

“METER WEIMAR EM TRÁS-OS-MONTES”:
READING IN TORGA’S *DIÁRIO*

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*Tantas palavras que conheço agora
E malbarato
No papel,
...
Que podem dizer elas
Que valha a pena ler? (28.06.1986)*

If I start with this excerpt from “*Rebate*,” one of the poems dispersed through the fifteen volumes of the *Diário* that Miguel Torga published alongside his many distinguished works since 1941, it is because of the emblematic way in which the poem combines the intimate correspondence between the act of reading and of writing, for the author as well as for his reader; and because of the question mark with which the poem concludes, opening rather than closing the way into discourse, and the corresponding questioning of the validity of words and the implicit attribution of an ethical quality to the reading process. I would like to have such an epigraph be representative as well of yet another self-questioning, mine, that would echo that of Torga, especially having in mind how through the *Diário* Torga very explicitly refers to what he considers the negative value of modern criticism, especially structuralism, of which he at one point asks: “*Pois que é senão vontade de destruição essa gana sistemática de análise, que disseca uma página tão encarniçadamente que a deixa seca, mumificada?*” (*Diário*, 12, 150; 14.06.76). My hope would be that, irregardless of critical preferences, my sketch of an analysis of reading in Torga’s *Diário* might instead serve to reaffirm the statement with which he concludes that same attack on criticism, that “*Escrever é um acto ontológico.*”

1. SELF-INSCRIPTION

“*Meter Weimar em Trás-os-Montes*” (1,176; Natal, 1940) is not by far the first reference to Torga’s own reading. The list of authors mentioned in the first volume up to that first allusion to Goethe is long: Thomas Mann, Pessoa, Gide, Munthe, Malraux, Wilde, Byron, Shelley, Camilo, Faulkner, Raul Brandão, Eça, Lawrence, Virginia

Woolf, Proust, Loyola, Villon, Baudelaire, Tolstoy, Morgan, Rilke, Cervantes, Defoe, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Kipling, Jorge Manrique, Schiller, Júlio Dinis, Lagerløf, and Pascal. Indeed, the very first reference the **Diário** offers to Torga's reading is not even within, as it forms a frame for the whole **Diário**, that is renovated with each subsequent volume and thus already calls attention to itself. I am referring to Torga's epigraph, "Chaque jour nous laissons une partie de nos mêmes en chemin," taken from Henri Frédéric Amiel's Journal Intime. With this citation in mind it becomes easier to understand just in which way writing -- in this case the writing of Torga's **Diário** -- can be conceived as an ontological act; at the same time, the reference to Amiel immediately proposes an answer to the inevitable question that the reading of diaries imposes to its readers, that is, how to read them? Beyond the occasional snooping that unauthorized readers will always direct towards others's diaries, this is a question that has always accompanied the establishment of the genre. In the West, private diaries are altogether a modern form of writing, appearing around the sixteenth century and blooming with the advent of the bourgeoisie and the expansion of printing technology (see Boerner, Didier and Hocke). If many diaries were indeed conceived as private and intimate, with the posthumous publication of famous diaries such as those of Byron or Amiel, the idea of a potential readership must have been in the mind of all writers of diaries who had the least literary expectations. In the case of diarists who have decided to publish their diaries alongside their other works as Torga did, there is almost from the start an implied reader for the diary, which then serves as much the purpose of establishing a dialogue, rather than simply that of a personal recording or exploration of inner feelings. If Torga's decision to publish his **Diário** thus exonerates the reader from feeling like a spy upon the author's mind and heart, it also forces the reader to face the diary explicitly as literature.

Commenting on the "modern diary," that is, foremost twentieth century diaries written explicitly for publication, Peter Boerner highlighted five conditions that apply equally to Torga's **Diário**: the tendency to note concrete events, the continuous re-directing of subject matter with each successive entry; extreme spontaneity; the establishment of a ground for dialogue between the author and the reader; creating a process to sort out the multiplicity of events and emotions; the insistence on a fragmentary nature. Beyond these, there are two other conditions of Torga's **Diário** that I intend to foreground: one, the inclusion of poems interspersed within the **Diário**; the other, the constant exploration and reshaping of self evidenced throughout. The first constitutes a direct connection with the ever increasing tendency already evidenced in the eighteenth century to blur literary genres and to form a diary literature, while the second decisively links Torga with other diarists, especially those like Amiel who did not write for publication, and for whom writing was both a form of mental and emotional hygiene and a privileged way -- in Amiel's case even the only way, according to Poulet -- to fashion a self.

One of the privileged ways in which the writer of a diary fashions his self is through the writing of his own readings. It is in this sense that Amiel becomes so absorbed in the knowledge of others to the point of diluting his own self, or further, of constituting his self through the absorption of others as Poulet remarks (306-307). For

Torga, it is less the danger of losing himself in others, than it is the imperative to question himself through a comparison with others, or even of establishing versions of his self that resemble others, on the journey to a more complete self-definition. As an example of the first instance one could cite the entry of October 10, 1936 in which Torga ponders on the nature of diaries: “Um **Diário** não é isto. **Diário** é o daquele inglês que, para que ninguém o lesse, até uma cifra inventou” (**Diário** 1, 28). Another example of the second instance would be precisely the entry when he ponders on the necessity to put Weimar in Trás-os-Montes, with its implicit and explicit comparison of himself (even if modestly) with Goethe. As for the third instance the reader has the whole diary as it unfolds and presents successive layers of the author’s personality, from which contradictions are not to be excluded but rather highlighted as nodes that signal the transformation of the self in time. One of the most recent entries, dated July 2, 1989, amply demonstrates this condition and points to yet another split:

O leviano que eu fui, quando em 1934, em letra redonda, dei nome e entreguei à sanha farisaica, com um beijo simbólico, o Cristo que metaforicamente supus existir em mim. . . . Dividido desde então em duas metades desigualmente responsabilizadas -- uma condenada à cruz de uma existência emblemática, rectilínea, coerente, sem transigências de nenhuma ordem, e a outra cingida apenas à ética profissional e às leis da civilidade --, assim tenho atravessado os anos, ora a assinar livros, ora receitas, fiel a uma dicotomia absurda, na íntima mortificação de ter sido um carrasco de mim mesmo. A dar cada passo de coração apertado, sempre atento à voz acusadora da minha identidade profunda, inconformada com essa angústia em que vivo de nunca saber ao certo quando estou a violentar e trair o homem natural em benefício da personalidade inventada.

Torga’s feeling of the split between his professional career as a medical doctor and his vocation as a poet is already emblematically inscribed in the first reference to his literary reading in the first volume of the **Diário**, even if then it is not explicitly made: “... aos tombos nesta maldita cama ... a ler na Montanha Mágica os liberalismos dum senhor Settembrini que já nem posso ouvir” (1,18; 01.11.1935). Yet it is in the reference to Goethe, rather than to Thomas Mann, that the reader can better observe Torga’s process of self-inscription. The entry, dated more vaguely than usual, “S. Martinho de Anta, Natal de 1940” reads:

*Bem me custa meter Weimar em Trás-os-Montes, mas tem de ser. Saem estes génios ao caminho de um pobre, e que é que a gente há-de fazer? Repeti-los e citar-lhes o nome:
De meu Pai tenho a estatura
e o sentido sério da vida;
De minha mãe, a natureza alegre
e o gosto de fabular*

Goethe

This entry is remarkable for a host of different circumstances: its immersion within the Christmas season, which always merits special attention from Torga and will lead to the inclusion of a poem every year on that subject, its date, with World War II under

way, pointing to the distinction that Torga will later repeat between the values of German culture and the atrocities of the war, the focus on the lyric aspect of Goethe rather than on the epic or the novelistic, and foremost, the complexity brought about by the inclusion of a poem on filiation within the sign of Christmas as well as within the problematics of literary influence. There can be no doubt that the lines from Goethe could have been felt by Torga and it is in the measure with which he identifies himself with the persona of Goethe that he inscribes them in his own diary. Also, there is the question of the reluctance expressed by Torga to insert Weimar in Trás-os-Montes, a reluctance that is explained by his constant repulsion at the adoration felt for foreign culture on the part of the Portuguese. And yet, there is equally the necessity to transpose the borders of the regional and even of the national, the necessity to feel at once Portuguese and European that so much preoccupy Torga and which lead to his constant appeal to bring Portuguese literature abroad. In this first evocation of the name of Goethe, there is at once the desire to record the similarity of feeling between the two poets and the recognition of an ideal of literature, which even as it sought to preserve distinct national and regional characteristics, also knew how to ignore national frontiers and which Goethe incorporated in his appeal for a “Weltliteratur.”

From the names of German authors Torga cites throughout the **Diário**, however, Goethe remains an exception inasmuch as nothing else is directly cited and the references to other poets, such as Hölderlin or Rilke, are merely incidental. Heine, Brentano, and Hölderlin are only mentioned circumstantially, the first two because of their association with the Rhine, and Hölderlin because the second centenary of his birth was being celebrated at the time Torga started his visit through Germany (25 August 1970). Nonetheless, the context in which Torga brings up the names of Heine and Brentano must still be linked to that first reference to Goethe -- and even helps explain it.

Torga, who has just written a poem to the “*Douro*” (17.09.1943) directly compares the Douro with the Rhine in the following entry, dated September 25, 1943: “O Reno tem castelos, tem Brentanos, tem Heines. O desgraçado Doiro tem as suas pedras descarnadas como ossos secos num deserto. Tanto vinho generoso que deu, tanta força a rasgar rochedos desde a nascente ao mar, e nada. Nem uma pintura, nem um poema, nem uma história. (Pinhão, 25.09.1943; **Diário** 3, 117). What Torga laments in this passage then is the lack of a national poetic tradition directed towards specific aspects of Portugal’s natural beauty, in contrast with other countries. In this light then, the reluctance to “meter Weimar em Trás-os-Montes” can also be understood as the recognition of the need Torga feels to look for antecedents abroad as he conceives himself as the first who sees and sings the Douro’s beauty. Inasmuch as he perceives himself starting a tradition, he does fashion his self in the image of Goethe. When in 17 August 1947 Torga notes his “*Leitura maciça de alemães. Goethe, Schiller, Eichendorff, George . . .*” (**Diário** 4, 113), he immediately qualifies it by declaring his discomfort:

. . . estes diabos dão-me sempre a estranha impressão de que estão a fazer exercícios de aplicação literária numa alta academia. São geniais, e tudo, claro. Mas iguais e monótonos do princípio ao fim. Falta-lhes a originalidade inglesas e a finura francesa,

que falham aqui, atamancam acolá, mas rompem caminhos como bandeirantes. Estará a virtude deles na força expressional da língua que eu desconheço e que as traduções diluem e planificam? Seja como for, nunca até hoje pude sentir o clima desta gente. (Diário 4, 113)

A passage such as this one shows admirably a complex node of contradiction in which Torga finds himself inextricably entwined, beyond the arguable question of taste or sensibility that led him at that point to ostensibly prefer French and English literature even though -- with a poet's feeling for language -- he admits that his judgment might be misled by translation. It is as if in noting his reading of German literature Torga would have been simultaneously pulled by attraction and rejection. His metaphorical qualification of the German authors as "bandeirantes" is symptomatic of such a tension, because it at once evokes a pioneering effort and a ruthless destructive power.

The mention of Torga's self-professed inability to understand the nordic climate must also be read strictly metaphorically since climate was not an impediment for his veneration of Selma Lagerlöf, whom he describes as having "*a mão feminina e mágica . . . a guiar o trenó que percorre de lés a lés a neve imaculada de cada lenda*" (**Diário** 2,26; 29.01.1942). Indeed, in an example of that other form of contradiction that is characteristic of diaries, the temporal, Torga's homage to the memory of Hölderlin upon his first visit to Germany on August 26, 1970, dissipates any possibility of seriously maintaining a north-south dichotomy:

Ultimo poeta sinceramente convencido de que a palavra inspirada podia salvar a humanidade, não restava aos deuses, temerosos do milagre, outro caminho senão emudecê-lo. . . . Da eterna juventude em que foi petrificado, o poeta do Estado Livre, onde "a sagrada teocracia do Belo" pudesse reinar, o jacobino com a mensagem subversiva envolta num pepló ateniense, o vidente que se propunha, como confessou, "desadormecer no seu tempo a semente que havia de amadurecer no futuro," continua a fazer-se ouvir por todos os que não desesperaram de influenciar pela força da expressão o andamento do mundo. A voz embargada tornou-se ainda mais pura e actuante no silêncio. (Diário 11,105; 26.08.1970).

What must be evident in such a passage is how much more explicitly even than in the first reference to Goethe, Torga's reading of the German poets and his recording of it in the **Diário**, is a supreme form of self-inscription, as all those attributes he recognizes in Hölderlin are after all the goals by which Torga himself is guided. The one characteristic of greatness beyond geniality that Torga had been willing to attribute to Goethe, Schiller, Eichendorff, and George in 1947 was precisely the "force of expression," which surfaces again in 1970 as the culminating attribute of Hölderlin, unencumbered now by a climactic disparity.

Furthermore, if in 1943 Torga writes a poem to the Douro only to immediately compare it to the Rhine by noting the former's impoverished state in terms of poetry, immediately after his tribute to Hölderlin, Torga writes a poem to the Rhine. Whereas in 1947 by writing "*Douro*" Torga could be said to be putting the Rhine in Portugal, in 1970, by writing "*Reno*," whose first lines reads, "*Doiro feliz da Europa*," Torga in effect reverses his previous strategy and puts Portugal in Europe, while aligning himself

even more closely with those poets who sing the Rhine. Just as the first line of “*Reno*” is immensely significant, so is the last one, a single but seminal and polysemic adjective, “*Contraditórios?*” -- qualifying the hearts carried away by the waters, and by extension the author’s as well.

This poem, “*Reno*,” with its concluding question mark must be read as yet another self-inscription of Torga’s that culminates a specific strand of the dialectic between reader and writer and which illuminates the reading process deployed by Torga in the fashioning of his **Diário**. That it comes about apparently on the surge of Torga’s homage to the dead Hölderlin is also representative of another important vein of Torga’s reading.

2. READING THE OBITUARIES

Two possible first “readings” have been proposed at the beginning of the **Diário**: one within --Thomas Mann’s *Zauberberg*, which appears especially relevant given Torga’s double role of poet and doctor, and which is further significant in terms of its being a detailed and prolonged confrontation with the inescapability of death. The other without -- the snippet from Amiel’s posthumous *Journal intime*, which also has a double attraction -- in the physicality that the metaphor of “*chemin*” lends to “*vie*” and in its explicit ontological assertion, as well as the implicit link with writing. One could also read in Amiel’s statement a tendency to view each step of the way as a detachment of the new self from the old, which becomes merely a dead fragment of each successive self. But a third “first reading” must also be advanced: the reading of newspapers -- for it is a mention of the exhaustive reading, “*do cabeçalho ao derradeiro anúncio*,” of the Comércio that really starts the process of inscribing Torga’s reading into his diary.

Torga’s immersion in newspapers is reiterated throughout the diary and, towards the later years, definitely so with the advent of April 25, 1974, it becomes a compulsion that he notes at one point thus: “*Nunca li tantos jornais juntos na minha vida. Nem no tempo da guerra Civil de Espanha e no da Mundial. . . E devoro carros de prosa diariamente, a mais contraditória e parcial, a vomitar as tripas quase sempre . . .*” (**Diário** 12, 116; 03.07.1975). In both cases, the reasons given for such excessive reading are personal, even if embedded in the collective, and presented in terms of an imminent death. In 1975 it is because the newspapers directly relate to matters “*da pátria, da carne colectiva a que pertença*” and Torga represents his condition of reader through a metaphor of hypochondria: “*Sou como aqueles doentes do coração que fazem electro-cardiogramas sucessivos, a ver se num deles não existem sinais de enfarte*.” In 1934 the personal tone had been even more pressing and the condition of death more stressed as Torga felt his roots in S. Martinho da Anta drying up after the return upon completion of his studies: “*Pareço uma destas Árvores que se transplantam, que têm má saúde no país novo, mas que morrem se voltam à terra natal*.”

The very beginning of the **Diário** must be understood as under the sign of death -- and it would do well to remember that the years covered by the first volume are 1933 to 1941. Death extends from the literal “*matanças de gatos, à mocada, cá na República*”

(01.03.1933), to the metaphorical being “*enterrado em montes até às orelhas*” (03.03.1934), to the all-too literal death of an infant that the young doctor must confront and that painfully establishes the link between death and the ethical necessity of an impotent search for words: “*Quem saberá por aí uma palavra para estes momentos? Uma palavra para um médico dizer a esta mãe, que entregou à vida um filho vivo e recebeu da vida um filho morto*” (**Diário** 1,15; 07.11.1934).

In 1935 there is a direct resolve to turn away from death and embrace life as a result of a confrontation with a decadent poet: “*respondi há bocado com palavras dum optimismo impressionante . . . fui-lhe dizendo que qual morte e qual cabaça!*” (**Diário** 1,17; 08.02.1935). Nonetheless, death -- which might well be termed one of the obsessive leit-motifs in the **Diário**, is going to reappear again and again, even if one were to discount as natural the way in which thoughts on death dominate the most recent entries as Torga by necessity had to confront successively the deaths of loved ones and friends. What is symptomatic in the **Diário** indeed, is not such a chronological effect, but rather the quality which death acquires as reading paradigm.

There are two necessary ways to face this: one, is to note the negative power associated with death -- in reading terms, beyond human ones: the best example of this negativity might be some of the comments directed towards critics such as the one already mentioned about mummification, or, even more pointedly, the way in which Torga pairs off exegesis against creativity, one destined to die, the other to live eternally: “. . . a história da humanidade está cheia de versos vivos e de exegeses mortas que deles fizeram gerações sucessivas. Cada nova leitura inaugura a *Ilíada*” (**Diário** 15,163; 03.03.1989). Clearly, with those passages one must keep in mind how Torga can also be painfully self-critical and despair of re-reading his own work, “. . . que série de dislates! Quanta auto-suficiência satisfeita! . . .” (**Diário** 14, 122; 14.10.1984), and that of other writers: “*Mais livros lidos à sobreposse. Inépcias que nunca deveriam ver a luz do dia. . .*” (**Diário** 14,123;15.10.1984). Or one could simply evoke the fact that the **Diário** itself also contains a large amount of criticism, destined to die in Torga’s own terms, but which holds its value as a confrontation with the writing of others.

The other, much more important because structural, way to face the question of the use of death as a reading paradigm, is to note how many of the entries, and notably those that pertain to Torga’s own reading, spring from a reading of the obituaries. The first one, significantly, is that of Fernando Pessoa (**Diário** 1, 19; 03.12.1935). Even though in it Torga will not make any detailed comments on the work of Pessoa, as is the case in subsequent instances, he does concentratedly combine a series of the most important elements in the diary: the anguished pain communicated in the solitude of the woods and the passing into eternity of a great poet (“*nosso maior poeta de hoje*”), allied to the question of identity. In succession come the names of Lagerlöf, Tagore, Shaw, Gide, Teixeira de Pascoaes, and others, culminating, as of volume 15, with Beckett. This latest entry is as important as the first inasmuch as one could view Beckett as a reverse double of Torga, in his own terms, especially as the last poem of the same volume is titled “*Esperança*”, in direct contrast to the reference to Beckett: “*Morreu Beckett. Com a obra de lúcida desesperança esculpida no rosto*” (**Diário** 15,192; 22.12.1989).

This apparent contrast between Beckett and Torga and between the barren lapidary epitaph for Beckett and the impetuosity of Torga's reaction to Pessoa's death is complex. On the one hand, it is only too tempting to see in Beckett an antithetical figure to Torga, as embodiment of a literature of the absurd which Torga at one point denounces, together with the "philosophy of pessimism" as being suffocating and exterminating (*Diário* 5, 199-200). On the other, might not that literature of the absurd -- even if he did not write it but read it -- and that "philosophy of pessimism," relate to another side of Torga, one which he might have openly decided to turn against, but which nonetheless never left him?

With respect to the condition of revolt and the need not to surrender oneself, Torga explicitly lays out an imperative for the poet: "*Um poeta deve morrer mais vivo do que nasceu . . . Por isso é que tenho uma ternura especial por Sá-Carneiro. Quando se viu perdido, meteu estricnina no corpo, e em vez de sonetos de água-benta, deixou-nos uma gargalhada: 'Quando eu morrer, batam em latas / Rompam aos saltos e pinotes . . .'*" (*Diário* 4,118). And in an entry of 10 July 1971 Torga refers to his reading of Freud and the death drive while mentioning a poem he wrote concerned with that subject beforehand (*Diário* 11,139).

There is yet another way in which the problematic of death, as elicited by the reading of obituaries and the apparent contrast between the entries on Pessoa and Beckett, asserts itself, especially in relation to the question of absurd literature and nihilism. In the *Diary* Torga does not seem to distinguish rigorously between pessimism, nihilism, and decadentism, and to their relation to death and ontology, so that it might be licit to view them all as forming a complex around which one can observe yet another facet of his self-inscription through reading. For instance, Torga vehemently decries Kafka and what he takes to be a wave of nihilism: "*Como uma onda que nenhum terror da praia detém, a vaga do 'nihilismo europeu' de Kafka avança inexoravelmente sobre nós. . . . Morrer não tem qualquer importância, desde que seja a esbracejar*" (*Diário* 5,163-64). Comparing this entry with the earlier one on Sá-Carneiro's suicide, it would seem that they are coherent and based on the common stress for resistance as a moral imperative. However, the entry on Sá-Carneiro already points to another reading, one made more explicit by the reference to Freud and the *Todestrieb*; that is, the possibility of desiring death, of the very pleasure associated with death. Indeed, the passages on Kafka and Freud have a common thread, which itself points to yet another connection. In the passage on Kafka dated 20 July, 1972, and written at the "Praia dos Carvoeiros," Torga writes: "*Kafka. Parece impossível, mas está-me a saber bem devorar páginas de negrura humana no seio desta claridade panorâmica. Tenho a impressão que lhes dou fundura. . .*" (*Diário* 11,165). Now, the first mention of Freud, earlier than the one just mentioned, has Torga reading at the beach as well: "*Estou no areal a ler Freud e, nem de propósito, uma nudista exhibe na minha frente um belo corpo de Vénus . . . dois seios brancos, duros e redondos*" (*Diário* 3,190). What we have in this knot of citations then is a curious repetition of elements -- "areal," pleasure, death drive, rejection of nihilism, pleasure in nihilism, pleasure in death, even the "seio" metonymically dislocated from the early entry on Freud to the later entry on Kafka -- that all revolve around the question of death and reading. The further connection these

elements point to is the notion of a bottom of bottoms allied to Torga's uncomfortableness with the Algarve: "é que no fundo, no fundo, também uma parte de mim se sente estrangeira, aqui" (**Diário** 11, 167; 21.07.1972).

If one part of Torga feels foreign in the Algarve, it is only licit to suppose that another part does not. And it is to that other part, avowedly the nationalistic one, and which is the other side of "meter Weimar em Trás-os-Montes" that I wish now to turn. With the early inscription of himself into Goethe's poem, Torga already left a part out. The one part of the poem that Torga cites divides the attributes received by the poet from his parents into a masculine seriousness and a feminine creativity, but the rest of Goethe's poem reverses that division and concludes with a question: "Aus dem Komplex zu trennen, / Was ist denn an dem ganzen Wicht / Original zu nennen?" Goethe's poem, in this and the succeeding strophe as well -- on the impossibility of dividing life ("Teilen kann Ich nicht das Leben") -- stresses indeed the impossibility of separating opposites at the same time that it makes such a separation an imperative, positing an irreducible unity of being in spite of all splitting: "Und so spalt ich mich, ihr Lieben, / Und bin immerfort der Eine." This is clearly a sentiment with which Torga could identify, even if he tried to reduce its paradoxical imperative, when he asks in 14 February, 1985: "*Sim, sou um nó de contradições. Mas que seria de mim se o desatasse? Se em vez de uma unidade na diversidade, fosse uma diversidade sem unidade?*" (**Diário** 14, 149).

The other side in Torga to Goethe's famed humanism, its reverse, is the attraction, always controlled but always present, of the abyss. At the beginning of the **Diário** this is very explicitly the abyss of reading and of contradiction, as well as of multiple identities:

*. . . se um leitor não se tem firme nos pés diante de certos livros e de certos autores, acontece-lhe como quando a gente se debruça a uma alta janela com adesão exagerada para o fundo: atrai-se dela abaixo. . . um homem, que ainda ontem era enforcado de Villon, passa a satânico de Baudelaire . . . Por mim, já esta semana tive tentações de ser o Binarder da Menina e Moça, o António de Faria da Peregrinação, o Nathaniel das Nourritures terrestres, e não sei que mais. Mas é claro que me segurei ao parapeito da janela, e não cedi à atracção do abismo" (**Diário** 2,97; 22.12.1942).*

Later, the abyss is that of Nietzsche, who died in Weimar. In 1942, in the entry separated from the previous citation only by one of the "*Natal*" poems, Nietzsche can only be guessed as the figure Torga mentions as having tormented him: "O dia inteiro com um filósofo à perna, que depois de me pôr a alma em pratos limpos em seis cadernos de aforismos, conseguiu que eu lhe pagasse na mesma moeda, a ler livros esgotados" (**Diário** 2,99; 28.12.1942). In 1959 the reference is completely explicit: "*A contemplação dos abismos naturais é necessária de vez em quando a quem tem a tentação dos outros. Toma-se consciência, com rigor físico, das asas que nos faltam para estar à altura da máxima de Nietzsche . . .*" Certainly Torga here must be referring to one of Nietzsche's aphorisms in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (Part 4, No. 146): "Wer mit Ungeheurn kämpft, mag zusehen, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein." This

Nietzschean imperative was precisely an ontological one, even if its intent would be to negate ontology, namely, to have the courage to look into the abyss and see it look back at oneself with one's own face.

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