‘Education and Culture for the Masses’:
Sociocultural Debates and Legacies
in the Mid-Twentieth Century

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The idea that the aesthetic programme of certain artistic and literary currents in the twentieth century prevented them from connecting with social and political concerns has become an enduring slight, repeated in the academic world, in the media, and by the participants themselves. This was the case with the modernist currents in Portugal, which (allegedly) advocated ‘art for art’s sake’, in contrast to other currents that proposed a social, interventionist art — an error encouraged by the intensity of the polemic that pitted neo-realists against Presencistas, and by the fact that such criticism, in accusing the latter of navel-gazing, compromised their position as public intellectuals. ¹

Independently of their aesthetic and ideological differences, the majority of these social players shared broad social and sociocultural concerns, while having different ways of expressing them.

It is important to distinguish the different ways in which this multi-faceted conception of intellectual invention operated, within which different perspectives are articulated on the same subject, according to whether the area of activity was

1 Neo-realism was a cultural movement that tried to apply the principles of socialist realism to the Portuguese situation, looking for inspiration to influences such as the literary tradition of nineteenth-century Portuguese realism, North American and Brazilian realist novels, and Italian cinema from the 1940s and 1950s. See João Madeira, Os engenheiros de almas: o Partido Comunista e os intelectuais (dos anos trinta aos inícios de sessenta) (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1996). The Presencistas were a literary and artistic current associated with the journal Presença, (1927–40), generally considered the most representative element of the second Portuguese modernism. However, there are studies which regard them as an anti-modernist reaction against the first Portuguese modernism — which emerged with the journal Orpheu, in 1915, and its imitators, supported by figures such as Fernando Pessoa, Mário de Sá Carneiro, Almada Negreiros and António Botto — which they claimed to follow, as has been suggested by Eduardo Lourenço in 1960 (Eduardo Lourenço, “Presença” ou a contra-revolução do modernismo, in Tempo e poesia: À volta da literatura (Porto: Editorial Inova, 1974 [1960]), pp. 165–94). Such a revisionism was also implicit in the criticism of ‘provincialism’ made by David Mourão-Ferreira in an early piece, in 1956. For an analysis of the long polemic, and the differences, similarities, and complementary aspects of these modernisms see Eugénio Lisboa, O segundo modernismo em Portugal, 2nd edn (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1984); Fernando Jorge Vieira Pimentel, “Presença, presencismo, presencistas”: recensões, nótulas, in Literatura portuguesa e modernidade (Braga: Angelus Novus, 2001), pp. 157–90; and Osvaldo Manuel Silvestre, ‘Prefácio’, A poesia da “Presença”: estudo e antologia, ed. by Adolfo Casais Monteiro (Lisbon: Cotovia, 2003), pp. 11–24.
strictly creative or aesthetic, or whether it was of a public or civic kind. However, the creative intellectual coexisted with the public or civic intellectual, and this plurality was exercised as much at the individual as at the collective level. This may seem surprising when we look at the links between certain intellectual representatives of these currents and certain sociocultural projects that were undertaken in the middle of the twentieth century.

In this article I examine the Portuguese situation in the light of these questions, by focusing on three points: the intervention produced on a particular topic, individual actions in certain institutions, and the institutional programmes themselves.

Seareiros and Presencistas as Heirs to a Republican and Progressive Culture

As well as their individual work in the proper sense, public interventions by Portuguese intellectuals were made in a variety of ways: by attention to the spreading and popularization of culture, by the creation of and support for associations of a sociocultural nature, by the debating of ideas, by the promotion of libraries and support for books and reading, and by civic intervention.

Setting out from the Republican and progressive intellectual tradition, we can see sociocultural and civic connections with both the promoters of Seara Nova and the modernists of Presença. In the latter case, this genealogy encompasses both those Presencistas most open to social questions and those more concerned with aesthetics, though more with the first group than the second.

Given the type of association I focus upon, the approach proposed here attempts to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the intellectual and sociocultural dynamics. In this way, it necessarily challenges the simplifications to be found in readings which proclaim the one-dimensional conservatisms of the old Seareiros, or the civic and social indifference of the Presencistas.

2 Seara Nova [lit. New Harvest] was a journal created in 1921 by a group of intellectuals committed to the regeneration of the Republic and to the formation of a spiritual elite responsible for the discussion of ideas and the conduct of public affairs. Apart from political, philosophical and educational essays, they also published news, commentary, reviews, artwork, fiction and poetry. Notable amongst the principal initial contributors were Raul Proença, Luís Cârma Reys, Jaime Cortesão and António Sérgio. In the 1940s and 1950s it made a turn to the left, leading to the temporary departure of Sérgio, Agostinho da Silva, Álvaro Salema, José Régio and other contributors (António Ventura, José Régio e a política (Braga: Universidade do Minho, 2000), pp. 58–61).

3 See Luís Augusto da Costa Dias, Uma anti-Seara em “Seara Nova”: doutrina e crítica nos jornais e revistas juvenis dos movimentos culturais dos anos 30 (Coimbra: CEIS20 — Universidade de Coimbra, 2002) and David Mourão-Ferreira, ‘Esta nova presença da Presença’, in Presença: edição facsimilada compacta, 3 vols (Lisbon: Contexto, 1993), i, 5–15, respectively. To Mourão-Ferreira, Presença had for decades been the victim of hasty, incorrect and often contradictory judgements, by critics who denounced it ‘como nefasta reacção ao modernismo (a qual?)’ [as an inauspicious reaction against modernism (which one?)].
To demonstrate such a hypothesis, I propose to examine three areas. The first part will serve to demonstrate the applicability of such a genealogy, through a brief examination of the paths taken by Miguel Torga, José Régio, Adolfo Casais Monteiro and Alberto de Serpa. The second part will follow the connections between personal stance, public intervention, and cultural dissemination (especially by libraries and public reading), through a detailed analysis of the case of Branquinho da Fonseca and his relationship to other colleagues in the management of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, such as José Azeredo Perdigão, as embodying the height of the Seareiro ideal of a wide-ranging spiritual function, and Domingos Monteiro, also a writer concerned with social matters in his writings and in his multi-faceted cultural activities, and himself a Presencista — if we regard the flagship journal of the second modernism, not as a school, but as a spiritual family, as emphasized by Régio (in light of the productive example of the Nouvelle Revue Française), and endorsed by Eugénio Lisboa. The third and final part will broaden the horizons of this approach, by including the communist current, as the principal representative of the politically committed, or ‘engaged’ opposition tendencies.

**From the Seara Nova to Presença:**

**The Europeanization of Intellectual Intervention**

It may be said of Miguel Torga (1907–1995) that he was a dissident Presencista, but even so he left a decisive mark on its decisive foundational period (1927–30). Later on he would adopt the ‘poetic identity’ of an Orfeu rebelde, an identity which was in harmony with that journal. His political and civic involvement for liberty and democracy had a recognized impact on his poetic work, of which the main examples are the poem ‘Ariane’, written during his time as a political prisoner, and the tale ‘Vicente’, from the collection Os bichos, both from 1940. His public activities range from the opposition campaigns of 1946 to the intellectuals’ manifestos against the regime of 1946, 1967 and 1969. And it is appropriate to mention too his cultural philanthropy in declining the Prémio Garrett, awarded by the Ateneu Comercial do Porto, while asking for the funds regarded it as a ‘sucursal novecentista da “torre de marfim”’, somente habitada por adoradores do próprio umbigo e de todo alheia, claro está, à esfera do “social”, às incidências do “político”, às exigências ou pressões do “económico” [a twentieth-century version of the ‘ivory tower’, inhabited only by those who gazed at their own navel, oblivious to everything, including, obviously, the ‘social’ sphere, ‘political’ events, and ‘economic’ demands or pressures] (idem, p. 5).

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6 Pereira, pp. 46 and 51.
to be used for the publication of works by young contestants, in 1954. In his biography of Torga, the historian Renato Nunes suggests that the persecution _ad hominem_ directed against him should be taken as an exemplary case of the way in which the Salazar regime behaved towards all Portuguese writers, persecuting precisely those whom it associated with literature of public intervention who did not support the regime in power. This conclusion is in agreement with our present approach.

In Régio (1901–1969), it is important to emphasize from the outset his early and courageous public intervention — against the grain of the ‘bourgeois spirit’, of ‘traditions of passive resistance’, of ‘accommodationism’, while defending ‘atheism and heresy’ — in a decade, the 1920s, already marked by the hardening of dictatorship and censorship of the freedom of expression, in journals such as the anarchist _A Batalha_ and the Republican _A Revolta_ and _Humanidade_.

Over the following decade he would publish more critical texts, in _Seara Nova_ (to which he would contribute from 1933 to 1940, and from 1949 to 1969) and elsewhere, and adopt positions critical of the regime. This intervention, though limited, tackled sensitive issues head-on, and it was unjustly omitted when proof of his civic commitment was demanded (in the same _Seara Nova_, in 1939), by the then young communist and neo-realist intellectual, Álvaro Cunhal, later to be the leader of the Portuguese Communist Party over a period of many decades. Furthermore, his literary output was subject to strict political oversight: for example, in 1934 the dictatorship prohibited the publication of his book _O jogo da cabra cega_ , which was followed by the censorship of his plays (1949, 1956), and of various pieces of journalism. This adoption of a visceral solidarity (of a social-democratic kind) with the victims of misfortune and injustice would culminate, in later decades, in frontal attacks on Salazarist repression, of which the most famous is ‘O recurso ao medo’ [Recourse to fear], in 1949, one of the most biting denunciations of the censorship of thought. He would present these texts in public meetings of oppositionists from the 1940s to 1960s, as well as signing manifestos seeking freedom of expression, such as those of 1945 (appearing alongside Presencistas such as Branquinho da Fonseca, Casais Monteiro, Gaspar Simões, etc.), 1962 and 1965 (related to the Portuguese Society of Writers), thus exposing himself to further political repression.

Furthermore, the very programme of _Presença_, constantly referred to by Régio, was based on the ‘independence of art and criticism from any

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8 Pereira, pp. 86–87.
10 Ventura, pp. 15–17.
11 Ventura, pp. 31–43.
12 This is not to deny that Régio adopted controversial political positions that could be taken as contradicting his humanist commitment, of which the main example is his reservation about self-determination for the Portuguese colonies expressed in the newspaper _O Comércio do Porto_, on 27 November 1960 (Ventura, pp. 48–52).
authority," and on a diversity of artistic styles, and of formal and aesthetic approaches. In the context in which they were operating, this necessarily turned it into a centre of resistance, aesthetic, artistic and cultural, though a centre that was also equidistant from the 'engaged' arts. Régio aimed to uphold modernism and the critical culture of which the journal had made itself the standard-bearer through, on the one hand, its integration into modern European culture, and on the other, by encouraging the Portuguese press to become involved in a criticism of arts and letters, in a way that it was not accustomed to.

But Régio also went further, involving himself in the spread of culture, by publishing anthologies of poetry, one of them — *Poesia de ontem e de hoje para o nosso povo ler*, 1956 — as part of a campaign for adult education. He also co-organized the Amicitia–Grupo Cultural de Portalegre (from 1958) and the Cineclube de Portalegre (from 1960), both points of reference in the sociocultural development of the area, generating intense activity in the shape of exhibitions, debates, a bulletin, pamphlets, competitions, film shows, etc.

Out of deep concern for the Europeanization of intellectual intervention — in the sense of an extension of the programmatic efforts of their predecessors, such as *Seara Nova*, with the aim of an affirmation of critical thought, of a living art for a democratic society, and of a broadened public made up of active citizens — there also emerged a response from Adolfo Casais Monteiro, who, along with Régio and João Gaspar Simões, would be one of the most prominent in producing literary and artistic essays and criticism.

Casais Monteiro (1908–1972) developed a relevant political and civic intervention throughout his life. At the start of the Military Dictatorship (1926–28), he was actively participating in political journals that defended 'democratic ideas', and involved 'in all kinds of opposition activities'. Later, in 1933, he joined the political and cultural movement known as *Renovação Democrática* (1932–45), which shared the Republican strategy of enforcing political pluralism at the start of the Estado Novo. In 1936 he was arrested for supporting the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. He adopted the profile of a democratic leftist, halfway between popular liberalism and the communists, thereby making

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14 Mourão-Ferreira, pp. 5–6.
17 Ventura, pp. 44–45 and 52–53.
himself a favourite target for the political police. Not content with taking away his teaching position at a secondary school (liceu), the dictatorship continued to persecute him, at one point even prohibiting any mention of his name in the press, either national or regional. To escape from this encirclement he fled to Brazil, in 1954. There he actively collaborated with the Committee of Intellectuals and the Portuguese Artists for Freedom of Expression (from 1958), with the movement Portuguese Democratic Unity (from 1961), and with the journal *Portugal Democrático* (1956–74), until his death in 1972. 21 This latter was the organ of the exiled opponents of Salazar, and as such was characterized by a unity based on ‘political diversity’ and by an ethical aim that the Presencista writer wholeheartedly supported and practised. 22 As he himself remarked, in refuting accusations of communist tendencies made by his former colleague Gaspar Simões, ‘defending the freedom of art and literature is not in any way incompatible with an active participation in the political struggle against the dictatorship.’ 23

Despite taking a more discreet approach, Alberto de Serpa (1906–1992) made a civic and cultural intervention that is worth recording. He was arrested on political grounds in 1936. He co-founded the *Revista de Portugal* (1937–40), to which he was secretary, and held the same position on *Presença* for some years. He was also a publicist and publisher of poetry, co-organizing, with Régio, two thematic anthologies. In aesthetic terms, it should be mentioned that his poetry reconciled poetic with realistic language, thus anticipating the emergence of neo-realism, which he drew close to by way of an explicit engagement in literary production during the Second World War, for example with *Drama* (1940). 24

Although not reducible to simply a Europeanization of intellectual intervention (there were also changes in habits and mentalities), it seems pertinent to refer to connections that bring together some Presencistas in a shared ethical posture, biography, and creativity. If fact, the open adoption of a homosexual orientation on the part of figures such as Régio and António Botto (the latter one of the contributors to *Orpheu*) came into conflict with deep-rooted hostile attitudes, social discrimination and prejudice, with implications for the appreciation of their artistic merit. 25 They helped, though, to establish this civic and political issue in Portuguese society, something that had been passed over by the progressive campaigns against the dictatorship, even by the oppositions of a political nature. We should also note the space given to questioning the Christian conscience,

22 Silva, pp. 32 and 136–43.
23 Monteiro, p. 313.
a position constantly affirmed by Régio, and rare in Portuguese literature, which necessarily faced a regime and a society based, in the words of the 1933 Constitution, on the ‘traditional Christian moral doctrine of the nation’.

Art and Life: From Literature to Sociocultural Promotion

The Presencista who offers the most exemplary symbol of the link to a progressive kind of intellectual tradition and of civic and sociocultural intervention is Branquinho da Fonseca, the co-founder and one of the main contributors to Presença until his voluntary departure (1927–30). He was the son of Tomás da Fonseca, himself a distinguished figure in the First Republic and an expert on educational matters, though better known for his works of anti-clerical fiction. His father’s career left an impression on him, not only in his concern with the question of popular education but also in his humanist, civic and Republican upbringing. He also took from his father his membership of the Masonry, having also joined the ‘Construir’ [Construct] Masonic lodge, in Coimbra. His taste for reading was also the direct fruit of paternal influence.26

In his own literary output Branquinho shows a concern with reflecting the surrounding social reality, and the popular classes, while adding to it an ethical dimension.27 Despite defending the autonomy and creative freedom of the writer, his work and his literary vision were permeated by an undeniable social concern, and an attempt to link art to life. Authors such as Paparella speak even of a ‘socio-political stance’, expressed by his critical gaze upon the Portuguese situation.28 This is the opposite, then, of what would be expected of a modernist writer, especially if we consider neo-realist criticism, made at the time of its affirmation of an aesthetic and sociocultural alternative, from the end of the 1930s onwards. It is true that this criticism was aimed mainly at two figures in particular, namely José Régio and João Gaspar Simões (who remained in the forefront of Presença until its extinction), but the stigma attached itself to the whole aesthetic current 29 — and Branquinho remained a self-confessed Presencista, albeit ‘without masters’, until the end of his life.

Adopting the interpretative framework of Prochasson,30 it is the intellectual, professional and family networks in which Branquinho moved that help us to

29 As was explained at some length by David Mourão-Ferreira, p. 5.
understand his role inside a social and cultural ‘micro-climate’. Having received his formative influences in the context of the Military Dictatorship, with the most conservative forces in society in the ascendant, Branquinho had been shaped by the social networks and a certain heritage common to progressive, republican, and opposition forces. After finishing his course in Law, in 1935, he exercised the position of *conservador* [town registrar] in different parts of the country (Marvão, Nazaré and Cascais), which, despite having different social and demographic characteristics, all shared a certain economic, cultural and territorial distance from the centres of power, thus giving him a broad knowledge of the country and its people that would be useful to him in the future. Furthermore, what is notable in this apparently anodyne progress, typical of a public functionary, is that it was while he was still in Nazaré that he showed his first concern with the promotion of culture. There he took the first steps in creating a municipal library (as well as a ‘Casa dos Pobres’ [lit. House of the Poor] and a project for the construction of a safe harbour), developing the acute concern with the most unfortunate that is evident in his writings. These achievements, along with a well-received literary work, gave him the momentum to launch himself into the role of conservator of the Museu-Biblioteca Conde de Castro Guimarães, in Cascais, a position that he would hold for almost two decades (1943–60).

Despite the hazards — censorship and restrictions on reading, budget constraints, hostility and a conservative literary taste on the part of those over him — the new director of the municipal library in Cascais achieved notable things in this period. He made five principal contributions: 1) he renewed the existing stock of books, one of the defects of the majority of libraries at the time (an obstacle both to attracting readers and to changing their reading tastes and preferences); 2) he promoted literary works, as organizer of the collection of stories *As grandes viagens portuguesas* [Great Portuguese Journeys] (published in two volumes, in 1946 and 1964 respectively), as a literary critic of the work of Trindade Coelho, and as translator of works by Duhamel, Stendhal, etc.; 3) he improved the supply and accessibility of books by way of home loans and the creation of a mobile library, in 1953, which would show the advantages of a spread of libraries and the urgent need for decentralization; 4) he published various articles in the press, with the aim of making society aware of the importance of public libraries (libraries open to everyone, in the Anglo-Saxon manner, but especially mobile libraries, given the inequalities in access in outlying areas, in comparison to the big cities) and the indispensability of privileging the reader and his needs over and above a priority on conservation, in contrast to current practice; and 5) he promoted the cultural advancement of the library, with its own publications, exhibitions, lectures, etc.31

It was through his early experience of national renewal through cultural promotion, echoing the progressive legacy of the First Republic, that Branquinho

31 See Paparella, pp. 16–17 and 23, and Melo, *A leitura pública no Portugal contemporâneo*. 
was able to launch himself into an ambitious initiative, that of using the good offices of a young institution in civil society to promote a national network of municipal libraries, and with it, the democratization of access to books and to reading.

The Gulbenkian Foundation:
An Inter-generational Project of Cultural Promotion

This challenge would be not only be taken up by the Gulbenkian Foundation, but some of its leaders would publicly declare themselves in harmony with a certain civic and Enlightenment legacy, notably the pioneering Seareiro, co-mentor and president of the new institution, José de Azeredo Perdigão. The stance taken by Azeredo Perdigão echoed his long-standing support for the spirit of the Enlightenment and for a Republican ideal of public education, which presupposed the extension to all citizens of a certain minimum schooling and values of self-advancement and self-awareness, but superseded the Seareira logic of giving exclusive priority to the formation of an elite:

A sociedade moderna assemelha-se a um grande edifício de vários andares, habitado, cada um deles, por uma certa classe de pessoas de idêntica categoria econômica e intelectual, edifício que, à medida que se vai elevando, mais necessita, não só de alicerces e infra-estruturas capazes de suportar os constantes alçamentos, mas também de que, entre os seus diversos pisos, existam fáceis comunicações e acessos, em ordem a que, entre os componentes dessas diversas camadas sociais, se estabeleçam relações de colaboração tanto no trabalho como na realização dos fins superiores a que o homem foi destinado. Eis porque, em nosso entender, ao progresso de uma sociedade nacional interessam tanto a formação das suas elites intelectuais e artísticas como o desenvolvimento da educação e da cultura do povo.

Depois do pão a educação é a primeira necessidade do homem, pensamento este que, por ser antigo de séculos, não deixou de ser actual. [...] A educação [...] prepara o homem para a realização da sua personalidade natural e social. Logo, só é homem educado aquele que, verdadeiro conhecedor da sua origem e do seu destino, possui, a par de uma determinada instrução profissional, um certo grau de cultura geral e um forte poder de autodisciplina.32

[Modern society is like a great building with many floors, each of them inhabited by a certain class of people of identical economic and social status — a building that in its construction requires not only foundations and infrastructure capable of supporting its constant elevation, but also that there should be, between its different floors, easy communication and access so that collaborative relations can be established between elements of those different social layers, not only in work but in the achievement of the higher]

ends to which man is destined. This is why, in our opinion, progress of a national society is concerned not only with the formation of its intellectual and artistic elites, but also with the development of education and culture for the people.

After bread, education is the prime necessity of mankind — a thought that although centuries old remains pertinent today. [...] Education prepares man for the realization of his natural and social personality. Consequently, man is only educated if, having a true understanding of his origins and his destiny, he also possesses, alongside a particular professional education, a certain level of general culture and a strong sense of self-discipline.]

This statement exemplifies not only the intervention by such individuals into particular institutions, but the institutional interventions themselves, since this vision not only bound together the whole of the Gulbenkian Foundation, but the Foundation itself created its own services and provided them with the necessary resources, human and logistical, to make a reality of such a vision. Various intellectuals and groups, in their turn, would join the project as employees or supporters in different levels of the organization: as administrators (such as Domingos Monteiro, a modernist writer, but also editor of the Society for Cultural Expansion from 1948); as employees in the static and mobile libraries (for example the surrealists Máximo Lisboa, Alexandre O’Neill, António José Fort and Herberto Hélder) and as contributors to the Reading Commission (where there converged the modernist generation of the journal Távola Redonda, neo-realists such as Mário Braga and Álvaro Salema, and existentialists of a communist background such as Urbano Tavares Rodrigues).33

Drawing on earlier achievements, Branquinho da Fonseca outlined his core idea for a network of mobile libraries in 1958, in a report which contained photographs and press cuttings about his previous pet project, the Cascais mobile library.34 This report would add weight to the interventionist and Enlightenment approach of the President of the Foundation by praising the role of libraries in the development of ‘a proper culture and a secure education’, by promoting the ‘taste for a spiritual companionship that would reinvigorate the

33 Portuguese surrealism was an artistic and literary current that emerged in 1943, inspired by its French forebears (of 1924), especially the school of André Breton. It proposed to change society and life by rehabilitating ‘everyday reality’, while at the same time rejecting a narrow and dogmatic ‘realism’, which it identified with neo-realism. Apart from the visual arts, it focused on poetry and criticism, released in occasional publications, so as to elude the censorship. Outstanding in the first generation were Mário Cesarány, António Maria Lisboa, Pedro Oom, António Pedro, José Augusto França, Vespeira, Cândido Costa Pinto, Moniz Pereira, Artur Cruzeiro Seixas and Fernando Lemos. The authors mentioned in the text are all from later generations, except O’Neill. Some consider the journal Távola Redonda (1950–54) to be linked to surrealism, but the more common view is that it is associated with Catholic authors and to modernism is a wider sense. Its contributors included David Mourão-Ferreira, Luís de Macedo, Alberto Lacerda, António Manuel Couto Viana, Sebastião da Gama and Fernanda Botelho.

34 Melo, A leitura pública no Portugal contemporâneo, pp. 281–82.
intelligence and stimulate understanding’, a ‘higher mission’ that necessarily went beyond ‘reading for reading’s sake’, implying an integrated supply of reading material (educational, reflective, and recreational) and an active role for the institution, going out to meet the reader. Such cultural facilities would fulfil a highly civilizing role, it said, and, by way of decisive argument, added that they were ‘widely used in every civilized country’.

In half a dozen years this project not only forged alliances (with town councils, local bodies, intellectuals etc.) but also overcame obstacles and improved institutional support (the mobile libraries were joined by the static). It became one of the most exemplary projects of cultural democratization, both during the dictatorship and in modern-day Portugal as a whole. Its vigour was due to several factors: its contribution to broadening access to books in underprivileged communities; the variety of books on offer (an alternative *corpus* of reading to the official or quasi-official offerings in most of the public libraries); and the shaping of a public that was better equipped, more demanding, more cultivated, more diversified, and more critical (by way of bibliographical collections, individual guidance on reading, bulletins, cultural outreach, etc.).

Concomitantly, another relevant point is that these libraries were promoting different aesthetic and cultural currents, including modernists and neo-realist. In the former group, readers’ preferences, as researched by Tengarrinha in 1971, included Régio, Domingos Monteiro, and Branquinho; in the second group, Alves Redol and Fernando Namora. Amongst the ‘top ten’ of favourite Portuguese authors there also featured others who dwelt on social themes, such as Ferreira de Castro and Aquilino Ribeiro. What is interesting about the demand for these names is the preference, above all, for contemporary Portuguese novelists connected to the opposition, that is, known for their civic, political and sociocultural intervention against the dictatorship. This openness was also reflected in the variety of foreign authors available.

This project drew on a range of experiences and experiments, such as the popular and mobile libraries of the First Republic and the alternative proposals of Bettencourt Ataíde and António Ferrão. This heritage would be deepened by José Pinto Loureiro, in his dual role as promoter of the Biblioteca Municipal de Coimbra and as author of the projected works (such as *Como reformar as bibliotecas portuguesas* [How to Reform the Portuguese Libraries], published by *Seara Nova* in 1938); by Victor de Sá (with his mobile library in Braga, from 1942 to 1950); and then by Branquinho himself.

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36 For further details see Melo, *A leitura pública no Portugal contemporâneo* and *A leitura pública na I República* (Lisbon: Húmus and Centro de História da Cultura, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2010).
Political Opposition and Sociocultural Intervention: 
A Dialogue by Many Pathways

The political framework of sociocultural intervention in the context of dictatorship should be analysed taking into account the ‘strait-jackets’ of the time: on the one hand those political currents, such as the communists, who advocated an art that was strongly engaged in politics and society, and which crystallized as an aesthetic school; and on the other hand, the rule of a dictatorial regime which institutionalized political censorship of the media, which gave authority to a social censorship of reading materials taken to be contrary to official values, and which restricted the freedom of expression, above all that of a political nature.

Such restrictions fostered changes in the very arena of public intervention and the form of political activity, leading many political, civic and intellectual groups to move into the field of voluntary associations of a sociocultural kind as the chosen ground for developing a resistance, itself changed. Paradoxically it was also the dim prospects for political and social revolution — and possibly a clearer perception of the perverse and varied effects of Portuguese ‘backwardness’ — that would lead to a gradual deepening of public intervention into the domain of culture, by programmatic and institutional means.

At this point we should note the contribution of the communist academic, Bento de Jesus Caraça. His project for intervention started out from a political platform, the need for the emancipation of all men, to arrive at a cultural platform, the need for everyone to secure a minimum level of general education. It is with this in mind that we should read his programme for an ‘integral culture’, which mixed areas and methodologies of teaching and education themselves (such as the popular universities, of which he was a promoter and assiduous participant) with the conception, production and mass distribution of books on scientific and cultural topics. Here we note the ‘Biblioteca Cosmos’ (1941–48), which he conceived in a spirit of scientific rationalism, and which quickly became a milestone in the circulation of general knowledge, both encyclopaedic and technical-professional, aiming to create a national scientific current, to counteract the official anti-scientific culture. Both projects were rooted in a progressive tradition — the ‘Biblioteca Cosmos’ was an updating, in a different mould, of the ‘Biblioteca do Povo e das Escolas’, by David Corazzi (1881–1913) — bypassing Salazarism, when they were not persecuted and attacked by it. But they nevertheless broke with a part of the Republican tradition, namely António Sérgio’s idea of refusing to popularize culture in order to protect the authenticity of individual education and critical reflection, which was at the root of his famous

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polemic with Abel Salazar.\textsuperscript{38} They also broke with the Seareiro programme, in its earliest generic formulation, of giving priority to the formation of an elite corps of intellectuals and servants of the public good, something the educational project of the Gulbenkian Foundation had also abandoned.

The activities described came to shape a good part of Caraça’s scientific work, in overseeing the teaching in the popular university, and in the preparation of educational works, including scientific textbooks. This shows the connection between the civic and scientific dimensions in the lives of public intellectuals, as well as allowing us to rethink the very nature of the social function of science, and of culture, and design of public policies predicated on a democratization of culture.

Even in the journals \textit{Sol Nascente}, \textit{Diabo} and \textit{Vértice} — the laboratories \textit{par excellence} for the creation of a neo-realist aesthetic — there was space for a reflection on democracy and the democratization of culture, a space which, given its regularity, diversity and complexity, does not fit the cliché of instrumentalization and the secondarization of culture by communism or Stalinism, by way of Zhdanovism or similar manifestations. These periodicals of a quite literary and literate stamp (despite being defenders of ‘social art’) did not neglect discussion and criticism of the need for an urgent democratization of culture, in articles that made reference to it either directly or implicitly — see, for example, analyses of the need to overcome illiteracy, cultural rights, the role of culture, of intellectuals, of libraries, of books, etc.\textsuperscript{39}

Within the field of institutional intervention, we should also note the contribution of journals such as \textit{O Tempo e o Modo} (1963–83) and the associations of a sociocultural nature such as the cooperative Pragma (1964–67) and the Centro Nacional da Cultura (CNC), not only for their prominence amongst specific elites (political, religious and cultural) but for their programmatic ambitions and for their being rooted in a current that emerges from inside the regime and the Catholic Church and begins a gradual convergence with moderate sectors of the opposition, starting with a dialogue with non-believers.

The current of ‘Catholic progressives’ emerges in an organized way in the cultural and civic sphere through journals such as \textit{O Tempo e o Modo}, reclaiming a legacy — that of the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier and the journal \textit{L’Esprit} — bound to a Christian compromise with the world and a certain idea of revolution, both ‘personal and communitarian’, which leads to an approximation to Marxism, especially by its popular (proletarian) engagement and by its


\textsuperscript{39} The aspects are discussed in the following monographs: Luís Trindade, \textit{O espírito do Diabo: discursos e posições intelectuais no semanário ‘O Diabo’, 1934–1940} (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2004); Luís Crespo de Andrade, ‘\textit{Sol Nascente}: da cultura republicana e anarquista ao neo-realismo’ (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2007); and Viviane Ramond, \textit{A revista ‘Vértice’ e o neo-realismo português} (Coimbra: Angelus Novus, 2008).
criticism of bourgeois individualism. In this direction, the first Portuguese journal of a religious outlook organized by a group of lay people renewed and promoted debate of ideas and art in the country, opening up the way to a ‘Christian humanism’; to a new poetry (with Pedro Tamen, H. Hélder, Cristovam Pavia, António Ramos Rosa, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, A. O’Neill, Ruy Bello etc.), to a different type of political thinking based on an acute social preoccupation, and to a dialogue between theology and science.

From a more communitarian and social perspective, Pragma undertook an impressive series of events (four courses, eleven debates and around forty lectures) until its enforced closure, as well as broadening its activities for the social benefit of its members, a legacy later extended by similar cooperatives such as Confronto (1966–72).

From 1957 onwards, the CNC in turn, under the aegis of Francisco Sousa Tavares, went on to distinguish itself by promoting debates that focused on sensitive current issues, whether social, religious or cultural. Most notable amongst these were the cycle of conferences called ‘Lusitania, Quo Vadis?’ (three sessions in March 1969, on political economy, cultural activity, and political perspectives, the last of which was obstructed by the PIDE), and the joint Spanish/Portuguese debate ‘Imprensa?’ (30–31 May 1969), with experts talking on press laws, and the position and operation of the press in the Peninsula — a taboo subject, given the censorship in both countries. On the other hand, a good many of the institution’s leaders involved themselves in other actions of a more political and civic character, such as the creation of the Christian Resistance Movement, and the Commission for the Promotion of the Vote (20 January 1969). Amongst the forty-three original signatories to the latter, there are six members of the CNC.40

Final Remarks

Having got this far, two aspects immediately stand out in this discussion. On the one hand there emerges a common source, a genealogy based on the intellectual traditions of Romanticism and Scientism (in Shils’s definition),41 which suggests links between certain currents marked by the Enlightenment and Positivism. That is, both the modernists tout court and the communist and other politically committed currents shared the idea of scientific universalism as well as values (such as progress) that had their roots in the Enlightenment. On the other hand,


these more recent projects (from the 1940s onwards, let us say), more focused on the democratization of culture, mark a certain rupture with similar projects in the tradition of Portuguese cultural movements, embodied in the arc that stretches from Generation of 1870 to *Seara Nova*. I am referring here to the idea that the intellectual, through his knowledge (be it philosophical, scientific, or historical) can assume a ‘disinterested and depersonalized view of the social and the political’, as Catroga puts it.42

In fact these new projects more concerned with the democratization of culture saw themselves as a civic interpellation and agents of sociocultural transformation for everyone. However, they would display different articulations and implications: either they tended to politicize social and cultural matters, or they were less concerned (but not wholly neglectful) in this regard, focusing instead on broadening access to cultural goods and building auditoria. In the first group we can place the communists and anarchist projects (except for the associative intervention, also concerned with cultural goods, tastes and auditoria); in the second, those of the Seareiros and modernists linked to the Gulbenkian Foundation. Halfway between them we might place some experiments by progressive Catholics.

This is not to deny a continuity with much of what constituted the intellectual tradition of those times, especially in Portugal, in the approach suggested by Shils,43 who sees this type of tradition as a *corpus* of intellectual labour; a *corpus* of knowledge, patterns of arguments and ideas, aims of intellectual activities. In this regard we can also read the currents as the heirs to certain traditions whose institutional configurations are, amongst others, the Republican centres (especially schools), the popular universities, association libraries, cultural, ideological and doctrinal journals, popular publishing for the masses, cinema clubs, and sociocultural associations.

Re-examining such articulations in the light of more rigid ideological frameworks, it can be seen that the fruits of such interventions do not always wholly correspond to the ultimate logic of those frameworks, remaining, for example, only half completed. However, in the context of dictatorship an exercise in cultural democratization, however much it might have in common with projects by representatives of other cultural currents at first sight less (or not at all) concerned with social and political intervention, necessarily had a radical character. Furthermore, the freedom of thought, of artistic creativity, and of public intervention defended by all these intellectuals — of whom we

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42 Fernando Catroga, ‘As vanguardas intelectuais, da Geração de 70 à *Seara Nova*’, in *Seara Nova: democracia/razão/Europa* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2001), pp. 41–60. There are nevertheless continuities, as this same author acknowledges in the case of the Presencistas, with a type of art committed not only to ‘stimulating aesthetic emotions’ but to the ‘primacy of the individual’, and the ‘freedom of thought and artistic creativity’ (cited in Álvaro Vieira, ‘Histórias da “Presença” revistas em Coimbra’, *Público*, 27 October 2002, p. 44).

43 Shils, p. 258.
have here examined the career of a representative sample, namely Miguel Torga, José Régio, Adolfo Casais Monteiro, Alberto de Serpa, Branquinho da Fonseca, José Azeredo Perdigão, Domingos Monteiro and Bento de Jesus Caraça — was necessarily another gain for social intervention in a context of cultural and civic obscurantism.

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