative systematically critiques class-based distinctions between women, demonstrating little concern for economic inequality or for the detrimental consequences of modern capitalist processes. It is precisely these aspects of Saramago's regionalist ideological discourse that my next chapter will address.

Chapter IV: "Julgávamos que vivíamos no cabo do mundo": José Saramago's militant particularisms

Comi uma mosca.
Unnamed peasant, in *Torre Bela*

When José Saramago won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998, one of the most surprising aspects of his acceptance speech was its opening homage to the author's illiterate peasant grandfather, from Portugal's Ribatejo region:

> O homem mais sábio que conheci em toda a minha vida não sabia ler nem escrever. Às quatro da madrugada [...] levantava-se da enxerga e saía para o campo [...]. Viviam desta escassez os meus avós maternos, da pequena criação de porcos que [...] eram vendidos aos vizinhos da aldeia. (1998: 1)

Further to this, in a subsequent interview Saramago suggested that his attitudes had been influenced by his rural roots (having been born in the Ribatejan village of Azinhaga and spent numerous vacations there): "Eu creio que seria outro se eu tivesse nascido numa grande cidade e tivesse crescido num meio, num meio, digamos, urbano, desenvolvido" (*apud* Evans 2002). As we have seen with other novelists examined within this thesis, Saramago's interest in his family's rural heritage extends beyond the merely biographical; in addition to his literary output, which I shall discuss shortly, the author's concern for (Portuguese and international) peasant communities is evidenced by his vocal support for Brazil's *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* – an organisation dedicated to combatting land ownership inequality and rural poverty (cf. Frier 2007: 9).

It is with these concerns in mind that one ought to consider José Saramago's widely-known membership of the PCP (from 1969 onwards) and

his repeated endorsement of communist ideals (cf. *apud* Reis 1998: 74-75).[234] Significantly, during an extensive interview with Carlos Reis the novelist articulated his understanding of 'ideology' through highly *spatialised* language, as an inescapable 'sea' of social, political, religious, ethical and cultural components: "nem sequer é legítimo pensar que se poderia viver fora dessa espécie de mar, porque aí é onde se respira, aí é onde se está, é onde nos alimentamos no plano mental" (*idem*: 73). This 'aquatic' or 'oceanic' imagery – which I shall return to later in this chapter, given that it appears in both *Levantado do chão* and *A caverna* – can be read as a metaphor for the geographical dynamics and personal experiences that jointly informed Saramago's worldview, as a politically engaged individual and as an author. Indeed, as I shall argue throughout this chapter, the notions of 'immersion' and 'situated experience' that this metaphor evokes are fundamental for deciphering previously neglected ideological facets of Saramago's fiction. Simultaneously, Saramago's description of ideology as "uma espécie de mar" alludes to paradoxical conceptions of maritime space, as both a barrier and a conduit between demarcated territories, material experiences and political outlooks. The liquidity and fluidity inherent to this image also suggests a rejection of geographical binaries – such as 'urban vs. rural' or 'centre vs. margin' – which will be the cornerstone of this chapter's analytical framework. Finally, the author's allusion to a "mar" suggests a quasi-infinite (and immortal) spatial framework which both resists political domination and, as John Mack argues, "cannot be rearranged so as to invest it with moral purpose" (2011: 97). It is precisely this ambivalent oceanic metaphor that makes Saramago's narratives set in *terrestrial* spaces so ideologically productive.

Previous scholarship on José Saramago's best-known novels of the 1980s (e.g. *Levantado do chão* [1980]; *Memorial do convento* [1982]; *A jangada de pedra* [1986]; *História do cerco de Lisboa* [1989]) has adeptly highlighted their critical treatment of Portuguese history, historiography and historical narratives (cf. Frier 2007; Sabine 2016; Gryspeerdt 2020: 270), their concern for bringing Portugal's marginalised / excluded perspectives and communities into

[234] For a comprehensive biography of Saramago, see Joaquim Vieira's *José Saramago: rota de vida. Uma biografia* (2018).

representation (cf. Silva 1989; Kaufman 1997: 177; Diakhité 2014) and their affinity with "Marxist and Marxist-influenced social and cultural theorists" (Sabine 2016: 3), including Walter Benjamin (cf. Rollason 2004: 209; Sabine 2016: 244) and Antonio Gramsci (cf. Frier 2007: 157; Sabine 2016: 29-70). Examinations of how Saramago's fiction relates to 'regionalism' and to geographical dynamics, however, have been somewhat less conclusive: Maria Alzira Seixo's aforementioned essay "Escrever a terra", for instance, largely limits its 'geographical' analysis to *Memorial do convento*'s problematisation of the "noção de terra pátria" through the spaces of Lisbon and Mafra (1986: 78), whereas Rui Jacinto's article "(D)escrever a terra: geografia, literatura, viagem. A geografia de Portugal segundo José Saramago" restricts its insightful comments on Saramago's 'cartographic' practices and his "hierarquia dos lugares" to the author's non-fiction (*Viagem a Portugal* [1981]) (Jacinto 2015: 9-40). Although tentative efforts have been made to explore geographical positionality in certain Saramaguian narratives,[235] the only study to date that has systematically examined the importance of 'location' to Saramago's fiction is Mary L. Daniel's "Ebb and flow: place as pretext in the novels of José Saramago". In this article, Daniel claims that "lococentricity" is a central characteristic of Saramagos 1980s novels: "Spatial identification has been used as parable or pretext for his ironic critique of socio-economic systems, geo-political developments, nationalistic self-appraisal, historical interpretation, and ontological introspection" (1990: 38). As perceptive as this commentary is, I would disagree with Daniel on one crucial point: as this chapter shall demonstrate, far from functioning as a "parable or pretext" for Saramago's socio-political critiques, what this critic describes as the "ebb and flow" of geographical and regional dynamics are an integral and indispensable component of the author's ideological discourse, particularly with reference to *Levantado do chão* and *A caverna* (hereinafter, *Levantado* and *Caverna*).

In a 'regionalist' ideological analysis of these two novels, I shall draw upon twentieth and twenty-first century political theorists whose work evokes

[235] See, for example, Mark Sabine's analysis of national identity, Iberian regionalism and trans-Iberianism in *A jangada de pedra* (cf. 2016: 160-204), and Anna M. Klobucka's references to "rooted cosmopolitanism" in *A jangada de pedra* and *A caverna* (2001: XVIII).

spatiality to a significant degree. Firstly, it will be necessary to consider Raymond Williams's iconic comments in *The Country and the City* on the constructed 'urban *vs.* rural' dichotomy, which he considers to have been conflated with political and economic processes: "People have often said 'the city' when they mean capitalism or bureaucracy or centralized power" (2016: 418).[236] As I shall outline, Williams's observations regarding misleading "traditional" preconceptions and images of urban and rural spaces, and of the "abstraction of the city" as an isolated problem, correspond to *Levantado* and *Caverna* in equal measure: "There is an evident unevenness in the dominant consciousness. In a sense, it seems, everything about the city – from the magnificent to the apocalyptic – can be believed at once" (2016: 400). Building on these pioneering obserations, the writings of Marxist geographer David Harvey will be useful for assessing the ideological importance of geographical dynamics and spatial imagery in both *Levantado* and *Caverna*. Of particular relevance are Harvey's comments regarding what he terms "the historical geography of capitalism" (2001: 324):

> Capitalism perpetually strives [...] to create a social and physical landscape in its own image and requisite to its own needs at a particular point in time, only just as certainly to undermine, disrupt and even destroy that landscape at a later point in time. The inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the restless formation and re-formation of geographical landscapes. (*Idem*: 333)

As a counterpoint to this 'capitalist landscape creation', Harvey proceeds to outline the ways in which resistance to this process has, in certain instances, allowed "regional structures and class alliances" to emerge: "the struggle for community, regional or national solidarity as the ideology behind the alliance, may support, reconstitute or in some cases [...] actively create local and regional cultures and traditions" (*idem*: 334). Furthermore, the geographer's call for

[236] Cf. Roberto Vecchi's use of Williams's comments, in "Le città invisibili di *Levantado do chão*" (1996: 88).

political activism to work *through* and *beyond* parochialisms will be important for examining the politics of solidarity that Saramago's narratives invoke:

> Struggles conducted from a parochial perspective - no matter whether that parochialism emanates from territory […] or from the para-technical division of labor in society - are self-defeating and doomed from the start. Only struggles which overcome the parochialisms inherent in the geography of our situation and in the situation of geography hold out any prospect for success. (2001: 37)

The above quotation leads me to a further theoretical concept that enhances geographical readings of both novels: the notion of "militant particularism", first coined by Williams (1989) and developed by Harvey (2001). Initially described as "the extraordinary claim that the defence and advancement of certain particular interests, properly brought together, are in fact the general interest" (Williams 1989: 115, 249), militant particularism is more concretely defined by Harvey as the process through which "[i]deals forged out of the affirmative experience of solidarities in one place get generalized and universalized as a working model of a new form of society that will benefit all of humanity" (2001: 172). In Harvey's view, the key problematic of Williams's concept is the "battle between different levels of abstraction" (*idem*: 175) or, in other words, the degree to which *abstraction* from localised and specific material experience can constitute an effective political strategy without resorting to *generalisation* (*idem*: 173). The "rub", then, is a decidedly spatial one, in that there is an inevitable "loss" in any "move from one level of abstraction – attached to place – to another level of abstraction capable of reaching out across space" (*ibidem*). As I will discuss presently, Williams's and Harvey's connundrum applies to *Levantado* and *Caverna* in equal measure: while Saramago's 1980 novel combines regional particularity and specificity with a connection to broader political coalitions, his 2000 narrative is highly allegorical and abstract, and yet correlates with precise material conditions within the author's native country and in a broader, trans-national context.

Accordingly, both sections of this chapter (on *Levantado* and on *Caverna* respectively) will follow a bipartite structure, focusing on the interplay between

spatial / regional dynamics and ideological messages within these two narratives. My analysis of Saramago's 1980 novel will: (a) examine the narrative's paradigm of Alentejan peasant isolation, separation and exclusion from political and economic power, which the author simultaneously undermines; and (b) assess the spontaneity and autonomous agency of peasant resistence within this narrative's regionally specific setting, while evaluating the extent to which this local political action interacts with national and international contexts. Following this, my reading of *Caverna* shall: (a) consider the ways in which this narrative evokes, challenges and surpasses simplistic geographical dichotomies, in its critique of pernicious spatial transformation attributed to late twentieth-century capitalism; (b) explore the novel's multiple strategies of resistance to this new socio-economic hegemony, through its destabilisation of nostalgic stereotypes relating to 'rural demise', and its construction of a geographically located, atheistic and Marxist form of 'mourning'. Thus, this chapter will posit spatiality and 'regionalist' discourse as inseparable from ideology in two key novels from Saramago's *oeuvre*.

IV.1. *Levantado do chão*: local and global struggle

Levantado – Saramago's first significant literary success within Portugal – is an Alentejan historical saga, tracing four generations of the fictional Mau-Tempo family and the lives of their contemporaries and peasant comrades, who reside in and around the village of Monte Lavre (Montemor-o-Novo municipality). The diegesis – which commences in the first decade of the twentieth century and concludes in 1975 – explicitly mentions the tumultuous political events that occurred in Portugal during this time period, such as the collapse of the Monarchy in 1910, the short-lived First Republic, the *Ditadura Nacional* and *Estado Novo* dictatorships, the April 1974 Revolution, and finally the agrarian conflicts that followed it, culminating in the peasants' occupation of large agricultural estates at the end of the novel. In doing so, the narrative illuminates the Alentejan peasantry's peripheral, supposedly 'un-informed' perspective, alongside its portrayal of the Mau-Tempo family's (and peasant comrades') resistance against capitalist (landlord), state-directed (Republican; *Estado Novo*) and religious (Catholic Church) repression. While the shiftless,

alcoholic and violent Domingos Mau-Tempo does not contribute to contemporary social, economic or political struggles in any way, his son João involves himself in numerous peasant revolts, communist cells and acts of subversion, leading to his interrogation and imprisonment on two occasions during the dictatorship. His son António also engages in political struggle against the regime (having spent years working away from Monte Lavre in the Portuguese army and then in France) as does his granddaughter Maria Adelaide, both of whom participate in the *latifúndio* occupations that conclude the diegesis.

This narrative's denunciation of material conditions and economic exploitation in the Alentejan latifundia over much of the twentieth century – informed by the two months in 1976 that Saramago spent observing the *Unidade Colectiva de Produção Boa Esperança* co-operative farm (Lavre, Montemor-o-Novo) – has perhaps inevitably been compared to and contrasted with Portugal's aforementioned neo-realist literary movement (cf. Viçoso 1999: 239-248; Sabine 2016: 31). Nonetheless, although the author himself described this narrative as "o último romance do Neo-Realismo, fora já do tempo neo-realista" (*apud* Reis 1998: 118), and Vítor Viçoso has highlighted the "óbvia comunhão ideológica" between the self-proclaimed communist Saramago and Marxist-influenced neo-realist writers like Alves Redol (1999: 239), to characterise *Levantado* as a mere continuation of neo-realist tendencies would be highly problematic. For one thing, the novel's own paratext explicitly rejects the reflectionist attempts to 'mirror' material realities that, as mentioned, are often associated with Portuguese neo-realism.[237] Specifically, the novel's frequently cited dust jacket note clearly discourages readings of the diegesis as purely mimetic: "o meu sonho foi o de poder dizer deste livro, quando o terminasse: 'Isto é o Alentejo'. Dos sonhos, porém, acordamos todos, e agora eis-me não diante do sonho realizado, mas da concreta e possível forma do sonho. Por isso me limitarei a escrever: 'Isto é um livro sobre o Alentejo.' (1994: cover). Mark Sabine's study of *Levantado* dedicates considerable attention to the author's apparent confession here, arguing that it "enables Saramago to affirm his solidarity with the social and political agenda of neo-realism, while stressing, in

[237] See I.2.

his dismissal of the 'sonho' of a literary microcosm of reality ('isto é o Alentejo'), his rejection of the movement's founding aesthetic premise" (2016: 31). To this analysis, I would add two further comments: (a) that Saramago's rebuttal of mimetic fiction corresponds to the Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton's dismissal of 'reflectionist' literary practices ("[l]iterature [...] does not stand in some reflective, symmetrical, one-to-one relation with its object. The object is deformed, refracted, dissolved" [2002: 48]); (b) that the author's comments hold considerable relevance for considering 'regionalist' ideological dynamics within *Levantado,* in that Saramago anchors this novel within a specific regional context whilst dispelling any notion that the narrative's importance is *limited* to that region. As Sabine suggests, *Levantado*'s temporal and spatial specificity might initially arouse "suspicions that the novel is provincial and anachronistic" (2016: 29) but, as this study will demonstrate, Saramago underlines the need to surpass 'parochial' or 'provincial' contours, through a partial perspective that is intended not as a microcosm but as a militant form of 'particularism'. These observations shall inform my analysis of Saramago's 1980 narrative.

IV.1.1 Monte Lavre – remoteness as paradigm?

An initial observation to make regarding *Levantado* is its construction (and simultaneous undermining) of 'backwater' (Monte Lavre) vs. 'metropolis' (Lisbon) and "country vs. city" binary divisions, according to which the novel's peasant characters in and around Monte Lavre are posited as *remote, isolated* and *detached* from events in the wider world. This discourse first appears in chapter II, as the Mau-Tempo family wander between different hamlets at the behest of Domingos ("há tanta poeira no caminho e alguma bosta seca ou bonicos de cavalo, que por longe de lugares habitados ninguém veio apanhar até aqui" [Saramago 1994: 15]), and emerges at various moments in the diegesis, often in a quasi-Biblical tone lamenting the bleakness of these territories: "por caminhos que o diabo só às costas dos homens" (*idem*: 118); "lugares por onde o Senhor nunca andou, e que andasse, onde é que estava o ganho dele e nosso" (*idem*: 146). These excerpts instantly demonstrate two under-appreciated aspects of *Levantado*: firstly, that it alludes to Aquilino Ribeiro's preface in *Terras do*

Demo, which discusses the 'isolation' of Beira Alta peasant communities ("Sem dúvida, nunca Cristo ali rompeu as sandálias, passou el-rei a caçar ou os apóstulos da Igualdade em propaganda" [Ribeiro 1983a: 5]);[239] secondly, and in relation to this first point, that Saramago's novel challenges existing (*Estado Novo* and other) bucolic preconceptions surrounding the Alentejan *latifúndio* as an idyllic *fugere urbum*. At the same time, the narrator's claims that neither God *nor* the Devil would set foot in such areas seemingly suggests this diegetic environment is isolated from *all* external influence and / or potentially 'corruptive' forces. Such imagery is later complicated, however, by its deployment to describe a PCP meeting in Terra Fria attended by João Mau-Tempo and Sigismundo Canastro ("dali para a Terra Fria seguirão juntos, por caminhos que Deus nunca andou e o Diabo só obrigado" [Saramago 1994: 207]), in which irony is clearly at play, given that the Alentejan labourers are venturing 'into the wilderness' to share their experiences with factory workers and urban collaborators. Indeed, this increasingly ironic tone correlates with a more systematic undermining of the narrator's authority throughout *Levantado* as a source of 'official' knowledge (cf. Gomes 1989: 104), and as a representative of "historically dominant ideologies" (Sabine 2016: 47).

This notion of apparent geographical isolation extends to the novel's peasant settlements, which frequently appear to be removed from and ignorant of outside occurrences, receiving external news reports via a process of gradual and imperfect osmosis; as David Frier notes, "when major events in history are alluded to, the focus of the narration shifts imperceptibly to a reflection of the news through the media, to which only the privileged have any access in this society" (2007: 60). This is implied early in the diegesis, when reports of the outbreak of the First World War in Europe haphazardly arrive to the peasant community, which remains unaware of, and excluded from the continent in which it is located – a continent renowned for the "luzes" of the eighteenth-century enlightenment: "Correram vozes em Monte Lavre de que havia uma guerra na Europa, sítio de que pouca gente no lugar tinha notícias e luzes" (Saramago 1994: 47). Subsequent news of the war – and of Portugal's participation in that conflict – predominantly arrives via newspapers that are

[239] See Chapter II.

incomprehensible to the largely illiterate rural proletariat,[240] or through economic hardship: "A Monte Lavre, de guerras, só chegavam notícias de jornal, e essas eram para quem as soubesse ler. Os outros, se viam subir os preços ou faltarem até os géneros grosseiros da sua alimentação, se perguntavam porquê, É por causa da guerra, respondiam os entendidos" (*idem*: 57). In this instance, the narrator apparently equates the novel's diegetic environment with generalised ignorance and limited knowledge of the outside world, as long as the Monte Lavre inhabitants in question are not erudite "entendidos" but uneducated rustic labourers. Later, when outlining the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and the peasants' supposed awareness of it, the narrator's tone becomes self-conscious and ironic, using the terms "ignorância" "afastamento": "por quanto se pode saber, e não é muito, em terras de tanta ignorância e afastamento do mundo, está a Espanha em ruínas" (*idem*: 115).

This notion of an 'uninformed', geographically and culturally remote rural proletariat re-emerges in *Levantado*'s final chapters, which depict the aftermath of the Carnation Revolution. Significantly, news of the coup in Lisbon arrives to Pegões (the Alentejan vineyard estate on which Maria Adelaide is working) in a diffuse and disorganised manner: "Pelo meio da tarde chegaram à vinha notícias que desassossegaram o pessoal, ninguém tinha certezas do que tivesse sido, Diz-se que há qualquer coisa com a tropa em Lisboa, ouvi na rádio, se assim fosse seria saber logo tudo" (*idem*: 350). Here, while the radio of 1974 spreads the news much faster and in aural manner – a more universally comprehensible means of communication than the aforementioned newspapers of the 1910s –, Saramago emphasises that events of national importance continue to be *mediated* (in this case, through a Lisbon-based broadcaster) in a manner that reveals only vague details and partial truth. Directly following this revelation, the narrator suggests a perceptive as well as physical distance between *this spot* on the Alentejan *latifúndio* and nationally significant political events, as epitomised by the surrender of Marcello Caetano and government

[240] The issue of literacy and education is an important dynamic in the Mau-Tempo family: although João Mau-Tempo receives limited schooling during the First Republic, neither his father Domingos (born during the Monarchy) nor his son António (a child during the dictatorship) benefit from such opportunities.

loyalists in Lisbon's Largo do Carmo: "*Neste lugar do latifúndio*, tão longe do Carmo de Lisboa, não se ouviu por aqui um tiro nem anda gente a gritar pelos descampados, não era fácil entender o que é uma revolução e como se faz" (*idem*: 350-351, my emphasis). In this passage – which I shall return to in my discussion of 'peasant politics' – Saramago deploys the demonstrative pronoun "este" to denote geographical precision within the Alentejan plains ("neste lugar do latifúndio"), suggesting that *some* (but by no means *all*) sections of the *latifúndio* are disengaged from political engagement and / or struggle.

Subsequently, back in Monte Lavre, the Alentejans' bewildered reaction to the Revolution reveals a conspicuous cognitive gap between the new provisional government in Portugal's capital and the regions' agricultural labourers:

> [O] governo devia vir aqui explicar, não vale a pena pôr nos jornais que a gente não os entende, na televisão passa tudo tão depressa, ainda não percebemos uma palavra já vieram outras cem, que é que eles disseram, e na rádio não vemos as caras das pessoas, não posso acreditar em nada que tu digas se não estiver a ver a tua cara. (*Idem*: 360-361)

In this instance, Saramago gives some indication of these peasants' developing knowledge of current affairs via new technologies (e.g. the television, which they presumably watch in collective spaces such as taverns rather than in private homes), but continues to suggest a cultural chasm between the labourers' limited understanding of political processes ("ainda não percebemos uma palavra já vieram outras cem") and the rapidly evolving circumstances of Portugal's *Processo Revolucionário em Curso*. In the peasants' demand for a 'face-to-face' explanation of these events from the national government, the author makes several important allusions to the revolutionary period: in addition to anticipating the Movimento das Forças Armadas *Acção Cívica* and *Dinamização Cultural* campaigns elsewhere in the country,[241] the labourers' generic use of

[241] As outlined in Chapter I, the MFA's campaigns sought to 'politicise' communities in northern Portugal, the Centre and the Algarve, rather than the Alentejo. For an explicit literary critique of

the term “o governo” to describe the new authorities suggests their lack of engagement with regime change in the capital. Finally, the Alentejans’ suggestion that ‘they cannot believe anything the government says without seeing its face’ gestures towards a ‘trust deficit’ in Portuguese politics even during the revolutionary era, which is compounded by the central authorities’ physical absence from the vast swathes of agrarian territory that they govern. In accordance with the passages above, then, Teresa Cristina Cerdeira da Silva interprets *Levantado* as an illustration of peasant ‘perceptive difficulties’ in Portugal (particularly in the Alentejo) throughout Portugal’s First Republic and *Estado Novo* dictatorship: “chegam ao leitor os ecos da situação portuguesa e europeia, com os seus atrasos, a sua distância e as dificuldades na percepção que dos factos poderia ter um camponês alentejano, preso à terra e sem acesso à cultura e à informação” (1989: 198-199).

Nevertheless, certain caveats should be attached to this view: at key moments in the diegesis, the narrator’s references to the ‘rustic ignorance’ of these Alentejan peasants is evidently self-conscious and ironic. This is clear, for instance, in Chapter XI, when João Mau-Tempo and his wife Faustina discuss the instruction given to him by his employers to attend a political rally in Évora (organised by the government to support General Franco’s Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War). Immediately after this exchange, the narrator, addressing an implied urban reader, seemingly equates this (Alentejan) “povo” with physical distance from the Lisbon-based regime and, *ergo,* ignorance of broader political realities: “E quem por este diálogo clamar que o povo está perdido, não sabe o que se passa, é tempo de dizer que o povo vive longe, não lhe chegam notícias, ou não as entende, só ele sabe o esforço que lhe custa manter-se vivo” (Saramago 1994: 91). This assessment of “o povo”, however, is sufficiently exaggerated, simplistic and vague (“o povo vive longe”) as to indicate parody, and is negated by the Alentejan peasantry’s frequent political activism and acts of resistance at subsequent stages of the diegesis, as I shall outline shortly.

MFA activity in Algarvian rural communities, see Lídia Jorge’s *O dia dos prodígios* (examined in III.2.).

To a certain extent, *Levantado* attributes the Alentejan labourers' lack of (explicit) political awareness to their geographical distance from Portugal's capital, which can be described as a 'privileged' centre of political authority (cf. Diakhité 2014: 62) or, using Frier's terminology, a "centripetal force" (2007: 111). This perception of Lisbon emerges early in the diegesis, after the establishment of a Republican government is initially mentioned at the beginning of Chapter V, in the form of an elliptical sentence beginning with an adverb: "Então chegou a república" (Saramago 1994: 33). The narrative then proceeds to portray the new government as being 'dispatched' from the capital to these Alentejan plains: "A república veio despachada de Lisboa, andou de terra em terra pelo telégrafo, se o havia, recomendou-se pela imprensa, se a sabiam ler, pelo passar de boca em boca, que sempre foi o mais fácil" (*ibidem*). This excerpt, in addition to demonstrating how "technological and political transformation elsewhere still make only the faintest impression [at this time]" (Sabine 2016: 37), depicts the systematic incursion of Lisbon-based national government institutions into 'provincial' communities, which travels "de terra em terra" not through a physical presence, but via the printed press and the haphazard method of 'word-of-mouth'. Moreover, during the subsequent *Estado Novo* regime, many attendees of the aforementioned Évora rally are revealed to be politicians, civil servants and army personnel who have travelled from the capital (and, to a lesser extent, from the nearby barracks of Setúbal): "o comandante da legião, o major que veio de Setúbal, os deputados, o da união nacional deles, o capitão de cavalaria cinco, um que é do i-ene-tê-pê, se não sabes pergunta, instituto nacional do trabalho e previdência, e todos os mais *que vieram de Lisboa*" (Saramago 1994: 95, my emphasis). Here, the phonetic spelling of this national institution's initials, followed by the 'enlightened' narrator's explanation of their meaning to the implied reader, further emphasises the cognitive divide between the Alentejan rural proletariat and government organisations managed from Lisbon.

Notwithstanding this 'apparent antithesis' that *Levantado* establishes between Portugal's omniscient, omnipotent capital and its seemingly ignorant and apolitical Alentejan peasant communities (cf. Vecchi 1996: 84), upon closer inspection one can detect a destabilisation of this dynamic (cf. *idem*: 93), particularly through the deployment of incremental irony. In 1911, for instance,

the striking labourers' erroneous belief that the First Republic will treat them with justice denotes a naïve and simplistic understanding of political authority within Portugal: "Sim, Lisboa é uma grande cidade, têm-nos dito que a maior do mundo, é lá que mora a república, por direito nos hão-de pôr em liberdade, Há leis" (Saramago 1994: 36). This excerpt reveals two significant preconceptions that the striking peasants hold with regards to the way political power is exercised throughout their country. On the one hand, it reveals their perception of the Republican government as being *settled* and *rooted* in the capital (and, therefore, only existent *there*), through Saramago's use of the verb "morar". On the other hand, it gestures towards their provincialist view of Lisbon as 'the largest city in the world', which is shown to have been encouraged by the State (via the third-person plural "têm-nos dito"). Later evidence of this discursively constructed 'metropolis vs. backwater' binary worldview emerges when João Mau-Tempo is working as a cork cutter to the west of Monte Lavre, in an area from which the capital can be seen: "De cima destes sobreiros vê-se Lisboa, se está claro o dia, quem diria que é assim tão perto, afinal *julgávamos que vivíamos no cabo do mundo*, são erros de quem não sabe nem teve quem lhe ensinasse" (*idem*: 77, my emphasis). This extract clearly addresses the Alentejan peasants' internalisation of a false consciousness regarding their own subaltern condition and apparent remoteness from urban 'civilisation'; in fact, the author highlights the relative *proximity* of these agricultural areas from the capital, when compared with large swathes of Portugal's inland regions.[242] As a result, Saramago posits the Alentejan labourers' 'isolation' as a mindset or psychological condition, rather than the product of actual geographical distance from the capital; indeed, phrases such as the aforementioned "A república veio despachada de Lisboa" highlight the technical ease of communication across these 80km. One is therefore reminded of Edwin Ardener's comments on the many false presumptions regarding 'remote areas': in Ardener's view, "the actual geography is not the overriding feature" (2012: 523), with assumptions of

[242] From Lavre, the physical distance to Lisbon is roughly 80km and therefore potentially walkable. The distance has been calculated on Google Maps (2021), contemplating a ferry journey from Montijo to the capital instead of a bridge crossing (which was not possible during the 1920s). On twenty-first century roads, this could be walked in approximately 15 hours.

an area's 'isolation' owing to "perceptions from the dominant zone, not part of its codified experience" (*idem*: 532). Along similar lines, Saramago exposes the construction of 'remoteness' as a psychological condition as opposed to a physiological reality.

In fact, Saramago's novel often reflects "perceptions from the dominant zone" about Portugal's rural provinces back onto the capital itself. This is particularly evident in João Mau-Tempo's imagined visit to Lisbon from the aforementioned cork forests, in chapter X. Significantly, although João and his companions exhibit "wide-eyed innocence regarding the city" (Frier 2007: 61) and seemingly lack cultural and spatial awareness within this urban 'metropolis' ("para que será este palito espetado no meio" [Saramago 1994: 77];[243] "nós sem prática destas calçadas, todo o tempo a escorregar no estupor das cardas, e a puxar-nos uns aos outros com medo dos eléctricos" [*ibidem*]), the inhabitants of the capital demonstrate their own ignorance of 'outsiders', through the manner in which they refer to the visiting Alentejans: "uma risota para os lisboetas, Eh, *saloio*" (*ibidem*, my emphasis). The *lisboetas*' use of "saloio" here is particularly relevant: as mentioned in Chapter II, this "ethno-geographic term" (Riegelhaupt 1967: 110, n.2) has a topographically specific significance in Greater Lisbon, pertaining to agricultural communities on the capital's northern outskirts (Priberam 2021e) Accordingly, the lisboetas' labelling of the alentejanos as "saloios" is *incorrect* ("não somos saloios" [*idem*: 79]), evidencing their own unawareness of Portugal's internal heterogeneity, and their readiness to indiscriminately describe all 'peasants' using their own parochial vocabulary. Furthermore, at various moments throughout the narrative, the author explicitly denounces "a precariedade do saber oficial citadino" (Wittmann 1997: 510), particularly in the narrator's descriptions of agricultural work to an implied urban reader who is assumed to be 'ignorant' of agrarian realities: "as pessoas da cidade cuidam, em sua ignorância, que tudo é semear e colher, pois muito enganadas vivem se não aprenderem a dizer as palavras todas e a entender o que elas são" (Saramago 1994: 89; cf. Vecchi 1996: 92-93). In chapter XXV, Saramago develops this playful condescension of the implied reader through an anonymous urban visitor / observer, who 'learns' about the realities and customs

[243] Lisbon's "Monumento aos Restauradores" obelisk.

of the countryside from the narrator: "Muito me conta" (*idem*: 273); "nós que somos da cidade a esta sombra nos acolhemos" (*idem*: 275).

At the same time, *Levantado* lampoons traditional (particularly *Estado Novo*-sponsored) depictions of Portugal's agrarian heartlands as idyllic, peaceful spaces of retreat, as evidenced in the following narratorial digression (Chapter XXV): "admirável é ver o gado derramar-se pela encosta, ou chão plano, que serenidade, longe das malsãs agitações urbanas. Do tumultuar infrene das metrópoles, Começai, Musas minhas, começai o canto bucólico, e temos a sorte de o rebanho vir para cá" (*idem*: 275-276). In this passage, which appears after several episodes of peasant agitation, the narrator parodies the supposed tranquillity of agricultural Portugal and its insulation from urban 'vices' and 'dangerous ideologies'. Specifically, the "canto bucólico" is a clear allusion to pastoral poetry, dating back to Theocritus's *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues* (cf. Gifford 2020: 16-21) and, in twentieth-century Portugal, the salazarist regime's so-called "pastoral ideology" (Figueiredo 1975: 164). In other instances, the narrator makes explicit reference to the poetic ecologue ("Estas éclogas são assim. Dedilham pastores os alaúdes, fazem as pastoras capelas de flores" [Saramago 1994: 62]) and, by extension, to the *Estado Novo*'s ideological deployment of such romanticised tropes. Through this "estilização do bucolismo" (Besse 2008: 68-69), the author exposes and dilutes "a imagem idílica do campo cristalizada na mente do citadino" (Wittmann 1997: 510), thereby contesting the assumptions underpinning Portugal's 'urban vs. rural' dynamics during the dicatorship period. At other moments in the diegesis, when describing the physical impact of agricultural toil on the Alentejan proletariat, the narrator explicitly critiques the dictatorship's practice of glorifying agrarian work and rural 'quality of life', specifically designed to avoid outward migration from Portugal's inland communities and political radicalisation in its urban centres: "afinal viver no campo não dá vida acrescentada, são invenções da cidade" (Saramago 1994: 328); "Um povo que se lava é um povo que não trabalha, talvez nas cidades, enfim, não digo que não, mas aqui, no latifúndio […]" (*idem*: 73).[244]

[244] See I.1. for a full discussion of these strategies and practices of the *Estado Novo* regime.

In parallel to this destabilisation of *Estado Novo*-sponsored bucolic tropes, Saramago's novel questions notions of 'escape' from an unpleasant rural environment, as seen in certain examples of neo-realist fiction. For instance, João's disappointment at being rejected from the army and being forced to remain in the Alentejo ("Quando João Mau-Tempo finca a enxada na terra [...] esquece a mágoa de ali viver, preso àquele chão, tão longe de Lisboa" [*idem*: 63]) is reminiscent of Manuel da Fonseca's short story "Campaniça", in which the protagonist Maria Campaniça longs to escape a dark and depressing Alentejan "terra ruim" (Fonseca 1984: 9).[245] However, in *Levantado*, the narrator's reference to João's 'frustrated dreams' "se a tanto alguma vez se atreveu a aspirar, se não foi tudo sonho de mocidade" (Saramago 1994: 63) directs the reader to the novel's aforementioned dust jacket, in which the author explicitly rejects simplistic neo-realist 'reflection' upon rural misery: "Dos sonhos, porém, acordamos todos" (*idem*: cover). As a result, Saramago challenges abstractions of both the 'city' and the 'country' as "huge isolated problem[s]" (Williams 2016: 400) and as the inherent sources of poverty, inequality and repression within twentieth-century Portugal.

Rather, *Levantado* can be interpreted as a critique of the multiple *loci* from which political and economic power emanated throughout much of twentieth-century Portugal. This is apparent from the narrator's references to the 'Braga coup' of May 1926 ("[v]em aí uma época de grandes tempestades [...] sem disparar um tiro, vindas de Braga que é longe" [1994: 63]; "fizera já seis meses que Portugal tinha sido levado pelo caminho de Braga" [*idem*: 66]), which recalls the North's anti-Republican, politically conservative precedents,[246] as well as the fact that important army barracks were located in this particular city, thereby enabling the *Ditadura Nacional* to be established. With regards to the *Estado Novo* period, Saramago's narrative posits both the national capital of Lisbon and the municipal centre of Montemor as potentially dangerous spaces for Alentejan peasants opposed to the dictatorship: "[p]ara os alentejanos o caminho da repressão é Montemor e Lisboa" (Silva 1989: 221). That said, it is important not to interpret this comment in a linear fashion, of progression in

[245] From *Aldeia nova* (1942).

[246] See I.1, particularly on the 1919 Monarquia do Norte.

severity from municipality to metropolis: although the local authorities in Montemor threaten agitators with a more sinister meeting with the political police in Lisbon ("[a]cabam por ir todos para Lisboa, era melhor que confessassem aqui, na vossa terra, entre conhecidos" [*idem*: 158]), this Alentejan town is in fact the scene of the authorities' most violent acts in the diegesis, such as the murders of actual historical figures Germano Santos Vidigal (at the hands of the PIDE) and José Adelino dos Santos (as a result of machine-gun fire from the *Guarda Nacional Republicana*).

There is, then, a clear equivalence established between repressive mechanisms devised in the *metropolis* and their local implementation within the Alentejan *municipality*. Members of the *Guarda Nacional Republicana,* for instance, represent this nationally integrated power structure, which regards communities such as Monte Lavre to be remote and irrelevant: "isto aqui em Monte Lavre não é vila importante, é uma aldeola do latifúndio, não precisa de mais que um cabo da guarda, *o qual responde tão firme como o general comandante que em Lisboa manda*" (1994: 236-237, my emphasis). The narrator's comments throughout the diegesis further reinforce this notion of a comprehensive, indissoluble chain of command that extends from the highest echelons of the New State in the Terreiro do Paço down to the smallest possible settlement within the country. This is apparent, for example, in the excerpt "*Por cidades, vilas, aldeias e todos os mais lugares* os cavalos encontram-se, relincham, esfregam os focinhos uns nos outros, trocam segredos e denúncias, inventam violências persuasivas e persuasões violentas" (*idem*: 119, my emphasis). This extract's references to all possible denominations of urbanistic scale in Portugal – from the "cidade" (city / town) to the "lugar" (hamlet) – denotes a permeation of *Estado Novo* authority throughout all demographic levels in the country, and in all possible environments.

In fact, *Levantado* shares with certain novels by Aquilino Ribeiro and Lídia Jorge a critique of the Portuguese State's hierarchical, 'top-down' structure, before and during the *Estado Novo* régime.[247] Specifically, the novel lampoons not only the New State's "highly centralized political system", with significant power concentrated in the national government (Riegelhaupt 1979:

[247] See Chapters II and III.

168), but also the various mechanisms and positions through which the Lisbon-based dictatorial authorities maintained tight control throughout rural Portugal, including the *casas do povo*, the *câmara municipal* and various *administradores* (cf. *idem*: 171).[248] This is apparent, for instance, in the narrative's references to the *casa do povo*, a charitable institution ostensibly designed to unite "landowner and farm laborer" (*idem*: 169). Specifically, the scene during which João Mau-Tempo and other Communist activists share their experiences of exploitation, at their meeting in the Terra Fria, details the workers' conviction that local *casas do povo* are under the control of their exploitative *latifundiário* employers: "Nos meus sítios, a casa do povo está de combinação com os patrões, senão não fazia o que faz" (Saramago 1994: 211). In addition, through the patronising sermons of Monte Lavre priest Padre Agamedes, the narrative criticises the collusion of local political authority figures and land-based economic interests:

> [A]té o pai é às vezes obrigado a bater no filho a quem tanto quer e ama, [...] assim, meus filhos, é a guarda, e já nem falo das outras autoridades civis e militares, o senhor presidente da câmara, o senhor administrador do concelho, o senhor comandante da legião, e outros senhores que têm encargo de mandar, a começar por quem vos dá trabalho [...]. (*Idem*: 120)

In this excerpt, Padre Agamedes's enumeration of local government and authority figures that 'lovingly' commit violence against the population is complimented by his references to "quem vos dá trabalho", suggesting a (localised) 'unholy alliance' between the mechanisms of the State, economic interests and religious figures. This "santíssima trindade" [*idem*: 1106-1107]) of *Estado, latifúndio* and *Igreja* is chiefly evoked through the monstruous metaphor of a 'three-headed beast' ("uma bicha de três cabeças e uma só vontade verdadeira" [*idem*: 119]) which nonetheless shows signs of internal division on several occasions. This growing schism is apparent from the *Estado Novo*'s introduction of an eight-hour working day in 1962, a policy of 'appeasement'

[248] See I.1. for an outline of the *Estado Novo*'s political organisation.

that the *latifundiários* oppose ("que eu saiba o governo não deu ordem para se trabalhar oito horas, e que desse, nas minhas terras mando eu, que sou o dono delas, e com isto se acabou a conversa" [*idem*: 339]), and, after the Carnation Revolution, from those same landowners' indignation when faced with the provisional government's radical economic policies: "Podem os demónios de Lisboa devastar a herança que nossos avós nos deixaram, aqui no latifúndio temos outro respeito pela sagrada pátria e sagrada fé" (*idem*: 359). Accordingly, the three-headed monstrosity comprising dictatorial government, Catholic clergy and landowning interests is depicted as fragile and prone to division, with the *latifundiários* resorting to regional parochialism and fulmination against "os demónios de Lisboa" whenever this contingent alliance is threatened.

Thus, while regional dynamics are an important aspect of the novel's ideological critique, Saramago's narrative rejects a solely *geographical* understanding of the Alentejan peasants' 'exclusion' (cf. Diakhité 2014: 55). Instead, it is clear that multiple inter-locking "differences of class, power and privilege" influence the socio-economic tensions within *Levantado* (Frier 2007: 43), with regionalist dynamics acting as a conduit for these intersecting factors. If one is to consider the *-berto*[249] local landlord families, for instance, it is apparent that they enjoy considerable financial privileges and freedoms; as Diakhité notes, despite their 'provincial origins' "Les ramifications de ces familles s'étendent bien au-delà des limites de la région" (2014: 45, 62). This is evident from their frequent trips to luxury resorts on Portugal's urbanised coast ("nos verões iam a banhos à Figueira [da Foz]" [Saramago 1994: 53]) and their desire to visit fashionable metropolitan centres once WWI has ended: "ai Paris, aonde estava decidido que a família iria mal acabasse a estúpida guerra" (*idem*: 54). Moreover, the author's depiction of these families as largely oblivious, absentee estate owners is exemplified by the gradual emigration of younger generations to the capital ("[t]inham prédios em Lisboa, e os mais novos da família, aos poucos, começavam a afastar-se de Monte Lavre" [*idem*: 53]), the impossibility of contacting them at times of extreme unemployment and material

[249] As both Frier and Gomes note, the fact that the *latifúndio*'s landholding families all have surnames ending with the *-berto* suffix indicates their homogeneity in terms of socio-economic class and political outlook (Frier 2007: 79; Gomes 1989: 189).

hardship ("[n]ão se vêem nestas alturas feitores nem capatazes nem manajeiros, muito menos se veriam patrões, todos fechados em suas casas, ou longe na capital e noutros resguardos" [*idem*: 56]) and their repeated conveyance of instructions from the metropolis: "tendo dito, ou avisados para Lisboa indolentemente o proferiram" (*idem*: 138). Therefore, although the novel certainly articulates a denunciation of socio-economic exclusion and inequality in spatialised terms, claims of a 'spatial deixis' ("«aí » et «no latifúndio, aqui»" [Diakhité 2014: 55]) should be treated with caution. For Saramago, political and economic exploitation of the Alentejan *latifúndio* (and of the peasantry that resides within it) take precedence over preconceptions of 'remoteness' or 'isolation' regarding the Alentejan land itself, as the narrator implies in chapter V: "entre o latifúndio monárquico e o latifúndio republicano não se viam diferenças e as parecenças eram todas" (Saramago 1994: 34).

In a broader sense, the author highlights the ideological significance of geographical dynamics within this novel through its first chapter / prologue, prior to the commencement of the diegesis proper. In particular, the narrator establishes a symbiosis (as well as a productive tension) between the concepts of "terra" and "paisagem", as seen in the chapter's first sentences: "o que mais há na terra, é paisagem. Por muito que do resto lhe falte, a paisagem sempre sobrou, [...] a paisagem é sem dúvida anterior ao homem, e apesar disso, de tanto existir, não se acabou ainda" (*idem*: 11). Aside from its possible allusions to Eça de Queirós's 'slogan' "Portugal é Lisboa e o resto é paisagem",[250] this excerpt describes "a paisagem" as a part and *product* of the land ("a terra"), although "a paisagem" ostensibly predates and potentially outlasts human presence. Precise distinctions between these two terms are necessary: on the one hand, "a terra" literally denotes 'land' or 'earth' – a seemingly unpoliticised territory that *may* or may *not* be used for agricultural activity; in Marxist terminology, the 'means of production' or the "base" (cf. Williams 1977: 81-82). "Paisagem", on the other hand, signifies 'landscape', which in both Portuguese and English can refer to the political, economic or cultural ordering of geographical territory by humankind – in other words, what Marxist literary critics would designate as a "superstructure" (Eagleton 2002: 5). Saramago therefore posits 'paisagem' as a

[250] See Chapter I for Queirós's exact comments.

cultural construction and as a dominant ideology, which only *appears* to be prehistoric and eternal. Accordingly, the chapter outlines the repeated transformation and distribution of land by land*scaping* (political and economic) processes:

> [A terra] como palma de mão coberta de linhas e caminhos, suas estradas reais, mais tarde nacionais, senão só da senhora câmara, […] e todo o mais deste destino está explicado nas linhas de ir e voltar [...]. [...]. Por esse tempo, e depois, se resolveu o que o futuro haveria de ser, por que vias da mão, este presente agora de terra retalhada entre os donos do cutelo e consoante o tamanho e o ferro ou gume do cutelo. (Saramago 1994: 12)

During this segment, the narrator articulates the deliberately unequal division of "terra" from past to present, as well as the incursion of national infrastructure ("estradas reais, mais tarde nacionais") which indelibly marked the land during the Monarchy, the First Republic and the *Estado Novo* dictatorship.[251] In this regard, the opening chapter's dialectical tension between "terra" and "paisagem" echoes David Harvey's claim that "[t]he inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the restless formation and re-formation of geographical landscapes" (2001: 333). What disadvantages the peasants of *Levantado*, therefore, is not the mere fact that they reside in the Alentejan *latifúndio* or their apparent 'remoteness' from the capital; instead, Saramago's ire is directed at the authoritarian and capitalist 'paisagização' of Portugal's natural environments, in the Alentejo and elsewhere. It is according to these criteria, and not simply those pertaining to a 'regional setting', that one can talk of 'regionalism' in *Levantado do chão*.

IV.1.2. The politics of the (Alentejan) peasant

With this 'regionalist' ideological critique firmly established, then, how might one describe Saramago's treatment of peasant resistance and political activism in the narrative? To respond to this question, it will be necessary to

[251] As discussed in I.1.

recall Mark Sabine's Gramscian analysis outlining "the development of a truly 'organic' workers' hegemony" in this novel (2016: 42), and to complement it with Eric Hobsbawm's comments on the politics of the peasantry compared to those of the industrial labour force: "It should be stressed that the difference is not one between 'traditional' societies 'without politics' and 'modern' ones with politics. There is politics in both" (1973: 5). While this statement seems rather self-evident and unnecessary, it is vital for understanding the preconceptions of peasant indifference and inaction that Saramago's novel challenges in its depiction of the Alentejan peasantry; across multiple chapters, the author stresses the intrinsic political consciousness of this region's agricultural proletariat.

Indeed, from an early stage in the diegesis, it is implied that these agricultural labourers within the Alentejan *latifúndio* have a tendency towards political contestation, which develops in intensity as the narrative progresses towards rebellion and, ultimately, revolution. This tendency is first made apparent during the initial years of the First Republic; when the peasants deliver a 'request' to the district administrator for more favourable working conditions, the narrator mentions their mood of 'agitation', their resentment of humiliating labour practices and debilitating government-imposed taxes, and their apparently 'menacing' tone:

> [O]s camponeses andavam agitados, protestavam contra as geiras e outras servidões, reclamavam contra o mau passadio a que eram condenados por impostos e tributações várias, o que, enfim, mais ou menos se exprimia na petição em tom de comedimento, talvez para disfarçar outras piores intenções. (Saramago 1994: 34)

Furthermore, as the narrator outlines the authorities' heavy-handed response to these protestors (dispatching the Republican Guard and arresting the ringleaders), the reader learns that strikes have also been coordinated (cf. *idem*: 35), which establishes a precedent for multiple acts of insurrection during Portugal's authoritarian regime: in 1945, João Mau-Tempo leads an illegal strike for a 33-escudo daily wage (cf. *idem*: 142-143); in 1958, local peasants protest

in Montermor against unemployment and the rigged Presidential Election of that year (cf. *idem*: 313); in 1962, the labourers secure the concession of an eight-hour working day (cf. *idem*: 333-341); after the April 1974 Revolution, the workers engage in occupation of large estates in the *latifúndio* (cf. *idem*: 361-366). Significantly, at no stage are the Alentejan peasants *directed* or *instructed* by an outside entity.

Returning to *Levantado*'s aformentioned opening chapter, it is clear that the implied reader is positioned from this moment onwards to interpret political consciousness and agency as an organic process, as opposed to the result of artificial manufacture or direction 'from above'. Specifically, this notion is expressed through the metaphors of planted agricultural crops (wheat) and topiary (cork oak):

> [O que acontece na paisagem] depende do que no chão se plantou e cultiva, ou ainda não, ou não já, ou do que por simples natureza nasceu, sem mão de gente, e só vem a morrer porque chegou o seu último fim. Não é tal o caso do trigo, que ainda com alguma vida é cortado. Nem do sobreiro, que vivíssimo, embora por sua gravidade o não pareça, se lhe arranca a pele. Aos gritos. (*Idem*: 11)

In this vivid symbolic imagery – which recalls "the fundamental concept in Émile Zola's *Germinal* of the radicalized proletariat as an 'organic' social force rising from the earth" (Sabine 2016: 35) – Saramago discounts the possibility of external interference in vegetation that has not necessarily been grown or even planted, but that has developed naturally and independently ("sem mão de gente"), much like the single flowers brought by João and António Mau-Tempo to the birth of Maria Adelaide, which result in "vales e as colinas [de flores cobertos]" (Saramago 1994: 356) by the end of the diegesis. Moreover, the prologue's brief reference to the process of cork cutting gestures towards the Alentejan peasantry's inherent potential for active resistance against violent repression ("Aos gritos"), establishing an expectation of peasant political activity within this narrative.

Following this first chapter, however, it is important to stress that the transgressive political actions of *Levantado*'s rural proletariat do not uniformly

correspond to pre-determined political tactics, as evidenced by the sudden refusal of Manuel Espada and his comrades to continue working with the "debulhadora" machine (chapter XII). When their overseer Anacleto warns them that he will blacklist them as 'strikers' ("Fiquem sabendo que os vou dar como grevistas"), the narrator observes the labourers' unfamiliarity with this terminology, despite the active choice they have taken to defy their employer: "Do que tal seja não sabem os insurrectos, por inocência da pouca idade e ignorância da prática" (*idem*: 101-102). In a later incident, this conception of 'resistance' as an intuitive, organic reaction to adverse material circumstances characterises João's leadership of a harvest boycott in order to secure a wage increase: "João Mau-Tempo abre a boca e as palavras saem, *tão naturais como se fossem água a correr de boa fonte*, Ficará a seara no pé, que nós não vamos por menos" (*idem*: 141, my emphasis). Moreover, in the following narratorial digression (chapter XV), the novel explicitly equates the gradual development of a rural proletarian political consciousness with the unnoticed biological processes of the Earth:

> [O]lhando nós este brejo que parece morto, só cegos de nascença ou por vontade própria não verão o frémito de água que do fundo vem subitamente à superfície, obra das tensões acumuladas no lodo, entre o fazer, desfazer e refazer químico, até ao rebentar do gás enfim liberto. [...] Se por um tempo nos afastarmos, distraídos em paisagens diferentes e casos pitorescos, veremos, ao voltar, como tudo estava afinal mudando e não parecia. (*Idem*: 125)

Through its evocative references to 'bubbling liquid' and 'accumulated tensions in the mud' within a seemingly 'dead swamp', this extract corresponds to Edwin Ardener's anthropological observations on supposedly 'remote areas', which he regards to be "event-rich, or event-dense": "Event-richness is like a small-scale, simmering, continuously generated set of singularities" (2012: 531). In a similar manner, Saramago's novel implies that political tension within the rural Alentejo is 'accumulating' in plain sight, undergoing a repeated process of chemical 'making', 'un-making' and 're-making' until a moment of liberation becomes inevitable.Finally, using the first-person plural "nós", the narrator addresses an

implied reader who is presumed to be ignorant of genuine political developments ("tudo estava afinal mudando e não parecia") within these ostensibly *a*political Alentejan plains.

In addition to illuminating 'concealed' socio-political processes through biological imagery, Saramago deploys irony at several moments in the diegesis, in order to lampoon both the salazarist dictatorship's attempts to instil "political apathy" in the Portuguese peasantry (Riegelhaupt 1979: 183), and any lingering assumptions in the late 1970s regarding Alentejan labourers' 'disengagement' from political activity. For instance, the author's use of humour manifests itself during the aforementioned Évora rally (chapter XI), when a speaker extolling the 'obedience' of Alentejan peasants is interrupted by a crude outburst from one of the agricultural workers in attendance:

> [L]embremo-nos de que a vida alentejana, ao contrário do que muita gente pensa, não é propícia ao desenvolvimento de ideias subversivas, porque os trabalhadores são verdadeiros sócios dos proprietários, partilhando com estes dos lucros e danos da lavoura, ah, ah, ah, Onde é que eu posso mijar, ó Requinta. (Saramago 1994: 95)

The citation above, aside from exposing the corporatist regime's hollow claims of 'partnership' between the Alentejan labourers and their employers, ridicules the dictatorship's idealisation of rural communities, as conservative 'bastions' against radicalisation in the country's urban centres. Most strikingly, the peasant's urge to urinate immediately after hearing the orator's words suggests a disdain for the *Estado Novo*'s bucolic discourse and a desire to *exhibit* that derision; to vulgarise Hobsbawm's and Scott's words, Saramago reveals that there is politics (and resistance) in pissing.

'Pissing', however, is revealed to be the least of the concerns that the "bicha de três cabeças" (State / Church / *latifúndio*) is forced to deal with in later decades, as opposition to the repressive *status quo* develops in scale and sophistication across the Alentejan plains. In chapter XIV, for example, Padre Agamedes expresses concern regarding the secret meetings of subversive peasants in the 'wilderness' and in abandoned houses: "Andam homens pelo

latifúndio, encontram-se aos três e aos quatro em sítios escondidos, nos ermos, às vezes em casas abandonadas, vigiando, outras vezes na abrigada de um vale, dois de aqui, dois de além" (Saramago 1994: 120-121). Nonetheless, the priest declines to credit these *camponeses* with an effective and coherent organisational structure of their own ("São malteses, são ciganos, são apóstolos, e quando acabam dispersam-se na paisagem, quando possa ser por caminhos desviados, levando papéis e decisões, A isto tudo chamam organização" [*idem: 121*]), and concurs with local political figures that this behaviour must have been imported and disseminated across the region:

> [A]inda ontem em conversa com o senhor presidente da junta ele me disse, Senhor padre Agamedes, olhe que a fatal doença já pegou na nossa vila, é preciso fazer qualquer coisa contra as perniciosas doutrinas que os inimigos da nossa fé e civilização andam a propagar entre as famílias [...]. (*Ibidem*)

This resolute refusal to countenance any possibility that the Alentejan peasants have established a political consciousness and organisational ability of their own is also apparent from the manner in which the Salazarist authorities address the subversive *camponeses* directly: in chapter XII, for example, tenente Contente is determined to discover who has 'taught' Manuel Espada and his co-workers to down tools and walk out of their job ("quem é que vos ensinou, vocês têm bons mestres [*idem*: 107]) and, when the labourers are released from interrogation, the administrator condescendingly instructs them to resist the 'lure' of dangerous propaganda: "não se deixem ir em cantigas, se aparecer alguém a querer dar-vos papéis ou de conversas subversivas, avisem a guarda que ela trata do assunto" (*ibidem*). While this instruction to avoid "cantigas" parodies the *Estado Novo*'s own 'folkloric' propagandistic strategies, it should be noted that in this scene (amongst others), local representantives of the New State regime significantly underestimate the Alentejan rural proletariat's innate potential for rebellious actions and behaviours, independent of (Communist) party direction.

This is not to suggest, though, that these Alentejan peasants do not engage with PCP doctrine or support that party's anti-capitalist objectives when

they encounter them. João Mau-Tempo is a case in point: in chapter XI, prior to this character's participation in (and leadership of) organised struggles against the *latifúndio* landowners, he reveals to Faustina that he has already read propaganda distributed by the Communist Party: "não entendo nada destes comunismos, bem, não é tanto assim, ainda na semana passada estavam uns papéis debaixo dumas pedras, com a ponta de fora, como se estivessem a acenar, e eu deixei-me ficar para trás e fui apanhá-los, ninguém viu" (*idem*: 90). João's comment here – which depicts this character as significantly more cognisant of Marxist ideology than Manuel Louvadeus in Aquilino Ribeiro's *Quando os lobos uivam*[252] – is corroborated by his attendance, alongside his comrade Sigismundo Canastro, at a meeting organised by PCP members in Terra Fria (chapter XXI). Nevertheless, as Sabine comments, *Levantado* "breaks with the Stalinist tenet of 'democratic centralism' in the revolutionary [Communist] party", and consistently "emphasizes the need for grass-roots level dialogue" (*idem*: 30). Specifically, this 1980 novel foreshadows Nancy Gina Bermeo's argument that the Alentejo's post-dictatorship land occupations were not directed or managed by the PCP (or others) "from above", but rather action taken "from below", on the peasant labourers' own initiative (1986: 56-57, 80).[253]

In particular, Saramago repeatedly juxtaposes the notion of revolution [or revolt] 'from above' with the independent, self-directed revolutionary activity of the Alentejan rural proletariat. For example, the author establishes a divide between Portugal's military rebellions of 1961 (Henrique Galvão's famed hi-jacking of the Santa Maria ship and the *Revolta de Beja*) and the struggles of the *latifúndio* labourers, who have not been been consulted or included with regards to these anti-salazarist initiatives: "bem esteve que se tivesse tomado o Santa Maria, e daí, bem está que em Beja se tentasse, e daí, mas a nós, cães e formigas do latifúndio, ninguém nos veio perguntar se aquelas eram as nossas navegações e estes os nossos assaltos" (Saramago 1994: 325). In 1974, when news of Lisbon's Carnation Revolution reaches the peasants in and around Monte Lavre, it is significant that their initial reaction is an interrogation of how the nouns "revolução", "democracia" and "igualdade" have been repeatedly

[252] See II.2.

[253] See I.1. for Bermeo's (and others') comments on the 1974-6 peasant occupations.

defined and monopolised by others: "não era fácil entender o que é uma revolução e como se faz, e se nos puséssemos com explicações de palavra, o mais certo seria alguém dizer, perguntar, com todo o ar de quem não acredita, Ah, isso é que é uma revolução" (*idem*: 351); "tanto se apregoou de mudanças e de esperanças, [...] andam aí a rádio e a televisão a pregar democracias e outras igualdades, [...] quem me explica que revolução é esta" (*idem*: 357). These passages, far from illustrating the ignorance and minimal political consciousness of these agricultural labourers, actually suggest that 25/04/1974 *golpe de estado* did not, in itself, succeed in effecting revolutionary change for proletarian workers in Portugal's agrarian South. Instead, Saramago explicitly describes the peasants' victories against their employers (before and after the April 1974 coup) as 'revolutions': when they secure an eight-hour in 1962, the narrator remarks "é uma revolução, oito horas de trabalho no latifúndio" (*idem*: 338), and, on the day that they occupy the empty estates after the dictatorship's fall, the author repeats the term: "os anjos varrem o céu, é dia de revolução" (*idem*: 364). With these remarks in its closing chapters, *Levantado* celebrates the Alentejan proletariat's potential for achieving radical political, social and economic transformation on its own doorstep, with the novel echoing Williams's statement in 1973 that "the 'rural idiots' and the 'barbarians and semi-barbarians' have been, for the last forty years, the main revolutionary force in the world" (Williams 2016: 436). The question that remains, therefore, is the degree to which this narrative's rural peasantry interacts *with* that outside world.

Although certain scholars have commented on *Levantado*'s 'universal dimension' – insofar as it surpasses its 'specific' and 'particular' regional environment (cf. Besse 2008: 20, 103; Silva 1989: 197) –, a more detailed analysis reveals a thoroughly grounded and localised 'militant particularism' which, while never fully relinquishing its links to the political, social and economic particularities of Portugal's southern *latifundia*, repeatedly gestures towards the need for global political struggle. One can highlight, for example the awareness-raising and coalition-building that occurs in the narrative between anti-capitalist and anti-Salazarist individuals in distinct settings and socio-economic circumstances; as Sabine notes, "the protagonists achieve an effective understanding of their socio-economic situation only through the integration of the 'falas mil' [...] of smallholders and landless labourers, of urban proletariat

and intellectuals, of emigrants, soldiers, women, children, and others" (2016: 22-23). This is evident from the aforementioned PCP meeting, during which João Mau-Tempo and Sigismundo Canastro share their life experiences together with members of the urban proletariat ("Cada um disse das suas razões" [Saramago 1994: 212]), as well as the 'teaching and learning' environment of João's Lisbon prison, in which he converses with subversives from across the country: "Conversa-se muito na sala seis, discutem-se assuntos de política e outras matérias, [...] é uma universidade popular" (*idem*: 259). However, João's interaction with the seemingly non-political Lisbon residents Ricardo and Ermelinda Reis[254] is also significant: while the charity and compassion that these *lisboetas* offer to him following his release from prison forces him to rethink his mistrust of the city ("terra afinal branda de Lisboa" [*idem*: 265]), the Alentejan peasant also informs the couple of his recent incarceration, which elicits an empathetic response: "conta o que na prisão passou [...] está Ricardo Reis muito sério e Ermelinda Reis enxuga os olhos" (*ibidem*). In these instances, the narrative approximates to Raymond Williams's appeal for a united political front between rural and urban communities: "Neither will the city save the country nor the country the city. Rather the long struggle within both will become a general struggle, as in a sense it has always been" (2016: 432-433).

Levantado's construction of trans-geographical coalitions is not limited to a simple conciliation of Portugal's 'city vs. country' divide, however, given that Monte Lavre's material struggles exists within an unmistakably trans-national context. On the one hand, Alentejan labourers within this novel interact and collaborate with like-minded individuals on a trans-national scale, as exemplified by António Mau-Tempo's correspondence with his comrade while working in France, the Spaniard Miguel Hernandez: "é como se ambos estivessem a fazer sinais de um lado para o outro da fronteira" (Saramago 1994: 289). On the other hand, the narrator repeatedly equates the immediate adverse circumstances faced by this Alentejan peasantry with international conflicts, such as the First World War ("Guerras também as havia ali, e não pequenas" [*idem*: 47]) and the Second: "No inventário das guerras tem o latifúndio a sua parte, ainda que não exagerada" (*idem*: 115). The difference between these two

[254] A rendering of Fernando Pessoa's heteronym, to which Saramago would return in later works.

passages is striking: while the narrator's references to WWI (in which Alentejan peasants fought in the Portuguese army) emphasise the 'great wars' taking place within the *latifúndio* itself ("guerras [...] não pequenas"), the second citation is far more circumspect regarding the rural Alentejo's involvement in the Second World War (in which Portugal was ostensibly neutral, but in engaged in significant trade with both sides): "a sua parte [...] não exagerada".[255] The net effect is to posit this region's rural proletariat as a *bona fide* participant in transformational global events, thereby converging with Harvey's favourable view of "struggles which overcome the parochialisms inherent in the geography of our situation and in the situation of geography" (2001: 37).

This insistence on including *Levantado*'s rural proletariat within broader events and dynamics is equally apparent in the parallels that local peasants establish between political unrest within the Alentejan *latifúndio* and the struggles of subjugated populations across the Portuguese Empire (cf. Frier 2007: 49). This equivalence is made explicit towards the end of the diegesis, when an unidentified labourer laments the continuation of socio-economic injustice and conflict in the Alentejo after the Carnation Revolution, while the "guerras de libertação" in Portugal's African colonies are already coming to an end: "que libertação foi esta, então já se fala que vai acabar a guerra em África e não acaba esta do latifúndio" [Saramago 1994: 357]). Through this commonality of purpose – with the Alentejans comparing their own local conflicts to the 'wars' still being fought across the Portuguese Empire – Saramago further refutes the assumption that such peasant communities in Portugal were 'removed' from international occurrences, although the author's point is somewhat blunted by his failure to acknowledge the civil wars that broke out in Angola and Mozambique, almost immediately after those countries achieved independence.

The biggest obstacle to *Levantado*'s construction of trans-regional and trans-national solidarities, however, is the geographical imbalance of its scope; although the narrator acknowledges nation-wide support for the oppositionist candidate General Humberto Delgado in the 1958 Presidential Election ("entre

[255] Portugal sold multiple goods and raw materials to the Allied and Axis powers, some of which were produced by Alentejan peasant labour (cf. Golson 2020: 79-110).

o Minho e o Algarve, entre a costa do mar e a raia do levante se agitaram as populações ao nome e verbo do general" [Saramago 1994: 305]), it is overwhelmingly apparent that the direct political action in which the Alentejan rural proletariat is involved is dominated by (agrarian and urban) areas of *southern* Portugal. This 'southern bias' can be observed, for example, in these peasants' secret coordination of strikes during 1945, which do not extend further north than the towns of Portalegre and Santarém: "Há ali no grupo quem pergunte, E nos outros sítios, há quem responda, [...] É o mesmo, em Beja, em Santarém, em Portalegre, em Setúbal, que isto não é ideia duma cabeça só, ou arrancamos juntos esta raiz ou estamos perdidos" (*idem*: 143). In this excerpt, although the notion of solidarity and common purpose is certainly present ("isto não é ideia duma cabeça só"), the towns listed are restricted to the southern Ribatejo and Alentejo regions, suggesting a reluctance to engage with communities in Portugal's North and Centre which, as outlined in Chapter I, has consistently been associated with political conservatism. Moreover, in the novel's closing scenes of revolutionary peasant action, Saramago's imagery of convergence between different areas ("De todos os lugares de trabalho confluem as máquinas, [...] é preciso ligar com os que vêm dos outros sítios, [...] e a coluna engrossou, torna-se ainda mais forte lá adiante" [*idem*: 364]) is tempered by the knowledge that the 1974-6 occupations and other revolutionary activities were vigorously opposed in "lugares de trabalho" north of the Ribatejo – an historical fact that is never acknowledged in this conclusion to *Levantado*.[256] There is, then, a certain reticence and inconsistency in terms of the trans-geographical solidarity that the novel otherwise purports to champion.

That said, it would be wrong to suggest that Saramago's narrative never engages with peasant commnities in northern and central Portugal; in chapter V, for example, an illuminating confrontation takes place in the *latifúndio* between striking Alentejan labourers and "ratinhos" (migrant workers from the Beira) who have been recruited to break the strike:

[256] See I.1. regarding peasant opposition to the occupations in northern and central Portugal.

> Estão agora dois grupos de trabalhadores frente a frente [...]. Dizem os do norte, Há leis, fomos contratados e queremos trabalhar. Dizem os do sul, Sujeitam-se a ganhar menos, vêm aqui fazer-nos mal, voltem para a vossa terra, ratinhos. […] Dizem os do sul, Aqui não trabalham, […] Dizem os do sul, Esta terra é nossa. (*Idem*: 37)

At the beginning of this sequence, one can observe an attitude of territorialism and hostility on the part of these Alentejans towards the threatening 'outsiders' ("voltem para a vossa terra" / "esta terra é nossa"), but, as Sabine notes, this focus on "regional identity" fails to "cut much ice" (2016: 39). Accordingly, the southern peasants change tack, attempting to establish a "common bargaining position" (*ibidem*) or a trans-regional 'popular front', and referring to the beirões as 'brothers': "Dizemos os do sul, É um engano, querem enganar-nos a todos, nós não temos que consentir neste salário, juntem-se a nós e o patrão terá de pagar melhor jorna a toda a gente. [...] Irmãos, dêem ouvidos ao que dizemos, juntem-se a nós, por alma de quem lá têm" (Saramago 1994: 327). In Sabine's view, this passage is "instructive", representing a "(dialectical) clash of perspectives [which] breaks [the Alentejans'] ideological isolation" (Sabine 2016: 46). Certainly, the southerners' shift away from regional isolation towards a discourse of unity can be viewed as a successful exercise in overcoming geographical "parochialisms", as explored by Harvey (2001: 37). Nonetheless, it is significant that the Beira labourers comprehensively reject this approach ("não queremos alianças, viemos de longe, não podemos ficar aqui em guerras com o patrão, queremos trabalhar" [Saramago 1994: 37]) and engage in physical conflict with the Alentejans: "então o primeiro do norte avançou para o trigo com a foice, e o primeiro do sul deitou-lhe a mão ao braço, empurraram-se sem agilidade, rijos, rude, brutos, fome contra fome, miséria sobre miséria, pão que tanto nos custas" (*idem*: 37-38). Hence, what Sabine regards as a caveat "no agreement can be achieved [between the two sides]" (2016: 39) is in fact a significant restriction in *Levantado*'s construction of a broader political alliance: although this exchange undoubtedly helps the southern peasants to develop political solidarity and empathy with other labourers, the same cannot be said of the *beirões* who, incidentally, are never mentioned again (indeed, no mention of

any other northern and central peasant communities can be found before the end of the narrative).

To what extent, then, can *Levantado* be regarded as a geographically circumscribed novel, which illustrates how "a regional social revolution emerged within the national political revolution" in 1970s Portugal (Bermeo 1986: 100) but fails to situate the Alentejan rural protagonists within a broader anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist struggle outside of their own region? Does the novel accept or challenge Eric Hobsbawm's argument that great peasant movements "all appear to be regional, or coalitions of regional movements" (1973: 9)? To conclude my analysis of this narrative, I will address several evocative metaphors that Saramago evokes within the diegesis, all of which emphasise the importance of a simultaneously local and global strategy of "militant particularism". While Sabine has highlighted the significance of the *milhano* (red kite) as a symbol of "panoramic vision" and "comprehensive historical perspectives" in the final chapter of the novel (2011: 56),[257] other images in *Levantado* are indicative of a recurring local vs. global dialectic.

The first repeated metaphor to consider in this regard is Saramago's concept of an 'inland sea',[258] which, before being mentioned explicitly, is indirectly alluded to during Faustina Mau-Tempo's journey to Lisbon to visit João in prison (chapter XXIV). In this sequence, Faustina reveals her unfamiliarity with Portugal's coastal landscape when she refers to the Tejo estuary as a 'sea', "Ai, comadre, isto é que [é] o mar", whereas her *lisboeta* companion also reveals her own "ignorância do que o mar verdadeiramente seja" (Saramago 1994: 256-257). Following this, the narrator depicts the Atlantic ocean beyond the Tejo's river mouth as a space of apparently infinite possibilities and epic exploits: "não este parco abrir de braços entre duas torres, mas uma ânsia líquida e infinita, um remexer continuado de massas de vidro e espuma, uma dureza mineral que amolece e enregela, o lugar dos grandes peixes e dos lutuosos naufrágios, poesias" (idem: 257). Following this evocative

[257] As Sabine notes, *Levantado*'s reference to the *milhano* recuperates a recurring "symbol" of neo-realism, which Ana Paula Ferreira has identified in multiple neo-realist texts (cf. Sabine 2011: 56; Ferreira 1992: 153).

[258] Margaret Jull Costa's translation (Saramago 2012: 314).

depiction of the sea as a combination of different elements in liquid and solid states, at the beginning of chapter XXIX the narrator explicitly refers to the *latifúndio* as a "mar interior":

> O latifúndio é um mar interior. [...] É mediterrânico mar, mas tem marés e ressacas, correntes macias que levam tempo a dar a volta inteira, e às vezes rápidos surtos que sacodem a superfície. [...] São comparações que tanto servem como servem pouco, dizer que o latifúndio é um mar, mas terá sua razão de fácil entendimento, se esta água agitarmos, toda a outra em redor se move, às vezes de tão longe que os olhos o negam […]. (*Idem*: 319)

This passage – which leaves room for multiple interpretations ("comparações que tanto servem como servem pouco") – has been interpreted as an ironic re-visiting of Portugal's history of maritime 'exploration' and 'conquest' (cf. Frier 2007: 81), or as an attempt to establish an Alentejan peasant 'counter-epic' tone (cf. Silva 1989: 193-194; Diakhité 2014: 63). There are several remarks that I would make in addition to the above: firstly, that the narrator consistently evokes imagery of concealed or undetected activity ("correntes macias"; "às vezes de tão longe que os olhos o negam"), surreptitiously operating within a maritime body of hidden depths: "na escura profundidade se enrolam lentamente as vagas" (Saramago 1994: 319). Moreover, Saramago's metaphor links specific, localised political struggles to external patterns of agitation and disturbance: "se esta água agitarmos, toda a outra em redor se move". The coexistence of two seemingly incompatible territorial concepts within the same expression ("mar" as noun and "interior" as adjective) portrays the Alentejans' seemingly remote struggles within their *latifúndio* environment as potentially connected to a broader political consciousness and collectivity, with this alternative 'Meditarranean' sea appearing in contrast to Portugal's historic reverance for the Atlantic Ocean. If, in Saramago's words, the very notion of ideology can be understood as an "espécie de mar" (*apud* Reis 1998: 73), then the author's use of the adjective "interior" as an adjective can be interpreted as a *localising, particularising* and, ultimately, *repositioning* strategy, connecting an 'ocean' of

transversal political thought with specific and contained socio-political struggles.

A second metaphor deployed by Saramago to complicate this novel's local vs. global dynamics is the narrator's comparison of 'the world' – as seen from Monte Lavre – to a delicate clock / watch (chapter XVI):

> *[O] mundo é, visto de Monte Lavre*, uma coisa delicada, um relogiozito que só pode aguentar um tanto de corda e nem uma volta mais [...]. [...]. Mas, se lhe tiram a casa, se o vento, o sol, e a humidade começam a girar e a bater por dentro dele, (...). *Visto de Monte Lavre, o mundo é* um relógio aberto, está com as tripas ao sol, à espera de que chegue a sua hora. (Saramago 1994: 137-138, my emphasis)

Inevitably, this depiction of an open clock with its innards exposed to the sun invites temporal readings, with Sabine commenting on how this imagery exposes the "erroneous indication of a cyclical movement of time" and the narrative's shift towards a diachronic framework of historical development (2016: 48). At the same time, this passage invites *spatial* interpretations: in Saramago's repetition of the phrase "the world is, seen from Monte Lavre" ("o mundo é, visto de Monte Lavre"; "Visto de Monte Lavre, o mundo é"), the syntax is inverted, with the narrator giving precedence to "o mundo" in the first instance and to "visto de Monte Lavre" in the second. The alternation here is subtle, but significant: it suggests an ongoing effort to foreground the particular perspective and localised standpoint of these Monte Lavre peasants, within a global context that their employers will later refuse to acknowledge that they are a part of: "Isto aqui não é mundo, é Portugal e Alentejo" (Saramago 1994: 332). Returning to the 'clock' imagery above, the author's evolving use of the term "relógio" – from the diminuitive "relogiozito" to an uncovered "relógio aberto" represents a shift from a limited, 'parochial' mindset towards an holistic, open and politically engaged one, made possible only through the removal of supposedly 'protective' restrictions ("se lhe tiram a casa, se o vento, o sol e a humidade começam a girar e a bater dentro dele"); in other words, only by breaking through an externally imposed structure of isolation (as symbolised by

the glass watch case) can the Alentejan rural proletariat comprehend their specific positioning within a wider "mundo".

Later, in chapter XXVIII, the narrator outlines Monte Lavre's developing relationship with the outside world through lunar imagery, describing 'moonlight' as a tool available to the peasants for increasing their awareness of external dynamics, and for (momentarily) illuminating their positionality within a much broader political context:

> Se [estas noites] lua têm, deste alto de Monte Lavre vê-se o mundo todo, faz de conta, não somos assim tão ignorantes que não saibamos que o mundo é muito maior do que isto, [...] neste silêncio, qualquer pessoa acreditaria, até eu, se lhe viessem dizer, Não há mais mundo, a não ser Montemor aonde iremos segunda-feira pedir trabalho. (*Idem*: 309)

While Saramago's concentration on "luar" here is a possible reference to Luís de Sttau Monteiro's 1961 play *Felizmente há luar!*,[259] this cosmological imagery can also be examined in terms of the revolutionary possibilities that it may or may not offer. If, according to Sabine's analysis of lunar imagery in *Memorial do convento*, moonlight functioned as "a metaphor for resistance", of "hope" and of "enlightenment" in the "oppositionist symbolic code of the Salazar era" (2016: 107), *Levantado*'s reference to "luar" outlined above might be read in similarly political terms. Nevertheless, the author's heavily *caveated* and *equivocal* depiction of lunar illumination ("*se* lua tem") suggests a contingent, temporary and incomplete process of political self-realisation, as reliable as the weather conditions and calendar cycles that allow – or do not allow – moonlight to be visible in the night sky. The novel's relationship between the *aldeia* of Monte Lavre and the wider "mundo", then, is far from conclusive, and is better understood as a strategic fluctuation between different scales of political agency, thereby corresponding with Hobsbawm's argument that major peasant movements operate on a liminal plane "somewhere inbetween" the microcosm and the macrocosm (1973: 8).

[259] See Margaret Jull Costa's remarks (Saramago 2012: 303, footnote 3).

Finally, it would be helpful to revisit Saramago's repeated allusions to "paisagem" and "terra", which establish a shifting, dynamic relationship between particularism and generality. In chapter I, this is achieved through the author's oscillation between the demonstrative prounoun "esta" ("esta paisagem" / "esta terra" (Saramago 1994: 11), the indirect object pronoun "uma" ("É uma terra ainda assim grande" (*idem*: 12) and the direct object pronoun "a" (in a short, ambivalent fragment, simply stating "A terra" [*ibidem*]. This rapid alternation between specificity and universality can also be observed in the narrator's claim that "não faltam ao mundo cheiros, nem sequer a esta terra, parte que dele é e servida de paisagem" (*idem*: 11), which simultaneously describes *landscape* as being part of the *land* and *land* as being part of the *world*, with the intricate syntactical construction "parte que dele é e servida de". The intimate correlation that Saramago establishes here between the local and the global ("terra", "paisagem" and "mundo") is reinforced by the last chapter of the narrative, in which the narrator depicts the exact location of the first peasant occupation as *unknown* (and even perhaps *irrelevant*), but also *unique*: "E então num sítio qualquer do latifúndio, a história lembrar-se-á de dizer qual, os trabalhadores ocuparam uma terra" (*idem*: 361). In this passage, a sentiment of geographical unimportance ("num sítio qualquer") combines with an imprecise reference to "uma terra", in order to emphasise the *militant particularism* of the Alentejan rural proletariat's revolutionary actions at the end of this diegesis.

Levantado do chão, then, is a novel that exposes and destabilises extant perceptions of rural isolation, city vs. country (and capital vs. province) binaries, and the Portuguese peasantry's political disengagement. Instead, the author presents the Alentejans' material and political struggles as simultaneously located and connected to a global (national and international) context. As Sabine suggests, this narrative does not claim to present a simplistic, indiscriminate "microcosm" of the nation or indeed of universal socio-economic circumstances (cf. 2016: 31), as evidenced by its refusal to 'co-opt' the peasants of northern and central Portugal into the South's political radicalism. Nevertheless, Saramago's oscillation between geographical precision and a broader unity of purpose corresponds to Williams's view that "almost all labour struggles begin as particularist", and that "the defence and advancement of certain particular interests, properly brought together, are in fact the general interest" (1989: 249).

In effect, this narrative proposes a rooted, regionally specific and place-centred socialist project, in a similar manner to Saramago's later novel *A Caverna* which, despite its geographical imprecision, shares the regionalist ideological concerns and 'politics of place' that I have outlined in *Levantado*.

IV.2. *A caverna*: the non-specific particular

When *Caverna* was published in 2000, Saramago had already established a formidable international reputation, primarily due to an increasing number of translations of his fiction and the fact that he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998. The 1990s can be regarded as an important period of transition for Saramago's literary output: critics have noted the author's shift from historically and geographically situated novels (such as *Levantado*) towards ambivalently located and largely allegorical narratives like *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* (1995). Christoper Rollason interprets this development as a result of radical socio-economic change in Portugal and elsewhere: "as if cultural particularity had vanished under the standardising pressures of globalisation" (2004: 208). This "globalisation vs. particularism" dialectic is, as Rollason notes, a useful starting point for examining *Caverna*, although the novel's 'particularist' dynamics should also be read in a 'militant' light, in line with Williams and Harvey.

In contrast to *Levantado*, Saramago's 2000 narrative is concerned not with a collective peasant proletariat in a particular region, but with the trials and tribulations of a single family (the ageing Cipriano Algor, his daughter Marta and his son-in-law Marçal Gacho) residing in a pottery, within a non-descript rural "aldeia". Specifically, *Caverna* depicts the struggle of this household to survive the existential threat posed by "o Centro" – an enormous and constantly expanding commercial and residential complex – from which their village is separated by several intermediary spaces: an agricultural "Cintura Agrícola" / "Cintura Verde", a "Cintura Industrial", a neighbourhood of "barracas" slums that represent the urban boundary, a constantly shrinking "terra-de-ninguém" which has not yet been built upon, and finally the "cidade" within which the *Centro* is located. Cipriano's traditional pottery business, having supplied the *Centro* with personally-crafted clay crockery for some time, is forced to

definitively cease trading and dispose of its unsold wares, after his contract of exclusivity is cancelled due to declining demand (and a proliferation of plastic kitchenware). The potter elects to place his rejected products in a "gruta" (cave) beyond the village, in the hope that they can be recovered and appreciated in a distant future. Although Cipriano and Marta succeed in convincing the Buying Manager to purchase a trial run of their newly-devised products (clay figurines painted to resemble a number of livelihoods and professions), this new endeavour ultimately fails too, when the *Centro*'s customers display little enthusiasm for such merchandise. Simultaneously, Marçal's long hours of shift work at the *Centro* as a security guard eventually grant the whole family resident status there, leading to Cipriano's reluctant decision to join them in the artificial complex. The narrative's final section portrays the interior of the *Centro* and the family's ultimate rejection of life within the building's synthetic environment, having discovered underneath the complex a sinister repetition of Plato's Cave allegory: a group of human bodies chained to a bench, staring at a wall of simulated images (the "shadows" of Plato's original allegorical image). Devastated by the realisation that these corpses 'are them', the family members, Cipriano's girlfriend Isaura and their new dog Achado flee the *Centro* forever (and also depart from their pottery home in the village), and set off towards an unknown final destination.

Multiple scholars have often commented on this novel's correspondence with late twentieth-century neo-liberal globalisation processes, but have seldom remarked upon the historical capitalist transformation of urban and rural environments addressed by Williams (cf. Schulenburg 2004: 284-285; Nashef 2015: 217). Other critics have analysed *Caverna* through the prisms of "rooted cosmopolitanism" (Klobucka 2001: XVIII), "a tangled intertwining of global and anti-global" (Rollason 2004: 207), the struggle between "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces (Frier 2007: 112), patterns of relentless "consumption" (Frier 2014: 122), "surveillance studies" (Rodrigues 2019: 271-286) and the concept of the 'non-place' (cf. Cardoso / Leão 2020: 106-108). All of the above will be relevant for my spatial reading of *Caverna* to some extent, although I propose to undertake a more systematic analysis of the narrative's 'regionalist' dynamics.

My task in this section of the novel, then, will be twofold: Firstly, I will examine how Saramago's 2000 novel destabilises geographical binaries and spatial preconceptions, through its depiction of multiple territories shaped by late-twentieth capitalism, culminating in the ominous *Centro* – an architectural manifestation of contemporary neo-liberalism's success in replacing *reality* with Platonic *simulacra*. Secondly, I shall outline the narrative's 'militant particularist' approach to resistance, which rejects a simplistic model of bucolic nostalgia while espousing a highly politicised form of mourning, involving the meticulous placement, localisation and preservation of historical remnants. Accordingly, this study of *Caverna* will mirror and complement my earlier analysis of *Levantado*, which, as mentioned, contains a finely balanced dialectical relationship between local and global spheres of political action.

IV.2.1 Spatial preconceptions and their undoing

First of all, one should note that *Caverna*, like *Levantado*, engages in a systematic deconstruction of what initially appears to be a rural vs. urban dichotomy. This strategy is apparent, for instance, in the narrator's musings on Cipriano Algor's "aldeia" and on its supposed isolation and simplicity, as seen in chapter II's description of the village:

> A povoação começava uns cem metros além, era pouco mais que a estrada que lhe passava ao meio, umas quantas ruas que a ela vinham desembocar, um praça irregular que fazia barriga para um lado só, aí um poço fechado, com a sua bomba de tirar água e a grande roda de ferro, à sombra de dois altos plátanos. (Saramago 2000: 29)

This passage outlines the apparent primitiveness and lack of sophistication within this "povoação" (settlement), as well as the village's solitude, low population density and relative lack of infrastrucure. At later points in the narrative, however, Saramago problematises the notion that this settlement is remote or isolated from 'civilization'. In chapter III, for example, when the narrator ironically mentions the fact that the 'villager' Marta Algor studied in

the "cidade", suggesting that large population centres must have *some* advantage over rural communities: "Marta, sendo da última geração, mais favorecida, portanto, pelas ajudas ao desenvolvimento, já gozou da sorte grande de ir estudar à cidade, que alguma vantagem hão-de ter sobre as aldeias os grandes núcleos de população" (*idem*: 51-52). Following this same logic, chapter V critiques preconceptions of a gulf between rural 'simplicity' / 'idiocy' and urban 'civilization' and knowledge, when the narrator deploys hyperbole in reference to the size of the Algor household's personal library:

> Como será fácil imaginar, a biblioteca da família Algor não é extensa em quantidade nem excelsa em qualidade. De *pessoas populares*, e *num sítio como este, apartado da civilização*, não haveria que esperar excessos de sapiência, mas, ainda assim, podem contar-se por duas ou três centenas os livros arrumados nas prateleiras [...]. (*Idem*: 73, my emphasis)

Specifically, this reference to "pessoas populares", and this description of the Algor family home as a "sítio [...] apartado da civilização" is a potential echo of the Alentejan peasantry's presumed remoteness ("afastamento do mundo") in *Levantado* (Saramago 1994: 115). In fact, *Caverna* uses precisely the same verb ("afastar") when, in chapter VII, the narrator outlines the Gacho family's 'small-minded' antipathy towards the Algors but simultaneously asserts that such acrimony is not limited to 'villages cut off from civilization': "Não é só em aldeias afastadas da civilização que os apêndices cerebrais humanos são capazes de gerar ideias assim" [Saramago 2000: 108]).

Towards the end of the diegesis, Saramago goes further in his dismantling of 'rural barbarity' stereotypes, in his strategic repetition of the term "civilização". This pattern is exemplified in chapter XIX, when Cipriano reflects on his abandoned pottery as "as derradeiras sobras de uma antiga civilização" (*idem*: 305).[260] This passage pivots from (ironically) depicting the Algor's rustic abode as "afastada da civilização", to portraying their rural existence as 'a civilization' in its own right. In this way, the novel *decentres* the presumed

[260] I shall return to this except later.

'locations' of political agency, self-awareness and knowledge, and destabilises the assumptions underpinning 'urban' (civilised) vs. 'rural' ('primitive') divides.

Moreover, Saramago's rejection of a simplistic 'countryside' vs. 'city' dichotomy is reflected in the narrative's ambivalent treatment of the "cidade", with this urban environment often being portrayed as an unexceptional space that the Algor family happen to travel through every time they visit the *Centro*. In chapter I, for example, when Cipriano Algor and Marçal Gacho traverse the *cidade*'s centripetal structure, this envionment is depicted simply as a transitory network of paths:

> Já estavam na periferia da cidade, haveria ainda que percorrer umas quantas ruas de traçado confuso, virar à esquerda, virar à direita, outra vez à esquerda, [...], em frente, finalmente desembocariam numa praça a partir da qual se acabavam as dificuldades, uma avenida em linha recta levava-os aos seus destinos [...]. (*Idem*: 17)

In the above passage, the narrator is concerned not with the features, characteristics or particularities of this city, but with its spiral-like urban plan and the ability of its roads to lead travellers to more pressing "destinos" – namely, the *Centro*.

Before engaging in a close analysis of this ominous complex, though, it would be helpful to evaluate the multiple *intermediary* spaces that Saramago's novel outlines between the *cidade* and the *aldeia*, given that these locales are used to critique real-life instances of economic exploitation, political repression and territorial transformation in Portugal and elsewhere. The first locale to consider in this regard is that of the *barracas* situated on the *cidade*'s boundary, which houses excluded communities and is explicitly differentiated from the city in the novel's opening chapter:

> Depois da Cintura Industrial principia a cidade, enfim, *não a cidade propriamente dita, essa avista-se lá adiante*, tocada como uma carícia pela primeira e rosada luz do sol, o que aqui se vê são aglomerações caóticas de barracas feitas de quantos

> materiais, na sua maioria precários, pudessem ajudar a defender das intemperies […] os seus mal abrigados moradores. É, no dizer dos habitantes da cidade, um lugar assustador. (*Idem*: 14, my emphasis)

Here, the spatial marginalisation of these "aglomerações caóticas" is clear, with inhabitants that "não se enquadram no sistema" and are "excluídos para a periferia" (Baltazar 2014: 234). A later scene (in chapter VI) denotes the repression of these communities by armed authorities, when Cipriano observes the military's entry into "the barracas" on the potentially false premise of subduing violence: "de súbito a faísca soltou, a luz se fez, o camião não fora queimado pela gente das barracas, mas pela própria polícia, era um pretexto para a intervenção do exército. (Saramago 2000: 91). The descriptions above of a residential zone that is technically within the city boundary, but that is excluded from civic participation in that space ("não a cidade propriamente dita"), not only recalls the 'poetics of exclusion' that Diakhité identifies within *Levantado* (cf. 2014: 88), but also highlights severe socio-economic injustices within urban environments that pre-date *Caverna*'s publication by several decades. Besides its obvious allusions to *favelas* on the outskirts of Brazilian cities (cf. Perlman 2010, 74, 175) and *banlieue* ghettos on the peripheries of Paris (Bronner 2010), Saramago's use of the term *barracas* gestures towards the working-class "bairros de barracas" that rapidly developed on Lisbon's borders during the 1950s and 60s ("do 'lado de la' da estrada, onde já não é Lisboa" [Cardoso / Perista 1994: 100]), and, more recently, to the police brutality, social exclusion and racial discrimination associated with the capital's peripheral communities from the 1980s onwards (cf. Cardoso / Perista 1994: 103-104; Cuberos-Gallado 2017: 237).[261] The author's dismantling of rural-urban dichotomies is therefore achieved through a critical analysis of liminal spaces within a supposedly homogeneous city environment.

Secondly, it is important to consider *Caverna*'s characterisation of the "Cintura Agrícola" / "Cintura Verde", which problematises idyllic

[261] These circumstances are particularly characteristic of the *Cova da Moura* and *Bairro de Jamaica* neighbourhoods of Greater Lisbon, which have become increasingly populated by ethnic minority immigrants from Portugal's former colonies.

preconceptions of agricultural labour. In chapter I, for example, the narrator evokes unflattering geometric imagery to describe the stark greenhouse structures disfiguring this ironically named 'green' belt:

> A região é fosca, suja [...]. Alguém deu a estas enormes extensões de aparência nada campestre o nome técnico de Cintura Agrícola, e também, por analogia poética, o de Cintura Verde, mas a única paisagem que os olhos conseguem alcançar nos dois lados da estrada, cobrindo sem solução de continuidade perceptível muitos milhares de hectares, são grandes armações de tecto plano, rectangulares, feitas de plásticos de uma cor neutra que o tempo e as poeiras, aos poucos, foram desviando ao cinzentos e ao pardo. (Saramago 2000: 12)

In this description of the 'region' as 'murky' and 'dirty', and dominated by angular buildings dedicated to intensive agriculture, Saramago recovers the ironic critique of bucolic / idyllic tropes seen in *Levantado*, this time with reference to late twentieth-century agricultural techniques. Specifically, this excerpt refers to the *Cintura Agrícola*'s "aparência nada campestre", the "analogia poética" according to which this area has been nicknamed the *Cintura Verde*, and the fact that the only "paisagem" that can be observed is that of dull greenhouse outlines across the horizon, organised in a modular manner across "milhares de hectares" – much like the novel's later references to "milhares de janelas" within the *Centro* complex (*idem*: 100). Subsequently, during another one of Cipriano's journeys to the *Centro* (chapter VI), the author explicitly depicts the *Cintura Agrícola* as an infinite "sea of plastic", characterised by cold artificiality: "esta cor de gelo sujo que cobre o chão, este interminável mar de plástico onde as estufas, talhadas pela mesma medida, se assemelham a icebergues petrificados, a gigantescas pedras de dominó sem pintas" (*idem*: 89). This imagery is complemented by Saramago's references to the suffocating atmosphere and uncomfortable labour conditions within these greenhouses: "Lá dentro não há frio, pelo contrário, os homens que ali trabalham asfixiam-se no calor, cozem-se no seu próprio suor, desfalecem, são como trapos encharcados e torcidos por mãos violentas" (*ibidem*). While this passage certainly echoes the daily travails of Alentejan peasant labourers seen in *Levantado*, *Caverna*'s

portrayal of the *Cintura Agrícola* can also be read as a critique of intensive agriculture greenhouses, increasingly prevalent on a global scale by the turn of the twenty-first century, and notorious for their adverse environmental impact as well as their systematic exploitation of migrant workers.[262] Saramago's portrayal of agricultural work, then, directly challenges bucolic preconceptions of rural 'escape' from industrial labour in an increasingly urbanised society.

In addition to presenting the *Cintura Agrícola* as an over-developed, unpleasant and exploitative agrarian space, *Caverna*'s portrayal of the neighbouring *Cintura Industrial* presents a non-urban territory that is filled with polluting factories and waste, and devoid of any vegetation. This is apparent in chapter VI, from the narrator's comments on the lurid 'landscape' of the Industrial Belt:

> Diz-se que a paisagem é um estado de alma, que a paisagem de fora a vemos com os olhos de dentro, será porque esses extraordinários órgãos interiores de visão não souberam ver estas fábricas e estes hangares, estes fumos que devoram o céu, estas poeiras tóxicas, estas lamas eternas, estas crostas de fuligem, o lixo de ontem varrido para cima do lixo de todos os dias, o lixo de amanhã varrido para cima do lixo de hoje [...]. (Saramago 2000: 89)

The narrator's comments here gesture towards the first chapter of *Levantado*, which, as mentioned earlier, posits 'a paisagem' as a superstructure in contrast to a "terra" base. In this extract from *Caverna*, however, the narrator refers to 'landscape' as a mental construct or subjective 'mood' ("estado de alma"), in opposition to a *Cintura Industrial* which has clearly been contaminated, polluted (e.g. "fumos"; "poeiras tóxicas"; "lixo") and transformed into a base whose new purpose is to serve a superstructure. In other chapters, it is apparent that the atmospheric pollution emitted by the Industrial Belt ("chaminés lançando para a atmosfera rolos de fumos tóxicos, […] laboratórios químicos, refinarias de

[262] Examples include Argentina's *Cinturón hortícula platense* (cf. García 2011: 35-53), Spain's *mar de plástico* in Poniente Almeriense (cf. Delgado Cabeza/Aragón Mejías 2006: 423-474) and, more recently, the Portuguese town of Odemira, in the western Alentejo (cf. Cordeiro/Santos 2022).

petróleo, *cheiros fétidos*" [*idem*: 13, my emphasis]) has already impacted on peripheral territories, as demonstrated by the narrator's use of identical vocabulary to describe the waters running into the village in chapter II: "uma ribeira de águas escuras e *fétidas*" (*idem*: 28-29, my emphasis). In this use of the same adjective ("fétido") to describe the unpleasant smells detectable in the *aldeia* and in the *Cintura Industrial*, Saramago indicates a relentless (and polluting) corporate expansion into isolated territories that are supposedly "apartad[as] da civilização".

In essence, the novel's various spaces are significant not for their antagonistic opposition to one another, but for their relationship of mutual dependence and their constant correspondence *with* each other. It is noteworthy, for instance, that Cipriano's pottery relies on the *aldeia*, on the *cidade* and on the *Cintura Industrial* to supply him with the raw materials required for his profession: "No segundo dia o oleiro viajou à cidade para comprar o gesso cerâmico destinado aos moldes" (Saramago 2000: 154); "Cipriano Algor vai abastecer-se nos arredores da povoação, encomendar aos mateiros e agricultores umas quantas carradas de lenha para queimar, comprar nas serrações e carpintarias da Cintura Industrial umas quantas sacas de serradura" (*idem*: 186). In this sense, Cipriano's rural *olaria*, the *Cintura Agrícola*, the *Cintura Industrial* and the *cidade* – all of which contribute towards his finished products that supply the *Centro* – can be regarded as the 'base' / 'bases' or 'means of production' supporting that enormous commercial complex, the novel's 'superstructure'. Caverna's treatment of these various territories therefore corresponds to Williams's disregard for "traditional" images of the country vs. city binary ("the country as cooperation with nature, the city and industry as overriding and transforming it" [2016: 421]), and concentrates firmly on the "contrast between forms of settlement and forms of exploitation" (*ibidem*) with regards to the areas that exist outside of the *Centro*.

Notwithstanding the observations above, no spatial reading of *Caverna* would be complete without a close analysis of the *Centro* structure, whose shadow, according to Rollason, "looms over the entire novel" (2004: 209). From chapter I, Saramago emphasises the complex's imposing presence and dominance over its urban surroundings, when Cipriano's and Marçal's journey through the *cidade* is abruptly terminated by one of the *Centro*'s walls: "Ao

fundo, um muro altíssimo, escuro, muito mais alto que o mais alto dos prédios que ladeavam a avenida, cortava abruptamente o caminho" (*ibidem*). Later, when Cipriano travels towards the *Centro* in chapter XVII, the narrator makes this complex's towering prominence within the *cidade* yet more explicit, through a subversion of the proverb 'all roads lead to Rome': "a cidade, a grande avenida, o Centro finalmente. Qualquer caminho que se tome vai dar ao Centro" (*idem*: 274-275).[263] Thus, Saramago dislodges the traditional centrality of the urban 'metropolis' and replaces it with an imperious, centripetal built environment.

Moreover, the *Centro*'s insidious nature is intensified by the fact that it is in perpetual growth; several critics have noted the *Centro*'s "permanent expansion" (Rollason 2004: 210) and its attempts to "absorb and contain, and even to replace, the city itself" (Klobucka 2001: XVI). Significantly, the *Centro*'s absorption of the surrounding city is articulated in a clearly geometrical manner, as exemplified by Marçal's comment to Cipriano regarding the complex's development (chapter XVII): "aqui nunca se acabam as obras, o Centro cresce todos os dias *mesmo quando não se dá por isso*, se não é para os lados, é para cima, se não é para cima, é para baixo" (*idem*: 281, my emphasis). In this excerpt, the *Centro* is depicted as a living entity, relentlessly spreading outwards in an undetected and insidious manner. Consequently, Saramago's complex poses an existential threat to the urban environment that surrounds and pre-dates it, not only in the economic sense of depriving the city of potential trade (cf. Rollason 2004: 212), but also in terms of robbing extant urban and rural communities of their inhabitants. This danger becomes evident, for instance, in Marta's conversation with Cipriano (chapter II): "Sabe melhor do que eu que os comerciantes da cidade lutam com grandes dificuldades para manter a cabeça fora de água, toda a gente vai comprar ao Centro, cada vez há mais gente a querer viver no Centro" (Saramago 2000: 34). Consequently, while the *Centro* might be viewed as a metaphor for globalising forces (including online commerce) that have threatened traditional brick-and-mortar retailers

[263] In Portuguese, this expression translates as "todos os caminhos levam a Roma" or "todos os caminhos vão dar a Roma".

world-wide in the twenty-first century,[264] the complex is clearly having a detrimental impact that goes beyond a purely mercantilistic one. In this regard, Cipriano's remarks to Marta in chapter XVI, regarding the *Centro*'s problematic relationship with the *cidade*, are extremely pertinent:

> [É] curioso que de cada vez que olho cá de fora para o Centro tenho a impressão de que ele é maior do que a própria cidade, isto é, *o Centro está dentro da cidade, mas é maior do que a cidade*, sendo uma parte é maior que o todo, provavelmente será porque é mais alto que os prédios que o cercam, mais alto que qualquer prédio da cidade, provavelmente porque desde o princípio tem estado a engolir ruas, praças, quarteirões inteiros. (*Idem*: 258-259, my emphasis)

In this evocative image of the complex as an insatiable creature 'swallowing up' streets, squares and entire blocks, Saramago depicts the complex as a threat to these urban surroundings, but also, paradoxically, as 'a part of the city' that surpasses the 'whole'. The impression, then, is of a parasitic organism that has grown within the confines of the *cidade* and is now jeopardising the very existence of that urban environment (and beyond).

It is precisely in these terms that the novel's portrayals of urban construction should be viewed: not as a destructive end in itself, but as a process in service of a hidden – and insidious – economic logic. Although it is the city that is depicted, in militaristic terms, as 'advancing' onto empty territory ("Não tardará muito que os edifícios da cidade avancem em linha de atiradores e venham assenhorear-se do terreno" [*idem*: 16]), a key exchange between Cipriano and Marçal in chapter VII absolves the *cidade* of responsibility for spatial transformation, and instead apportions ultimate blame to the *Centro*'s relentless expansion strategy: "daqui a mil ou dois mil anos não é nada impossível que a cidade tenha chegado até onde neste momento nos encontramos, observou Marçal. Fez uma pausa, [...], chegou a uma conclusão logicamente impecável, acrescentou, Ou o Centro" (*idem*: 109). Accordingly, the narrative's imagery of continuous urban development ("uma rede

[264] See, for instance, https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2018/07/crumbling-britain-slow-death-high-street regarding traditional retail's decline in the UK.

entrecruzada de rastos de tractores, certos alisamentos que só podem ter sido causados por grandes pás mecânicas [...] uma faixa estreita, uma nova terra-de-ninguém" (*idem*: 16) can be attributed to the neo-liberal, hyper-capitalist impulses underpinning the *Centro*'s expansion strategy. In this way, *Caverna* echoes Harvey's argument that "[t]he inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the restless formation and re-formation of geographical landscapes" (2001: 333), in its depiction of repeated and relentless territorial upheaveal carried out at the *Centro*'s behest.

Homing in on the *Centro*'s exterior (described in detail during the first third of the novel), Saramago initially describes an imposing, angular and strikingly uniform structure: "uma construção enorme, um edifício gigantesco, quadrangular, sem janelas na fachada lisa, igual em toda a sua extensão" (*idem*: 17). This homogeneous and ominous character of the building's façade is more comprehensively developed in chapter VI, when Cipriano arrives at the *Centro* with his new product proposal:

> Exceptuando as portas que abrem para o exterior, em nenhuma das restantes frontarias há aberturas, são impenetráveis panos de muralha [...]. Ao contrário dessas fachadas lisas, a frente virada para este lado está crivada de janelas, centenas e centenas de janelas, milhares de janelas, sempre fechadas por causa do condicionamento da atmosfera interna. (*Idem*: 100)

The passage above illustrates a complex that clearly *distinguishes itself from* – rather than *blending into* – the surrounding cityscape, with numerous façades physically separating the *Centro* from the outside world, and an atmospheric conditioning system designed to remove the need for external 'fresh air'. In addition, the building's "milhares de janelas" – resembling a beehive (cf. Amorim 2010: 79) – function as a potential metaphor for fascistic socio-political organisation. Above all, this towering complex can be understood as an architectural symbol of late twentieth-century capitalist development, in a

similar vein to the much-discussed Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles.[265] This iconic building, referred to by Fredric Jameson as a structure that "does not wish to be a part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement or substitute" (1991: 40), has been described by Edward Soja in strikingly dystopian terms:

> [It] has become a concentrated representation of the restructured spatiality of the late capitalist city: fragmented and fragmenting, homogeneous and homogenizing, divertingly packaged yet curiously incomprehensible, seemingly open in presenting itself to view but constantly pressing to enclose, to compartmentalize, to circumscribe, to incarcerate. (2003: 243)

According to this logic, the neo-liberal economic tendencies that developed over the final decades of the twentieth century – which claimed to favour openness, diversity and choice while (arguably) achieving the opposite – is epitomised by iconic stand-alone buildings, of which *Caverna*'s *Centro* is evidently a (fictional) example.

Proceeding now to the interior of Saramago's complex, it is first of all significant that the building's interior is not revealed until the final quarter of the novel, starting from chapter XVII when Cipriano and Marçal visit their future abode. At this juncture, the narrator mentions the impersonal numbering of the *Centro*'s individual apartments ("Os apartamentos estavam identificados como se fossem habitações de hotel, com a diferença da introdução de um hífen entre o número do andar e o número da porta" (Saramago 2000: 279), whereas the inward-facing design of the living quarters that encourages 'panoptic' observation and surveillance (cf. Rodrigues 2019: 278). This is made clear from the following exchange between the protagonists:

> Queres tu dizer que há apartamentos cujas janelas dão para o interior do próprio Centro, Fica sabendo que há muitas pessoas que os preferem, acham que a vista

[265] A detailed history of this once 'futuristic' hotel can be found at https://www.laweekly.com/a-brief-history-of-downtowns-futuristic-bonaventure-hotel-at-40/

> dali é infinitamente mais agradável, variada e divertida, ao passo que do outro lado são sempre os mesmos telhados e o mesmo céu […]. (Saramago 2000: 276)

These remarks on the *Centro* gesture towards the paradoxical dynamics of Los Angeles alongside other 'late capitalist' American cities, which, in Soja's view, mirror the social manipulation exercised within Disneyland and similar archetypal theme parks: "Like the original 'Happiest Place on Earth', the enclosed spaces are subtly but tightly controlled by invisible overseers despite the open appearance of fantastic freedoms of choice" (2003: 246). In a similar manner, Saramago's complex engenders an internalisation of neo-liberal doctrine within its residents, and actively discourages interest in the 'outside world', where the *Centro* is unable to influence consumer patterns and behaviours.

In this context, can one describe the *Centro* as a straightforward transposition of the twentieth-century shopping centre / mall, or even, as Rollason proposes, the arcade structures of nineteenth-century Paris that are explored in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (cf. Rollason 2004: 209)? Saramago's own reflections on the narrative certainly suggest this influence, particularly when, in a 2001 interview, the author explicitly states that: "O centro [comercial] é um lugar de ideologia. [...]. Os que dizem que as ideologias acabaram, na realidade o que estão a dizer é que acabou 'uma' ideologia. Não é verdade que as pessoas não tenham uma ideologia. Mas é nova: consumir" (Saramago 2010: 488). On the one hand, Saramago's positing of the *Centro* as a 'place of ideology' (namely, a late capitalist, neo-liberal ideology, championing frantic consumerist practices) is an extremely useful framing for my spatial and ideological analysis of *Caverna*. On the other hand, the author's remarks gesture towards the *multiple* ways in which the symbolic importance of this mysterious complex can be understood, beyond the simplistic confines of the contemporary "centro comercial".

Specifically, the *Centro*'s assortment of features problematise its relationship with traditional models of the shopping centre or, while nevertheless maintaining a certain degree of plausibility in the context of evolving 'mall' practices from the late twentieth century onwards. This is readily apparent

towards the end of the narrative, when the *Centro*'s numerous facilities and attractions are enumerated in exhaustive detail. In the first extended list of amenities in chapter XVII (recounted in a staccato style, with Saramago's trademark commas as punctuation), the narrator not only outlines shops, meeting places, cafes, cinemas and theatres (cf. *idem*: 277), but also more unusual attractions such as "uma montanha-russa" and "um [jardim] zoológico" (*ibidem*). Such facilities hold some affinity with the development of commercial complexes (particularly in the USA) over recent decades, resulting in what have been dubbed "destination malls" by some observers, with "experiential attractions" designed to "keep people in the center longer" (Smiley *apud* Garfield 2018).[266] Saramago adds a note of irony and absurdity to the scene, however, with the narrator's description of "uma fachada de igreja, a entrada para a praia" (Saramago 2000: 277), which emphasises the falsity of such iconography. This absurd register is repeated and intensified in another prolonged passage in chapter IX, in which the narrator, describing a separate area of the complex, outlines "muitas outras instalações que em interesse e variedade nada ficam a dever às primeiras" (*idem*: 308). It is at this point that Saramago's *Centro* assumes a much wider framework of referentiality, as indicated by the excerpt's references to international landmarks and monuments in reconstructed form: "uma muralha da china, um taj-mahal, uma pirâmide do egipto, um templo de karnak, [...], um convento de mafra, uma torre dos clérigos, [...] um himalaia com o seu evereste, um rio amazonas com índios" (*ibidem*). This collection of global images corresponds, in a very literal manner, to the strategies adopted by internationally renowned mall complexes by the 1990s; as Jon Goss notes, "iconic metonyms" (such as the Eiffel Tower, Italian urban squares or Miami Beach), had become a common sight in shopping malls by this time, exploiting "well-worn clichés of place from our collective *musée imaginaire*" and the contemporary condition of "*other-wheritis*, the spatial equivalent of nostalgia, a social condition in which a distant place is preferable to here and now" (1993: 40). In a comparable manner, the *Centro* of Saramago's novel utilises methods deployed by existing commercial establishments to

[266] See, for example, recent plans for the American Dream Miami project: https://www.businessinsider.com/largest-mall-us-american-dream-miami-2018-5?r=US&IR=T

transform its customers' perception of geography and space, for the purposes of inspiring customer loyalty and increased consumption.

Furthermore, a number of amenities listed by *Caverna*'s narrator in this chapter dispel the notion that this *Centro* is a mere retail establishment, with Saramago hinting at the complex's insiduous desire for total control over its visitors and residents through contrasting pairs of facilities. Firstly, this is apparent in the narrator's juxaposition of "um centro dos pequeninos" with "um centro da terceira idade", suggesting that the *Centro* is designed for an entire lifetime of residence and consumption – as Saramago also implies in his allusion to "prodígios que nem oitenta anos de vida ociosa bastariam para os desfrutar com proveito, mesmo tendo nascido a pessoa no Centro e não tendo saído dele nunca para o mundo exterior" (2000: 308). Secondly, the contrast of "um hospital de luxo" with "outro menos luxuoso" implies that healthcare at the complex is privately provided and segregated according to socio-economic class, with the patient receiving treatment quality in accordance with their financial means. Finally, the passage evokes contradictory images of *minute* and *astronomical* scale ("um cometa, uma galáxia, um anão grande, um gigante pequeno" [*ibidem*] that complicate any notion of rational or logical spatial distribution. Such sinister characteristics are, according to Soja, typical of late capitalist architecture – exemplified by the Bonaventure Hotel – which promotes consumer obedience: "its spaces confuse an effective cognitive mapping, its pastiche of superficial reflections bewilder co-ordination and encourage submission instead" (Soja 2003: 243-244).

Hence, Saramago's *Centro* should not be understood merely as a critique of the conventional shopping centre / mall – itself a phenomenon dating back to the 1950s in the United States, and now perceived by many to be in a state of irrevocable decline (cf. Allen 2021), requiring additional features in order to increase consumer engagement and profitability (cf. Garfield 2018). Above all, what *Caverna* critiques through its intricate spatial framework is the insidious manner in which contemporary built environments increasingly blur the boundary between reality and the unreal. This tendency within the novel is apparent not only with regards to the modern mall's "commodification of reality" (Goss 1993: 20), but also concerning the broader direction of 'post-modern' geographical transformation, in Soja's terms: "Involved in almost

every aspect of the changing urban imaginary has been the realization that it has become more difficult than ever before to tell the difference between what is *real* and what is *imagined*" (Soja 2000: 325). Further, the narrative's portrayal of the *Centro*'s 'unreality' gestures towards Jean Baudrillard's pioneering remarks in *Simulacra and Simulation*, which deploys cartographical terminology on several occasions to outline the cognitive manipulation inherent to contemporary development processes:

> Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. [...]. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory - *precession of simulacra* - that engenders the territory [...]. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere. (Baudrillard 1994: 1-2)

If the comments above are to be adopted as a lens for understanding Saramago's complex – as this study proposes – then one is inevitably led to consider the novel's homage to Plato's Allegory of the Cave, outlined in Book VII of *The Republic* (cf. Laird 2003: 1-30). This inspiration for *Caverna* – made explicit in a quotation from Plato's text immediately before the diegesis begins (Saramago 2000: 9) – is an incontestably *spatial* metaphor, appearing in the novel as a physical cave below the *Centro*'s foundations that destabilises Cipriano's distinction between fiction and reality:

> [S]abes que o que ali está, sendo o que é, não tem realidade, não pode ser real, Sei, E contudo eu toquei com esta mão na testa de uma daquelas mulheres, não foi uma ilusão, não foi um sonho, [...] depois de os ver fiquei a pensar que talvez o que realmente não exista seja aquilo a que damos o nome de não existência. (*Idem*: 333)

Moreover, given that the *Centro* has been constructed upwards and outwards from the direction of this cave, it is not a significant logical leap to read the complex in its entirety as an updated, highly politicised re-imagining of Plato's

original allegory (cf. Laird 2003: 7), particularly as the narrative concludes with the *Centro* openly commodifying the Platonic cave itself: "BREVEMENTE, ABERTURA AO PÚBLICO DA CAVERNA DE PLATÃO, ATRACÇÃO EXCLUSIVA, ÚNICA NO MUNDO, COMPRE JÁ A SUA ENTRADA" (Saramago 2000: 349-350).

Ultimately, then, *Caverna* denounces a threatening and destructive consequence of late-capitalist territorial re-organisation: an increasingly exploitative and exclusionary economic and societal framework, coupled with a proliferation of artificial, simulated images which remove consciousness and agency from the citizen-turned-consumer and transform them into the archetypal "prisoners" glued to shadows on a wall. In this sense, Plato's cave is a necessary component of Saramago's spatial critique in this novel, whereas *another* cave is used by the author as a site of productive resistance, within a more comprehensive strategy of militant particularism.

IV.2.2. "[O] que nos ficou": militant particularist mourning

Before analysing *Caverna*'s methods of resistance, however, it would be opportune to outline the techniques that Saramago's novel does *not* utilise to this end – namely, ativistic, simplistic and acritical understandings of bucolic nostalgia. That said, it is important to underline the narrative's portrayal of urban development processes, which gesture towards the wanton, definitive destruction of extant communities and natural undergrowth. This tendency is illustrated from the novel's first chapter as the following remarks on the "terra-de-ninguém" demonstrate: "essas implacáveis lâminas curvas que, sem dó nem piedade, levam tudo por diante, a casa antiga, a raiz nova, o muro que amparava, o lugar de uma sombra que nunca mais voltará a estar" (*idem*: 16). The pairing of aged architecture and emerging foliage here ("a casa antiga, a raiz nova") emphasises the scale of what is being lost, whereas the adverb "nunca" coupled with the future tense engenders a definitive, fatalistic tone. Moreover, the reader witnesses a gradual deterioration of the village environment, particularly on the occasions that Cipriano enters and exits that community. In chapter II, for instance, the narrator offers the following description of the *aldeia*'s decrepit entrance: "havia uns restos esquálidos de bosque, uns campos mal amanhados,

[...], depois apareceram numa curva as ruínas de três casas já sem janelas nem portas, com os telhados meio caídos e os espaços interiores quase devorados pela vegetação" (*idem*: 28-29). In this excerpt, Saramago illustrates the desolation, decay and abandonment that characterises sites of former human habitation (the dilapidated houses), agriculture (the neglected, messy fields) and even untouched areas (the 'squalid remains' of a forest), although, at this stage of the diegesis, Saramago's use of qualifying adverbs ("telhados *meio* caídos"; "espaços interiores *quase* devorados"), suggests an incomplete demise. Later descriptions of the same environment, however, do not appear to offer any degree of hope for the *aldeia*'s survival, as can be observed from chapter VI:

> O oleiro tinha deixado para trás a povoação, as três casas isoladas que ninguém virá levantar da ruína, agora ladeia a ribeira sufocada de podridão, atravessará os campos descuidados, o bosque desleixado, foram tantas as vezes que fez este caminho que mal repara na desolação que o cerca. (*Idem*: 87)

Here, the narrator produces a yet more nihilistic tone by combining the negative pronoun "ninguém" with the future tense, accompanied by images of ruin, decay and desolation that verge on the post-apocalyptic. Besides their affinity with the dystopian ending of Ribeiro's *Lobos*,[267] such passages also correspond to the genuine demographic, economic and environmental phenomena of "despovoamento" and "desertificação" that have affected the inland rural communities of Portugal (and other Meditarranean countries) in recent decades;[268] specifically, *Caverna*'s depiction of the *aldeia* can be likened to the 'abandoned' village of Broas, a rural settlement 30km from Lisbon that has been lying empty for over forty years with its architecture gradually deteriorating.[269]

With regards to the Algor family's personal reaction to this demographic transformation, the predominant sentiment is one of mourning and lament. This is apparent, for instance, in Marta's remark in chapter XVIII, just before the

[267] See II.2.

[268] See I.1. for an outline of these processes within Portugal.

[269] See https://www.tsf.pt/sociedade/aldeias-abandonadas-as-portas-de-lisboa-10440198.html

Algors' move to the *Centro*: "temos a casa, uma casa com vista para o cemitério, Que cemitério, A olaria, o forno, as pranchas de secagem, a parga da lenha, *o que era e já deixou de ser*, que maior cemitério do que esse, perguntou Marta, à beira das lágrimas" (*idem*: 293-294, my emphasis). This despondent tribute to "what was and is no more" – deploying the imperfect and preterite tenses to emphasise the notion of *loss* – is mirrored by Cipriano's tormented outburst in chapter VII regarding his redundant profession, which utilises the preterite and pluperfect: "é o trabalho que *deixou de ser o que havia sido*, e nós que só podemos ser o que fomos, de repente percebemos que já não somos necessários no mundo" (*idem*: 106-107, my emphasis). Indeed, it is Cipriano who emerges as the family member most profoundly affected by the loss of the Algors' rural abode and their seemingly inevitable move to the *Centro*, eliciting concern from his son-in-law Marçal in chapter XVII: "nem a mim mesmo, que não nasci nem me criei debaixo daquele tecto, me vai ser fácil separar-me disto, que não se dirá do teu pai" (*idem*: 267). This keen awareness of Cipriano's attachment to the pottery gestures towards Tuan's comment that "[t]o be forcibly evicted from one's home and neighborhood is to be stripped of a sheathing, which in its familiarity protects the human being from the bewilderments of the outside world" (1974: 99) – a sentiment espoused in a similar manner by Teotónio Louvadeus, in Ribeiro's *Lobos*. In the above excerpt from *Caverna*, however, a manifestation of topophilia is accompanied by evocative maritime imagery, with Cipriano's existence visualised as a rapidly shrinking island: "não é necessária uma excepcional agudeza de visão para perceber que o teu pai está a ver-se a si mesmo como se vivesse numa ilha que se vai tornando mais pequena em cada dia que passa, um pedaço, outro pedaço" (Saramago 2000: 267). Marçal's use of an 'oceanic' simile is significant here: one is reminded of Saramago's description of ideology as "uma espécie de mar", which, as mentioned, manifests itself in *Levantado* through the narrator's depiction of the *latifúndio* as a "mar interior". Nonetheless, in contrast to the positive and politically productive connotations of that metaphor, *Caverna* posits Cipriano's way of life as threatened by the overwhelming, unstoppable ideological 'tide' of neo-liberalism and hyper-capitalism, for which the *Centro* acts as a spatial symbol. To a certain extent, then, Saramago's 2000 novel is concerned with the emotional impact of territorial transformation and the resulting loss.

Nevertheless, one should acknowledge the novelist's public comments on *Caverna*, which firmly rebuff the suggestion that his narrative favours a return to an 'idyllic', pre-urban and pre-modern age. Saramago makes such comments in a 2002 interview:

> O livro não pode ser, enfim, eu não gostaria que fosse entendido como uma apologia dos antigos tempos, da vida tradicional, e uma feroz crítica aos tempos de agora. Se o leitor se colocar aí, não me dá nenhuma satisfação. [...]. Não podemos viver como Cipriano Algor. Já não se pode viver assim. […] mas a alternativa, *o que nos ficou*, o caminho por onde metemos e o caminho por onde estamos, não pode ser o do centro. (*Apud* Evans 2002, my emphasis)

This rather unambiguous statement with regards to the author's intentions is reflected in the ironic narratorial voice of *Caverna*, which accompanies the decline of Cipriano's rustic profession. In chapter X, for example, the narrator questions the long-term viability of Cipriano's adherence to extant traditions, customs and consumer trends:

> Cipriano Algor carrega com algumas culpas próprias em tudo isto, a primeira das quais, […], foi pensar que certos gostos e necessidades dos contemporâneos do avô fundador, em matéria de produtos cerâmicos, se iriam manter inalteráveis per omnia saecula saeculorum ou, pelo menos, durante toda a sua vida […]. (*Idem*: 147)

In this instance, the narrator contemplates the inevitability of evolving habits and 'tastes' over generations, as opposed to an immobile *status quo* that persists "per omnia saecula saeculorum" – unto the ages of ages. An equally relevant motif in this regard is that of the "enciclopédia velha" that Cipriano uses to develop his figurine designs in chapter V (*idem*: 73), described as a 'time capsule' comprising frozen snapshots of the past:

> [A]s enciclopédias de hoje, de ontem e de transantontem representam imagens sucessivas de mundos paralisados, gestos interrompidos no seu movimento, palavras à procura do seu último ou penúltimo sentido. [...] exibem com uma espécie de maníaca fixidez uma paisagem que, assim condenada a ser só, para todo o sempre, aquilo que tinha sido, e irá tornando ao mesmo tempo mais velha, mais caduca e mais desnecessária. (*Idem*: 74)

In these pointed allusions to "mundos paralisados" and a "maníaca fixidez" – akin to the cryptic "obsessiva eternidade" of *Lobos* –,[270] *Caverna*'s narrator questions the desire to perpetually conserve obsolete ways of life. A final indication of this intention is revealed in chapter XIII, when Cipriano dreams that he has renovated his pottery facilities: "Deixemo-nos de saudosismos que só prejudicam e atrasam, [...], o progresso avança imparável, é preciso que nos decidamos a acompanhá-lo, ai daqueles que, [...], se deixam ficar sentados à beira do caminho a chorar um passado que nem sequer havia sido melhor do que o presente" (*idem*: 193). This oniric sequence – echoing Engenheiro Streit's similarly fatalistic comment in *Lobos* –[271] can be interpreted in Saramago's novel as a fleeting moment of lucidity in Cipriano's mind, signifying the futility of lamenting an irretrievable past and a conscious rejection of regressive and atavistic "saudosismos". Such passages inevitably recall Williams's critique of the revolving "escalator" pattern that rural nostalgia has historically followed (Williams 2016: 16-17), dating back to bucolic ideals of Eden, Theocritus's *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*: "When we moved back in time, consistently directed to an earlier and happier rural England, we could find no place, no period, in which we could seriously rest" (*idem*: 49).[272]

Given this tendency to repudiate simplistic models and understandings of ruralist nostalgia, *Caverna*'s reader is led to contemplate the true mechanisms of resistance that Saramago's narrative deploys against the *Centro*: the territorial manifestation of hyper-capitalist hegemony to which the author is evidently opposed. On a superficial level, the novel appears to minimise the potential for

[270] See II.2.

[271] "O progresso não é um ferro de engomar. Alguma coisa vai cilindrando na sua marcha" (Ribeiro 2014: 68) - see II.2. regarding this passage.

[272] See also Gifford 2020: 14-19.

organised struggle against this neo-liberal entity, with the complex's Buying Manager describing "os detractores do Centro" as "cada vez menos numerosos e cada vez menos combativos" (Saramago 2000: 292). Furthermore, upon the Algor family's move to the *Centro* in chapter XIX, the narrator describes their new apartment as specifically designed and equipped for passive obedience: "o apartamento estava arrumado, limpo, posto em ordem, com os objectos trazidos da outra casa nos seus lugares próprios e à espera de que os habitantes comecem, *sem resistência*, a ocupar também os lugares que no conjunto lhes competem" (*idem*: 305, my emphasis). Nonetheless, in a similar fashion to *Levantado*'s undetected mud bubbling under the surface of the *latifúndio,* one can detect a limited, subtle, and 'particularist' form of militancy, gesturing towards Foucault's notion of political resistance as a "multiplicity of points".

I should clarify that when I use the term 'resistance' regarding this novel I am *not* referring to the Algor family's decision to abandon the *Centro* and their pottery, and to travel to an unknown location at the ambivalent end of the diegesis ("uma viagem que não tem destino conhecido e que não se sabe como nem onde terminará" [*idem*: 348]). Although certain scholars see this "negative flight" (Frier 2007: 152) as a "resolute attempt at resisting sanitized lives" (Nashef 2017: 377), *Caverna*'s final scene is politically restricted in one key aspect: its diversion from the original Allegory of the Cave, in which enlightened individuals "assist their fellow cave-dwellers in seeing the truth" (Smith 2012: 624). In contrast to the Platonic model, which envisions a post-enlightenment return to the place of shadows and simulacra (cf. Plato 1973: 230), Saramago's novel depicts a family that simply flees, without attempting to warn others about the insiduous simulated environment in which they are 'prisoners'. The reader is therefore led to consider alternative methods of resistance, which in fact appear a key moments *throughout* the diegesis rather than solely at its conclusion.

What I am proposing, then, is a reading of this narrative that foregrounds what the author terms "o que nos ficou": the seemingly insigificant anthropological remains and natural vegetation that the *Centro*'s expansion does not succeed in obliterating by the novel's ending. The presence of such 'vestiges' is apparent from chapter I, as Cipriano is driving through the "terra-de-ninguém" on his way to the complex, with the narrator highlighting the

remaining ‘fragments’ that have survived the onslaught of bulldozers and tractors:

> [T]al como sucede nas vidas, *quando julgávamos que também nos tinham levado tudo por diante e depois reparamos que afinal nos ficara alguma coisa*, igualmente aqui uns fragmentos dispersos, uns farrapos emporcalhados, uns restos de materiais de refugo, umas latas enferrujadas, umas tábuas apodrecidas, um plástico que o vento traz e leva, mostram-nos que este território havia estado ocupado antes pelos bairros de excluídos […]. (Saramago 2000: 16, my emphasis)

In this key passage, Saramago questions a number of key assumptions upon which the *Centro*’s spatial expansion and domination depends. Firstly, this is apparent in the imperfect construction “julgávamos que” – reminiscent of the peasants’ remark “julgávamos que vivíamos no cabo do mundo” in *Levantado* – which challenges the prevailing, hegemonic discourse in relation to territorial transformation. Through this sceptical tone, the narrator’s prior claim that the diggers “levam tudo por diante” is undone, replaced by an assertion that “afinal nos ficara alguma coisa”: a statement that corresponds directly to the author’s aforementioned emphasis on “o que nos ficou”.

These remaining fragments, though, arguably hold more significance than as simple “signos remanescentes que nos lembram da vida destruída”, as some criticism has suggested (Brandão 2006: 8). In fact, numerous passages of the novel posit natural foliage and anthropological remnants as silent, expectant harbingers of future redemption. One can consider, for example, the mulberry tree that is destined to stand outside Cipriano’s pottery for an eternity: “a amoreira-preta, para sempre agarrada à terra, ainda gotejava” (Saramago 2000: 348). This tree, described as a “*leitmotiv*” (Frier 2002: 46) that represents nature’s creative power as well as its stubborn permanence (cf. Brandão 2006: 13-14), also demonstrates tenacity in the face of seemingly impossible odds, with its insistence on producing fruits that ‘nobody will pick’: “a amoreira-preta persistirá em criar as suas amoras, mas não terá ninguém que venha apanhá-las” (Saramago 2000: 267). In other instances, flora at the entrance to the *aldeia* begins to reclaim deserted rustic abodes: “[a] vegetação que sempre irrompe dos

escombros, como se ali tivesse estado, à espera da sua hora, desde a abertura dos cavoucos" (*idem*: 28-29). In this excerpt, Saramago depicts natural growth as emerging from a state of strategic hibernation at an opportune moment, while posing an existential threat to the human structures that they now seek to submerge.

Simultaneously, Cipriano's actions suggest a determination to conserve his rejected ceramic products – in other words, *anthropological* remains – in a safe location, primed for discovery and recognition at an unknown future moment. Specifically, the potter seeks out a secure, remote and protected natural 'cave' in which he carefully places and hides his crockery (*idem*: 178), presenting a second 'cave' within the novel that, in my view, holds as much importance as the Platonic cavern discovered beneath the *Centro*. Significantly, as the Algors drive towards the *Centro* in chapter XIX to take up residence there, the intact crockery that they drive past is described as a "tesouro arqueológico", "escondido pelas moitas de silvas", representing, as alluded to earlier, the final remains of an 'ancient civilization': "Qualquer diria que passaram dez mil anos desde que ali foram descarregadas as derradeiras sobras de uma antiga civilização" (*idem*: 305). In describing Cipriano's ceramic products as the final remnants of "uma antiga civilização", the narrator not only posits the potter's rural community as a *civilisation* (rather than as "afastada da civilização"), but also suggests that this "civilização" is part of countless generations of presumably deceased societies, and that it will not be the last to apparently disappear. Saramago establishes a more explicit tone of anticipation in chapter XII, once the potter has placed his ceramic products within the isolated "gruta":

> [Cipriano] perguntará a si mesmo se não deveria cortar uns quantos ramos de árvores para cobrir melhor as louças, dá a ideia de querer que ninguém mais saiba o que aqui está, de querer que fiquem assim, ocultas, resguardadas, até ao dia em que novamente venham a ser precisas [...]. (*Idem*: 178)

Here, the narrator's references to 'hiding' and 'guarding' Cipriano's products until "novamente venham a ser precisas" suggests not only a desire to preserve fragments and vestiges, but also, and more importantly, an anticipation of

eventual absolution in the face of nefarious socio-economic forces in the *present*. The potter deploys a similar strategy in the final moments of the diegesis, when he places the figurines he had made for the *Centro* at the pottery entrance, in a 'defensive' stance: "os bonecos iam pouco a pouco ocupando o espaço em frente da casa, [...] agora já não é só diante da casa que as estatuetas estão de guarda, também defendem a entrada da olaria" (*idem*: 349). While some scholars read Cipriano's final gesture as an attempt to protect the "part of humanity" that has not yet fallen under the *Centro*'s influence (Nashef 2017: 377), I would venture that the potter's intentions are rather more long-term; just as the Chinese Emperor Qin Shi Huang was symbolically 'defended' by a static terracotta army within his mausoleum, *Caverna*'s figurines are deliberately placed to 'guard' human remnants for a posterior reckoning. There is an element of ambivalence and parody involved in this image, however, in that the narrative offers no concrete indication as to when this reckoning might take place, and that Cipriano's dolls are in miniature and involve clowns, hinting at a slightly ridiculous 'last stand'.

As a result, it is evident that *Caverna*'s treatment of conservation and memorialisation goes beyond the conventional nostalgic "urge" to cling to "familiar vestiges" (Lowenthal 2015: 28). Instead, what is at stake in this novel is a *messianic* understanding of historical remnants, in the sense that a moment of ultimate triumph is *hoped for*, if not *expected*.[273] As opposed to Walter Benjamin's quasi-religious, historical materialist notion of "a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (2007: 254), *Caverna*'s messianic dimension can be understood in humanist terms, such as Jacques Derrida's post-Soviet demand for a "certain experience of the emancipatory promise, [...], a messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism" (2006: 74). In Derrida's view, this atheistic understanding of the messianic is inextricably linked to a process of *mourning* which, unlike the imprecise and elusive object of ruralist nostalgia, involves intense *localisation* and *precision*:

[273] Several scholars have commented on the "messianic" properties of *Levantado*, particularly with regards to the resurrection of previous vanquished generations in its final chapter (cf. Grossegesse 1997; Rodriguez/Bravo 2020).

> [Mourning] consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead [...]. [...]. Nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one *has to know* who is buried where - and it is *necessary* [...] that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. (*Idem*: 9)

In Saramago's novel, this form of bereavement is certainly apparent in Cipriano's meticulous 'laying to rest' of the rejected fruits of his labour ("com que atenção descansa no solo as diferentes peças de louça, [...] aqui não se partiu um único prato" [Saramago 2000: 163-164]), and his fixation on the exact spot of their resting place later in the diegesis (*idem*: 305). His eventual success in 'ontologizing' human remnants is brought into question, though, due to natural vegetation's ability to overwhelm the *aldeia*'s gravestones containing the remains of deceased inhabitants: "Nos estreitos caminhos de saibro do cemitério há pequenas poças de água, a erva cresce por toda a parte, não levará cem anos para que deixe de se saber quem foi metido debaixo destes montículos de lama" (*idem*: 45). Hence, while there is an explicit effort to *locate* and *specify* memorials to the village's dead – in a *particularist* fashion – that objective is threatened by the ravages of time (and of the natural world), which potentially make the identification of 'tombs' by future generations impossible.

In this context, *Caverna*'s allusions to the messianic can be interpreted as *conjectural*, rather than unequivocally affirmative; the novel's selective deployment of mourning and nostalgia is significant and productive not as an end in itself, but in its inherent recognition that a return to a previous state of affairs is utterly unfeasible. There is a certain affinity here with Enzo Traverso's comments on "left-wing melancholia", as a response to the collapse of major communist regimes in the late twentieth century; in Traverso's view, such melancholy is "the result of an impossible mourning: communism is both a finished experience and an irreplaceable loss" (2016: 45). Following communism's irrevocable demise, Traverso argues, "the lost object [of mourning] can be the struggle for emancipation as a historical experience", as opposed to "a regime or an ideology" (*idem*: 53). In Saramago's narrative, too, there is recognition that a 'return' (in this case, to a pre-*Centro* environment) has

become impossible, althought this acknowledgement is nevertheless accompanied by a desire for continued struggle against the insidious, hyper-capitalist dogma that this complex represents – even if this battle is ultimately destined for failure. In face of the *Centro*'s destructive, standardising and disorientating impact on existing territories (and on spatial awareness), Cipriano's (potentially futile) 'militancy' is concerned with *placement*, *localisation* and *particularism*.

To conclude, both *Caverna* and *Levantado* contain an ideological (anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian) critique that is developed on territorial grounds, and with highly spatialised imagery and language. Both novels evoke and simultaneously undermine 'urban vs. rural' and 'centre vs. province' dichotomies, extant notions of rural 'remoteness' and 'ignorance', preconceptions of urban 'culpability', and misguided 'bucolic' imagery. Undeniably, these narratives reflect and respond to distinct historical circumstances: Saramago's 1980 novel destabilises the false consciousness of isolation and 'rustic ignorance' internalised by an exploited rural proletariat within the twentieth-century Alentejo; his 2000 narrative reflects monumental spatial transformation (in Portugal and elsewhere) in the final decades of the twentieth century, with an array of rural, urban and semi-urban settlements increasingly dominated by an abominable "lugar de ideologia" (the hyper-capitalist *Centro*). In addition to these critiques, both narratives espouse a form of 'militant particularism' as a method of resistance against such detrimental political, economic and social circumstances. In *Levantado*, the author emphasises the peasants' autonomous, organic agency as a political unit within a specific regional setting, while connecting their situated material struggles to a broader (and potentially global) sphere of militant activity. In *Caverna*, the reverse is true – while the novel is devoid of geographical specificity and regional contours, the chief method used by the protagonist to challenge the *Centro*'s threat of territorial standardisation and disorientation is a relentless insistence on specifying, locating and protecting anthropological remnants. If the ideological battle of Saramago's earlier novel involves universalising *outwards* from the spatially particular, his later narrative gestures towards the need to particularise *inwards* from a geographically non-specific, largely allegorical diegetic environment. It is in these terms that one should interpret the

regionalist and socialist ideological project of José Saramago, in the novels outlined within this chapter as well as several other works within his *oeuvre*.

Conclusions

A novel is an impression, not an argument.
Thomas Hardy

Joan Ramon Resina, in his introduction to *The New Ruralism: An Epistemology of Transformed Space*, states that this 'recent' cultural tendency "is not about retiring to the country or rebuilding ruined landscapes, nor about conserving quaint forms of life" (2012: 27). Rather, Resina suggests, it concerns new ways of contemplating regional / rural environments that are capable of "turn[ing] the world into full forms of presence" and "thinking that reflects on, rather than away from, the regioned specifications of space and time, and foregrounds them […] instead of burning them as dispensable fuel for the production of abstract, empty-formed, interchangeable thinking" (*ibidem*). What this thesis has consistently argued fact that numerous Portuguese novels of the previous century had already exhibited precisely these principles, in their "foregrounding" of regional dynamics, landscapes and tropes as a key element of broader, more complex ideological discourses. In particular, certain novels by Aquilino Ribeiro, Agustina Bessa-Luís, Lídia Jorge and José Saramago display a preoccupation with confounding territorial preconceptions, and with manipulating regional tensions in the service of distinct (yet *oppositional* and *resistant*) political projects.

Chapter I of the thesis began by underlining the central role of regional inequalities, divisions, tensions and preconceptions within Portugal's nineteenth-, twentieth- and early twentieth-century politics, particularly during the turbulent 1926-1974 First Republic, the prolonged 1926-1974 dictatorship, and the post-revolutionary context. Detailed historical and sociological explanations for ideological variations between metropolitan Portugal's constituent parts were discussed, and, on occasion, offered, while avoiding a deterministic approach to differing political activism and behaviours across geographically and culturally defined 'regions'. Through an analysis of concrete examples encompassing individuals, political parties / movements and discourses from across the (left-right; progressive-conservative) ideological

spectrum, it became apparent that historical marginalisation and romanticisation of the country's remote rural communities was digested and weaponised by multiple stakeholders in Portuguese society, in accordance with distinct and often oppositional worldviews. Subsequently, the chapter charted the evolving, dynamic relationship between modern Portuguese literature (in particular, fiction) and regional spaces and communities, with a marked emphasis on the competing ideological uses of regional landscape, spatial tensions and territorial identity that manifested themselves in specific literary movements, and in the work of major (canonical and non-canonical) Portuguese authors. The objective of this "secret history of regionalisms" was to demonstrate the intricate symbiosis of territorial and ideological literary discourses from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first, with regional geographies often exploited and manipulated in the service of more comprehensive and systematic political projects (neo-romanticist and salazarist nationalisms; [ultra-]conservativism; anti-authoritarianism; anti-capitalism; feminism), and ideological messages or frameworks frequently evoked through territorial / spatialised imagery. As this project has evinced, however, the articulation of region and ideology in the novels of several important twentieth-century authors allowed for a productive ambivalence with regards to the worldviews expressed and / or supported by those writers.

This political ambiguity was discussed, for instance, in Chapter II, which examined one novel by Ribeiro published in the final year of the First Republic (*Andam faunos pelos bosques*) and another released over thirty years later, in the middle of the dictatorship period (*Quando os lobos uivam*). This chapter demonstrated the ability of two of Ribeiro's Beira Alta narratives to contain and espouse both *visible* / explicit and *concealed* / implicit ideological messages, some of which can be read as oppositional, rebellious or resistant while others can be interpreted as conservative, sexist or even reactionary (although authorial and narratorial irony complicates this latter perception somewhat). On a more overt level, it was noted that these narratives sardonically critique aspects of the (Republican and *Estado Novo*) political and social *status quo* within the Beira Alta's peasant communities, with a particular focus on corrupt local government practices and intrusive authorities, whilst taking care to link such circumstances to a broader context and to undermine prevailing stereotypes of rural

'remoteness'. The more subtle ideological facets of these novels hinge on their trite, hyperbolic and fetishised portrayals of Beira Alta landscapes, environments and peasant subjects, in a seemingly *idyllic* manner that in fact de-stabilises the bucolic imagery promoted by the regime. It was argued that *Lobos* in particular incorporates these elements in order to denounce not only the salazarist dictatorship's corrupt and repressive attempts at 'internal colonisation', but also the extreme marginalisation and material poverty experienced in one of Portugal's supposedly idyllic inland settlements, whilst rejecting Marxist-oriented or revolutionary strategies for alleviating these conditions. Finally, it was noted that Ribeiro's 1926 and 1958 novels evoke a distinctly *topophilic* sentiment which, while initially appearing to a-critically endorse ruralist nostalgia and atavism, offer 'radical', anti-nationalist and anti-colonial interpretations.

Following this analysis, Chapter III concentrated on a pertinent ideological question that Ribeiro's novels touch upon, but do not comprehensively explore or problematise: the positions held (or *seemingly* held) by Portuguese women within concrete regional contexts. In particular, this comparative section of the thesis concentrated on the gendered regionalist dynamics detectable in Agustina Bessa-Luís's *A sibila* and Lídia Jorge's *O dia dos prodígios*, and, in addition, on those narratives' exploration of (regionally specific) 'matriarchal' and 'sibylline' archetypes as positive or negative models for women's advancement. The chapter affirmed that both *Sibila* and *Dia* systematically challenge (and, often, lampoon) simplistic geographical binaries and idealistic / nostalgic pastoral imagery, particularly when those notions are associated with salazarist, socially regressive gender dichotomies. Moreover, it was suggested that despite both authors' apparent rejection of contemporary 'feminist' agendas, the protagonists of these two novels are used by Bessa-Luís and Jorge to undermine misleading metonymies of matriarchal authority in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho and Algarve, while proposing *regionalised* versions of the classical 'Sibyl' figure that provide glimpses – if not ultimate fulfilment – of hope for a future re-evaluation of established gender roles.

Lastly, Chapter IV examined the importance of regionalist dynamics to two fundamental ideological battles that Ribeiro's, Bessa-Luís's and Jorge's narratives fail to substantially address: the economic class struggle and anti-

capitalism, which, in Saramago's fiction, are inextricably linked to anti-authoritarianism. In its explicitly geographical analysis of *Levantado do Chão* and *A Caverna*, this chapter outlined the strategies deployed in both of these novels to exploit and deconstruct externally projected, binary preconceptions of rural 'isolation' *vis-à-vis* urban 'civilisation', in order to highlight the detrimental political and economic ordering of *multiple* territories, firstly under State repression (*Levantado*) and subsequently within the context of hyper-capitalist hegemony (*Caverna*). The chapter then delineated the localised politics of resistance that these two narratives articulate, including, in different formulations, a common affinity with "militant particularism" as a means of rebellion, survival and / or commemoration in the face of hostile political, social and economic forces.

Despite the considerable ideological distinctions between the authors and novels examined in this thesis, these narratives are united by their highly politicised treatment of regional geographies and spatial dynamics, not simply in the service of de-centralisation, regional development initiatives and local identities, but rather for the purposes of grounding their respective ideological objectives in concrete, material and *rural* lived experiences, while rejecting any notion of idealisation with regards to their portrayal of rustic spaces (indeed, quite the contrary in several cases). Furthermore, although the degree to which these novels offer *radical* solutions to political, social and economic issues varies considerably, each of them can be described as oppositional in one way or another, whether the hegemonic model in question relates to centralised governments (and corrupt local authorities) that fail to engage with localised concerns / traditions, patriarchal social norms reinforced by idyllic rural tropes, or economic inequities and dystopian capitalist development supported by territorial binaries and preconceptions. It was noted that several (but not all) of these novels manipulate images of rural nostalgia and common atavistic desires for an Edenic return, while never endorsing or encouraging such sentiments, or even suggesting that such a return is possible. As a whole, this thesis evinced the central role of regional space and of geographical localisation within twentieth-century Portuguese fiction's construction of broader ideological novelistic discourses.

As acknowledged at the very beginning of this study, there were certain limitations to its scope, due to its concentration on continental Portugal (at the expense of insular fiction from the Azores and Madeira archipelagos), and the absence of 'regional' / 'rural' narratives set in Portugal's former colonial territories. It should be evident, however, that to have included such narratives in my corpus would have presented its own set of problems, not least a distraction of focus and an implausible expansion of 'regionalist ideological projects' to encompass *insularity*, *anti-colonialist* discourse and *post-colonial* imaginaries. In effect, to ensure concentration on the role of geographical marginalities, it was necessary to precisely define those margins and to avoid false equivalences between *regional* and *colonised* spaces. Concomitantly, there was a relative lack of reference to the potential overlap of regional geographies with identity (particularly, anti-racist and LGBTQ+) discourses, which could be interpreted as an oversight. Nevertheless, any scholar must work with the confines of the literature available and the dynamics contained therein, rather than tracing connections that exist only on very questionable grounds, if at all. While the intricacies of male sexuality in Portugal's rural communities have been explored in detail, (e.g. Miguel Vale de Almeida's *Senhores de Si*, which focuses on Alentejan village society), the link between queer identities and regionally specific twentieth-century novels is rather tenuous, save certain aspects of Nemésio's *Mau Tempo no Canal* (cf. Pitta 2003) and of Bessa-Luís's *Vale Abrãao* (cf. Lentina 2019: 14-22). Similarly, of the Portuguese novels consulted prior to corpus selection, only Lídia Jorge's *O Vento Assobiando nas Grúas* appeared to engage with the questions of race, colonial legacy and (regional) location, but it became clear that the narrative's coastal Algarvian environment does not assume the same discursive significance and ideological importance as in those novels that were set aside for close analysis. Ultimately, while a truly intersectional approach to the circumstances faced by inhabitants of Portugal's regional / rural areas is certainly possible, a more obvious discipline for addressing these concerns at present would be sociology or

anthropology, rather than literary studies, given the limited themes evoked in narrative fiction.[274]

That said, this thesis undoubtedly opens up considerable scope for subsequent research, within the Portuguese / Lusophone Studies field and outside of it. Firstly, an examination of ruralist imagery and regionalist dynamics in twenty-first century Portuguese fiction seems a logical starting point, to complement Martín López-Vega's incisive reading of Valter Hugo Mãe's work in *Periferias emancipadas: políticas de la representación espacial en la Iberia reimaginada* (2017). Secondly, the notion of *insularity* could be re-evaluated in an explicitly ideological sense, encompassing renowned Azorean and Madeiran novelists such as João de Melo and Joel Neto, and building on Brianna Medeiros's recent study *The Eruption of Insular Identities: A Comparative Study of Azorean and Cape Verdean Prose* (2020). More broadly, multiple opportunities present themselves for analyses of post-independence novels from Portuguese-speaking Africa; while a 'regionalist' reading of narratives published prior to 1974 would risk conflating an affirmation of local identities with nationalist / anti-colonial pretensions, it would nonetheless be productive to study the (possibly problematic) role of regional spaces in post-colonial 'nation-building' narratives. In addition to the apparent 'northern matriarchy' and North vs. South "internal exotic" paradigms explored by the Mozambican author Paulina Chiziane – which Ana Margarida Martins critiques to great effect in *Magic Stones and Flying Snakes* (2012: 65-84) – an examination of the complex relationship between ideological projects and regional geographies would potentially aid interpretations of Pepetela's Angolan novels and Mia Couto's Mozambican narratives, amongst other examples.[277] Any such study, however, would need to carefully consider the role of externally imposed (rather than 'naturally formed') national borders, of ethnic distinctions between (and within) selected geographical areas, and of armed conflict (particularly in Angola and Mozambique) in intensifying rural-urban demographic and

[274] A potential model for such an analysis is Wendy Hulko's and Jessica Hovanes's Canadian study "Intersectionality in the Lives of LGBTQ Youth: Identifying as LGBTQ and Finding Community in Small Cities and Rural Towns" (2018).

[277] For instance, Pepetela's *Yaka* (1985) and Couto's *Terra sonâmbula* (1992).

economic imbalances within those nations (cf. Boslego 2005: 6). Lastly, the literary 'politics of place' that this dissertation has highlighted can be explored with reference to recent political upsets and evidence of regional disharmony in numerous Western nations, as Gemma Edwards and Chloé Ashbridge have also revealed in their adroit studies of twenty-first century British literature.[278]

My final remarks, then, must reflect upon the context in which this thesis was originally conceived. Much has changed in international politics over the four years since this research project began: in the UK, the 'regional revolt' that was widely associated with the 2016 Brexit Referendum has now been re-purposed into a Conservative "red wall" electoral coalition, on the basis of (vague and elusive) commitments to "level up" England's unequal provinces; in the United States, Donald Trump's mobilisation of America's so-called "left behind" rural communities was not sufficient to grant him a second term as President, although deep demographic and ideological divisions between the country's states and regions remain over issues like abortion; in France, the far-right politician Marine Le Pen has consistently sought to expand her electoral support beyond the north-eastern *départements* that she won in 2017, in preparation for the upcoming Presidential Election; in Brazil, only the historically poor and left-leaning states of the Nordeste region resisted the rise of the neo-fascist politician Jair Bolsonaro.

Portugal has only very recently adhered to these right-wing populist trends, with the ultra-nationalist *Chega* gaining 7% of the vote and 12 *deputados* in 2022's parliamentary elections, with considerable support in Alentejan districts and in the country's Eastern hinterlands (cf. Comissão Nacional de Eleições 2022). Aside from this party's demonisation of Afro-Portuguese, Roma and other ethnic minorities present throughout Portugal's urban and rural communities (cf. Lusa/Jornal de Negócios 2021), its leader André Ventura is an especially pertinent example of regionalist discourse's continued relevance (and evolving nature) within Portuguese politics and society. Namely, Ventura's apparent support for the struggles faced by rural communities was suggested by

[278] See Edwards, *Representing the Rural: New Rural Imaginaries on the English Stage since 2000* (2021) and Ashbridge, *Rewriting the North: Place, Nation, and the Cultural Politics of Devolution* (2021).

his presence at a 2019 “concentração pelo mundo rural” protest (ironically, in Lisbon – cf. Lusa/Jornal de Abrantes 2019), whereas his supplanting of the PCP’s Alentejan vote in the 2021 Presidential Election was championed as evidence that “quebrámos o mito das terras de esquerda e das terras comunistas” (Ventura *apud* Curvelo 2021). With this increasingly fraught and fragmented ideological geography, in Portugal and elsewhere, a detailed understanding of how regional tropes and dynamics may be manipulated by politicians and artists from across the political spectrum is as important as ever. If, as the British ‘regional writer’ Thomas Hardy suggested, “a novel is an impression, not an argument” (*apud* Short 1991: 159), the *impression* left by the novels studied here should serve as a tool for critically re-evaluating fallacious regionalist *arguments*, which continue to mobilise (surviving) rural communities in a reactionary direction.

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