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The daily life of law students in São Paulo in "Romance de um Estudante" (1864)

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#### **Summary**

The article presents the partial results of a research in history of education about the daily life of law students in São Paulo in the 1860s, based on the reading of the anonymous fictional text "Romance de um estudante", published in the periodical "Diabo Coxo", in 1864. This publication, the first illustrated one to circulate in the city of São Paulo, was made by the cartoonist Angelo Agostini, the student Sizenando Nabuco and the abolitionist Luiz Gama. In this way, we discuss constituent aspects of the student identity of that time, such as the distance between family home and school home, youth as a period of exile, and expression through literature and periodism.

Keywords: History of higher education. History of young people. Everyday life of students. Literature and History of Education.

### Law students' everyday life in "Romance de um Estudante", São Paulo (1864)

#### Resumo

Este artigo mostra os resultados parciais de uma pesquisa na história da educação sobre a vida quotidiana dos estudantes de direito de São Paulo durante a década de 1860. A sua análise baseou-se numa obra ficcional e anónima intitulada "Romance de um Estudante" que foi publicada em 1864 num artigo intitulado "Diabo Coxo". Este jornal, a primeira publicação ilustrada a ser impressa em São Paulo, foi feita por Angelo Agostini, um cartunista, pelo estudante Sizenando Nabuco e pelo activista da antiescravidão Luiz Gama. O jornal argumenta sobre os aspectos de identidade da juventude desse dia, tais como a distância entre a família e o lar de estudantes, a juventude como período de exílio e a expressão através da escrita, como na literatura e no jornalismo.

Plavaras-chave: História da educação superior. História da juventude. A vida quotidiana dos estudantes. Literatura e História da educação.

#### 1 Introducion

Created by decree on August 11, 1827, the Juridical and Social Courses changed the educational landscape of the Brazilian elite. A significant portion of young people from

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wealthy families and those close to the nobility left their schooling in Portugal and began to experience their college years in the cities of Olinda and São Paulo, where this new type of education would be implemented. And, in the course of the establishment and consolidation of these courses, the students of the Faculties of Law, as the Courses became known, undertook profound literary, journalistic, cultural and political activity (CUNHA, 1986; MARTINS and BARBUY, 1998; ADORNO, 2019).

This article, which deals with the production of São Paulo law students in the mid-1860s, particularly highlights one aspect of student activity of the period: periodism, which was a substantial part of the cultural and formative environment that organized the small and cold city of São Paulo in the period. There are at least 102 known periodicals that had the participation or initiative of law students, between the founding year of the Faculty and the Proclamation of the Republic (AMARAL, 1977); it is possible that this number is even higher, because not all materials produced have stood the test of time. What has survived the passage of time, even if it is fragmented and often deteriorated, constitutes an enormous framework to understand and better explore the history of higher education and young people in the 19th century.

Thus, we take as a source a fictional text published in one of those periodicals produced with the participation of law students from São Paulo. The periodical, entitled Diabo Coxo (Lame Devil), circulated between 1864 and 1865, and was the work of three different names who lived in the capital of the province of São Paulo. They were the Italian lithographer and draftsman Angelo Agostini, the abolitionist Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama, and the law student, writer, and playwright Sizenando Barreto Nabuco de Araújo.

We selected, among the production of the Diabo Coxo, a text entitled "Romance de um estudante" (Romance of a student), which was published throughout the first 5 editions of the periodical, in the year 1864. An anonymous text, probably written by Sizenando Nabuco and/or Luiz Gama, portrays the first months of a young man's life in the city of São Paulo, from the moment of his arrival in the capital, when everything seems strange and frightening, to his adaptation to the modus operandi of life as a law school student.

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#### 2

# PRÁTICAS EDUCATIVAS, MEMÓRIAS E ORALIDADES

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Based on the reading of this fictional text, the article intends to approach the representations of young people elaborated in it. To do so, it is necessary to understand structural aspects of what it meant to be a law student in São Paulo in the period. To do so, we will make a brief presentation about the College in the 1960s.

## 2 THE LAW SCHOOL

With a population of no more than 30 thousand inhabitants (CAMPOS, 2004), the city of São Paulo had its daily life marked by the experience of young people who came to the city to study law. The Faculty, located in the central region of the provincial capital, received students from all over the country, and became, year after year, a center of congregation for part of the young elite during the Empire. Its students organized themselves into associations, literary groups, were politically active and, of course, wrote. They were poets, playwrights, literary critics and fictionists, often exercising more than one of these functions at the same time. The invention of their daily lives (CERTEAU, 1985; 2014) is a privileged subject for research in the history of education.

During the school year, the city was flooded by these young men in search of a future in the legal career, whether as lawyers, judges, or other positions made available by the Brazilian state in formation. When they returned to their hometowns, the monotony and tranquility returned to the dirt streets and the mud huts. But, undeniably, the relationship established between the students, the future bachelors and the city produced deep marks that were engraved in the city's memory instruments, whether through street names, statues or as knowledge disseminated by the schools and textbooks.

The College admitted students as young as 15 years old, as long as they passed the admission exams. And it was not only law students who went to São Paulo to study. Those who wanted to pass the entrance exams would try to qualify in the preparatory courses that welcomed them. These educational institutions were also part of the student scene of the period - their students were known as "bichos" that attended the "corral" (CUNHA, 1986).

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Away from their families of origin, the students established social ties through the associations, the course classes, the housing - with the arrival of the students came also the housing type known as "republic" -, and the practice of periodism that, many times, was the congregation of all these elements in a printed product: the newspapers could be organs of the associations, could have been founded by students of the same course class, could be written by residents of the same republic and so on.

Writing and reading the newspapers published in the city was a habit of the students. There were the newspapers of the "great press", notably the periodicals "Correio Paulistano" and "Diário de S. Paulo", which were accompanied by a myriad of publications of small size and ephemeral existence, but that represented the efforts of young students in the arena of the written word. This was the so-called Academic Press - and here "academic" refers to the fact that the Law School was known as the Academy.

The texts written and published by students condensed within them a large set of voices and elements from different cultural backgrounds. The presence of this polyphony is an indication of the discursive circulation that took place in the period (BAKHTIN, 2010), being possible, through the identification of ideological threads (VOLÓCHINOV, 2017) that compose these speeches to nuance aspects of the history of education and young people.

The investigation in periodicals is an important element to unveil still unknown aspects of the history of education, as Moacyr Flores (2021) does with respect to the teaching of the Portuguese language in the 19th century; in turn, the use of texts produced by higher education students is relatively new in the country, with the work of Dislane Zerbinatti Moraes (2015) having presented some possible paths. Thus, the production analyzed here possesses characteristics that qualify it for the work in question: it is a typical element of the academic environment of São Paulo in the period, although it is not a publication entirely produced by students, condenses various forms of discourse and is tinged by numerous ideological threads throughout its length. Of its editorial staff, only Sizenando Nabuco was a student of the course. But there is no doubt that its circulation took place in the student environment of the time. Reading and writing

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newspapers, one can affirm, was part of the way of life of the students at the São Paulo Law School

It should also be said that the history of the city and of the São Paulo Law School is a constant object of dispute in the present (GLEZER, 2007; ABUD, 1998), making the importance of these students in the construction of a nation project that was then being established the target of important historiographical divergences. The very toponymy of the city is impacted by the ideological dispute that takes place in the present time, in movements of erasure and invisibilization (SEVCENKO, 2004), and names and references to native peoples, enslaved people or African ethnicities are permanently replaced by others, often from the law students themselves who passed through the city in the nineteenth century.

#### 3 The Lame Devil and "a student's novel

The Lame Devil was a weekly publication, which came out only on Sundays. Half of the 8 pages were dedicated to illustrations and the rest was composed of texts. The newspaper was printed at the German Typography and Lithography, owned by Henrique Schröder, in a format of 18x26cm. It came out on October 2, 1864, and its production totaled 24 numbers, distributed equally in two series. Only one complete collection has stood the test of time, having been acquired by Mario de Andrade Municipal Library, in São Paulo, from which a facsimile version was produced in a joint venture of the São Paulo University Press and the São Paulo History Academy. It is this edition that was used as the basis for the writing of this article (CAGNIN, 2005).

Both the texts and the illustrations of "The Lame Devil" were full of irony and satire about the political situation and the daily life of the city. Its theme dialogued with the prevailing issues in the city (such as the inauguration of a new theater and the theatrical program, or the daily life of the Law School), as well as in the country (with critical positions regarding the Paraguayan War, for example). Thus, it circulated easily among the literate inhabitants of São Paulo, and was well received by the city's traditional press.

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Antonio Luiz Cagnin points out that, "besides these weekly and daily newspapers", and he refers to the city's great press, "there proliferated the students' burning pasquins, in outraged libertarian verbiage, seasoned with scathing satires and corrosive humor, alongside the pamphlets of young dreamer poets, with their sugary romantic verses" (CAGNI, 2005, p. 11).

É neste cenário que aparece o Lame Devil. E poemas e textos fictícios faziam parte das suas páginas, com as mesmas características que apareceram nas ilustrações. O "Romance de um Estudante" é o primeiro a ocupar um lugar, logo na página 3 da edição inicial. A sua escrita estende-se por mais quatro números, uma prática comum para os periódicos da época, e termina no número 5 do "Devil's Lame".

O texto é narrado por um dos personagens, cujo nome não é conhecido, mas que admite ser chamado Diabo. Não há indicação de autoria e a escrita não apresenta uniformidade, e é importante notar que o texto apresenta problemas de coesão e variações linguísticas ao longo das edições em que foi publicado. Esta característica não interfere negativamente na análise, mas realça o carácter experimental da obra que foi procurada para ser escrita. Esta falta de uniformidade pode também ser devida à reacção do público ao texto, e pode indicar que a escrita foi feita com múltiplas mãos.

Como Luiz Gama e Sizenando Nabuco estavam a cargo da redacção da revista, podemos inferir que "Romance de um Estudante" foi escrito por um ou ambos os autores em conjunto, o que também contribuiria para a variação da forma do texto que pode ser percebida aquando da sua leitura.

Como Luiz Gama e Sizenando Nabuco estavam a cargo da redacção da revista, infere-se que "Romance de um Estudante" foi escrito por um ou ambos os autores em conjunto, o que também contribuiria para a variação na forma do texto que pode ser percebido aquando da sua leitura.

A sua trama conta a história de um jovem que vai para a cidade de São Paulo para frequentar a Faculdade de Direito, bem como a sua trajectória como estudante. Desta forma, são apresentados aspectos da sua escola, boémia e vida amorosa.

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#### 4 Análise dos dados

As already mentioned, the facsimile edition of Diabo Coxo published by the University of São Paulo Press in 2005 is used. Thus, the citations presented here refer to the original numbering of the journal, and are indicated according to the number in which they appear. The original spelling of the text, which is in accordance with the spelling rules of the 19th century, was also maintained.

Below the title of the text is its epigraph, which is a quotation from the Book of Ramayana, which reads: "my crows flutter! The carnage is great and the feast shall be plentiful!" (DIABO COXO, n. 1, p. 3).

The Ramayana is an epic poem from ancient India, which also has the character of functioning as a religious book for Hindus. It tells the story of Prince Rama of Aiah, and its title can be translated as "The Journey of Rama." Part of Rama's story takes place in a 14-year exile in a terrible forest named Dandaka, away from his family.

Since this is the first passage to be read in the text, we infer from this information that its intention was to project onto the student of the "Romance" the condition of an exile, just like Rama, and who would have contact with both feasting and carnage. In the very first characterization of the student, who later on we learn is called Silvano, the idea of exile stands out: "miserable young man who abandoned the prairies of Guanabara, crazy head, crazy Argonaut who comes in search of the golden pommel of science, leaving immersed in pain your unhappy family" (DIABO COXO, n, 1, p. 3).

It is the image of a young student who leaves, leaving his family of origin immersed in unhappiness, to go into exile in the capital of the province of São Paulo. The image, caricatured and satirical as the whole of the Devil with a Lame Ass, is full of dramatic tints, both to mark the condition of the student, and to emphasize the family's feelings about his estrangement.

From this excerpt, it is also important to refer to the "young man" as being a crew member of Argo's ship, an Argonaut, therefore, in search of the Golden Fleece, as told in

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Greek mythology. In Silvano's case, the object made of precious ore of his quest is the "pomo de oiro da sciencia", which would be obtained in the city of the Law Academy, the target of the boy's dreams and desires.

A partir de duas referências antigas, o Ramayana e os argonautas, o "Romance" enfatiza a ideia de viagem, de jornada, na trajetória do estudante Silvano. Para tanto, ele precisou abandonar sua família, seu "lar doméstico", para empreender sua busca, para cumprir seus desígnios. A distância entre a família de origem e a vida adulta parece se desvelar por meio das agruras da vivência e do cotidiano escolares. Mais do que isso, o distanciamento is a structuring element of the text, not just a mere object.

As soon as he arrives in São Paulo, after making the trip that takes him away from his family, the student is disappointed with what he finds in the city. His interlocutor, who we will learn is nicknamed the Devil, controls him at the same time and scolds him, telling him to leave his tears for later. And then he says: "life here has its charms! Your feminine lips will get used to the wine, the smoke, and the drag of blasphemy and insult" (DIABO COXO, n.1, p. 6). The feasting and the carnage of Ramaiana meet again in the very first moment of fright that the boy goes through.

In the process of converting Silvano from a young man from Guanabara into a student, besides the need for his "feminine lips" to get used to what the city offers, he will also have the company of literature: "Have you read Rabelais, do you know Pantagruel? - Well, from now on these are the dear friends of your nights ..." (DIABO COXO, n. 1, p. 6). The result of this experience will be a man in poor health, but transformed into a true conqueror: "...isn't it true, my cherubim, that a dry cough, a staring look, a somewhat deaf and weakened voice, a transparent hand, are a powerful philtre, worthy of Lovelace or D. Juan" (id. ibid.). Distant from his family of origin, Silvano is exposed to the dangers of life, and it is his choice whether to experience them or not.

As a way to mark the passage from childhood to adulthood, the narrator offers the future bachelor a drink, which is promptly rejected by Silvano, who does not like what he drinks. The Devil then replies, "Poor child. Don't you know what cognac is? Soon you

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will know it, and you will call it more often than the Hebrews call manna..." (DIABO COXO, n. 1, p. 6).

The Devil, a figure who knows the city and the hardships Silvano will go through, is on hand to be his guide. By drinking, he introduces the boy to some of the habits that will become part of his daily school life, which will not be limited to books, sabbaticals, and law books. The amusements, the student parties, and the drunkenness will be an important part of his socialization process. The fact that Silvano does not like cognac makes the Devil project that in the future this situation will change. Newly arrived, the boy has not yet gone through all the necessary rites to be part of that environment.

The first rite is his entry into the city of São Paulo. From the outside, he could only be an observer. Now there is the overlap between his daily life as a student and his daily life in the city. The narrator distances himself for three months and begins to describe the situation, making the deeds of this period visible. The Devil, to make his readers happy, invades the boy's house with the objective of revealing what happens there.

According to the text, Silvano now lives "...in a little house outside the city, all surrounded by swamps, by high pine trees" (Diabo Coxo, n. 2, p. 2). It is inferred that the "out of town" indicates a dwelling far from what would be considered, nowadays, the Old Town of São Paulo. It is important to say that, in the middle of the 19th century, the Province Capital was composed by a small urbanized nucleus and a countless number of rural properties, distributed around this already initially urbanized space.

Entering the house, the Devil finds Silvano sleeping and starts to scrutinize the environment: "...let us make a detailed inventory: cigar butts, withered flowers, pipes, fragments of marble, a whip, two spurs, a bronze horse and a photograph of a woman! Next, it notes that the student possessed "papers of music, a hunting rifle, a piano, a dagger, a dissertation on Roman law (unfortunate!) and a skull" (id. ibid.).

The view of Silvano's everyday objects indicates a musical life, smoking addiction, hunting practice, and a properly scholarly element, a dissertation. The way the Devil

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Rev.Pemo - Revista do PEMO



describes Silvano's objects carries in itself a great deal of irony, as well as contributing to the image of a student who indulges in bad habits and puts his health at risk.

The description, although long, is pertinent because it is one of the very few portraits of what would be a student fraternity in the nineteenth century. It is present in a fictional text that actively dialogues with the expectations of its readership - which, in this case, means dialoguing with students who lived in student fraternities - and is a useful resource to enter into the daily life of those young men who were entering the world of law. It also gives notice of a central element in Silvano's relationship with the city: the need for an animal as a means of transportation.

And in the Devil's description, of course, the student is not lacking the most intense of bad habits: poetry.

"Verses! Good heavens! We are lost!" (Lame Devil, n. 2, p. 2), exclaims the Devil before taking the scattered papers left by Silvano in his hand. He reads them, interested in learning more about the boy's life. "Gone are the illusions," says the verse read by the Devil, who comments, "So soon?! Are you lost? I fell into the sentimentalist school, it's fashionable, let's move on" (id. ibid.).

A witty narrator who comments animatedly on Silvano's life, the Devil also does a bit of literary criticism. The idea that the "sentimentalist school" is part of a passing moment ("it is fashionable") denotes that the debate among students about poetry and literature went through different paths. It was not only about writing and reading, but also about taking a critical stance on the literary production that circulated in the city.

To the joy of the narrator, and also of his readers, there are pages written in prose. In them, Silvano comments on his solitude ("I am alone: the city is far away; it is night, how the lamplights tremble in front of the convent!"), on the landscape around the house and also on his course: "Positive sciences, social, literary studies! Crazy! To want to separate all these things! All of them make a body, and from this one spark jumps? the truth" (Diabo Coxo, n. 2, p. 2-3).

Silvano, through his writings read by the Devil, refers directly to the organization of studies in a law course. Would it be possible to divide knowledge between the positive

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Rev.Pemo - Revista do PEMO



sciences, the social sciences, and literary studies? At the same time, he affirms in his answer the reigning positivism. Only the truth was of interest.

With references to philosophers and pompous language, Silvano's text seems to mock the mannerisms of a young student who, immersed in his education, lets himself be carried away by the abstract world of ideas. However, this same young student will be shot down by the arrow of love, writing about a girl - "Ella was so good, she was only seventeen years old. She was a flower" (Diabo Coxo, n. 2, p. 3) - who is not named, but who promotes a great impact on his emotions. From then on, Silvano is finally converted, according to the narrator's vision, into a poet: "Silvano definitely had the whole characteristics of a poet of the epoch: cute and lazy" (Diabo Coxo, n. 3, p. 2).

The student, apparently healing from excessive drinking the night before, leaves the Devil bored with his lamentations, "How dull is poetry out of books!" (DIABO COXO, n. 3, p. 3), he says and proceeds to transcribe the papers written by Silvano, published under the title "Paginas Íntimas." In them, the boy puts into perspective his life in the city, his trajectory as an academic. Inebriated by love, he says that "as a child, I have searched with fever and desperation for the secrets of moral life, the entrails of the animal kingdom, the moulds in which this globe of earth, a speck of dust, turns in infinite space" (DIABO COXO, n. 4, p. 2. My emphasis). He even asks himself if it would not have been better "not to have left the tree of science for the tree of life" (id. ibid.).

At this point, the text gives a singular dimension to Silvano's life, a representative caricature of the Academy's students: exiled in São Paulo, separated from his family, he gets involved in poetry and gets carried away by life, distancing himself from his initial purpose of venturing into the golden sphere of science.

As the text announces at the beginning, the student would undergo physical transformations, incorporate new habits, live new experiences, and stop being a child. And, with crude strokes, as is the tone of every Lame Devil, he builds the image of a young poet, drunk on love, who deviated from his goals upon his arrival in the city.

Much more than a criticism, The Lame Devil highlights an important aspect of the students' daily life at the time: the contact with a series of transforming experiences that

Rev.Pemo, Fortaleza, v. 3, n. 3, e337109, 2021 DOI: https://doi.org/10.47149/pemo.v3i3.7109

https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo



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put them in other paths for the future. This set of experiences, unique, built through otherness and together with other young people in the same condition, are characteristics of the condition of a young law student in São Paulo, typifying this social stratum before the rest of society, to the point of becoming traces of a caricature that circulated widely in the city.

The citation to the Ramayana and the entire construction of the text point to a specific understanding of the city and its Academy: a place of passage, temporary exile, a place of redefinition of trajectories. The student, a foreign inhabitant of São Paulo land, needs to be introduced upon arrival and, once his mission is accomplished, he must say goodbye and move on to his destiny. What "Romance de um estudante" also seems to indicate is that it is typical of this social stratum, of the "academic youth", to create safe spaces for the experience of life to take place without the interference of the older elements already inserted into society - or, in other words, to be cut off from the rest of the world.

The city of São Paulo, as it appeared at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century, opened itself up to these young exiles as a set of possible places, of possibilities of their own construction. And it also made possible the free discursive circulation, because in the spaces created and maintained by these students, the discourse is allowed to circulate according to norms and rules created by themselves. Periodism, a weapon in the public arena of debates, helps us to see elements of private life and to think about the identity constitution of the youth of that time.

#### 5 Considerações finais

To the introduction of "History of Youth", Levi and Schmitt point out that youth is a social and cultural construction, acquiring contours and specificities according to time and society. They also indicate that youth

[...] is situated within the shifting margins between childhood dependence and the autonomy of adulthood, in that period of pure change and restlessness in which the promises of adolescence are realized, between sexual immaturity and

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https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo



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maturity, between formation and the full flowering of mental faculties, between lack and the acquisition of authority and power (LEVI and SCHMITT, 1996, p. 8).

In the case analyzed here, this location of youth between two points, between childhood and adulthood, is not only due to biological or symbolic components, but it is also, in itself, a physical location: the student portrayed in "Romance of a Student" is physically distant from what is his childhood life and also from what will be his adulthood.

Unlike the young people who go through this transition with their families or with the society in which they will be inserted in adulthood, the law students in São Paulo lived this transition similarly to the exile presented in the Ramayana, as if they were in a dense forest apart from the known reality. This sheds light and gives a very specific coloration to this situation.

The representations that the young man makes of himself, which here appear embodied in the fictional text analyzed, are inseparable from the relationship he establishes with his student environment, and to them are incorporated elements of daily life in a structuring manner. His housing, food, and means of transportation, to name just a few of the everyday elements, are not circumstantial, but are part of his ways of doing things and that elaborate his way of facing the world.

It is convenient, therefore, to confront the expectations elaborated by society as a whole for young people with their own projected identity.

Society shapes an image of young people, assigns them characters and roles, tries to impose rules and values on them, and notes with anguish the elements of disintegration associated with this period of change, the elements of conflict and resistance embedded in the processes of integration and social reproduction (LEVI and SCHMITT, 1996, p. 12).

The distance between what was molded by society and the representation elaborated by the students indicates that there were situations of maladjustment in the students' daily life. Certainly, the youth that studied at the Law School established, through periodism, an effective dialogue with the image molded by society. They acted as agents in the public arena of debates, sought to insert themselves in the intellectual milieu, and also engaged in political bickering.

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Rev.Pemo - Revista do PEMO



The fictional text presents evidence of this maladjustment.

Silvano's conversion into a poet, to the scorn of the narrator, is one of the most palpable examples. In search of his "golden pommel of science," which would serve to place him among the national intelligentsia, so that he would graduate and pursue a career as an official of the national state in formation, the young student goes astray and assumes for himself the pen of the poet. But as if this were not enough to characterize the character as being given to letters, dedicated to expressing his loves and pains through the written word, Silvano himself sums up his life to his words and his objects scattered throughout the republic:

[...] my life has been simple, but tormented, to tell it is not necessary, it is all written on those sheets of paper you see there, and most of all on those withered bouquets, on those pictures, on my songs, on those lines written on the wall, on those drawings... (Lame Devil, n. 3, p. 3)

Taken perhaps by romantic spleen, the young student feels no need to experience anything that cannot be described in words, nothing that can exist outside of poetry.

Another element of maladjustment present in the text makes reference to the students' not very praiseworthy behavior: the conflicts caused with the law and order after excessive drinking.

Silvano says about a fellow student: "This town is definitely very stupid. Frank got drunk yesterday, beat up the patrol, and is being prosecuted" (Lame Devil, n. 2, p. 3, my emphasis). It is not known who Frank is, but it is possible to take him as a generic characterization of the student dissatisfied with his student life. And this discontent appears in the form of violence against the city, which is very stupid, according to the narrator, but mainly with the symbolism of hurting the patrol, the local policing. A central element in the maintenance of ideologically majority positions in society, which includes social expectations towards youth, police repression appears as an element of opposition to the aspirations of young Frank. The conflict with the patrol becomes, in an explicit way, an indication of the youth's maladjustment with respect to social expectations for youth.

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Finally, it is important to say that reading "A Student's Novel" indicates that there is a set of experiences that can only be experienced and known by those in their student exile. One must enter the city to see what it has to offer. For those who are on the outside - physically outside the city, but also symbolically outside that everyday life - the revelations are unknown, and this has unfoldings in the historiography of education. As Chartier (1990; 1991) points out, the use of new sources allows a glimpse into tensions in society that would not otherwise be revealed. In this way, it is possible, through fiction and student periodism, to access historical processes that remained invisible for many years.

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