REPRESENTATIONS OF PORTUGAL IN HERMANN HESSE, PHILIP ROTH AND PAUL AUSTER

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"The limits of my language' means the limits of my world."
Wittgenstein (1922, 1999, *Tractatus*, 5.6)

Abstract

The aim of my research is to answer the question: How is Portugal seen by non-Portuguese fictionists? The main reason why I chose this research line is the following: Portuguese essayists like Eduardo Lourenço and José Gil (2005) focus their attention on the image or representation of Portugal as conceived by the Portuguese; indeed there is a tendency in Portuguese cultural studies (and, to a certain extent, also in Portuguese philosophical studies) to focus on studying the so-called 'portugalidade' (portugueseness), i.e., the essence of being Portuguese. In my view, the problem with the studies I have been referring to is that everything is self-referential, and if 'portugueseness' is an issue, then it might be useful, when dealing with it, to separate subject from object of observation. That is the reason why we, in the CEI (Centro de Estudos Interculturais), decided to start this research line, which is an inversion in the current tendency of the studies about 'portugueseness': instead of studying the image or representation of Portugal by the Portuguese, my task is to study the image or representation of Portugal by the non-Portuguese, in this case, in non-Portuguese fiction. For the present paper I selected three writers of the 20th

century: the German Hermann Hesse and the North-Americans Philip Roth and Paul Auster.

Key-words: Representations of Portugal; Peirce; icons; indices; symbols; Hermann Hesse; Philip Roth; Paul Auster

Sinopse

O propósito da minha pesquisa é responder à questão: como é Portugal visto pelos escritores de ficção estrangeiros? A principal razão pela qual escolhi esta linha de investigação é o seguinte: ensaístas portugueses, como Eduardo Lourenço e José Gil (2005), centram a sua atenção na imagem ou na representação de Portugal tal como é concebida pelos próprios portugueses. De facto, existe uma tendência nos estudos culturais portugueses (e também, até certo ponto, nos estudos filosóficos) para se centrarem na chamada 'portugalidade', ou seja, na essência de ser português. No meu ponto de vista, o problema com os estudos que referi anteriormente é que tudo é auto-referencial. E se a 'portugalidade' é uma questão a ter em conta, então pode ser útil, ao estudá-la, separarmos o sujeito do objecto de observação. É esta a razão pela qual nós, no CEI (Centro de Estudos Interculturais), decidimos começar esta linha de investigação, que é uma inversão da tendência corrente dos estudos sobre a 'portugalidade': ao invés de estudar a imagem ou a representação de Portugal pelos portugueses, a minha tarefa é estudar a imagem ou a representação de Portugal pelos não-portugueses, neste caso, na ficção não-portuguesa. Para este artigo seleccionei três escritores do século XX: o alemão Hermann Hesse e os norte-americanos Philip Roth e Paul Auster.

Palavras-chave: Representações de Portugal; Peice; ícones; índices; símbolos; Hermann Hesse; Philip Roth; Paul Auster

Introduction

This paper is integrated in a line of research of the R&D Centre *CEI* - Centro de Estudos Interculturais - (Centre for Intercultural Studies) of the ISCAP /Polytechnic Institute of Porto (Portugal). The research line in question is 'Cultural Representations', and my part in it is studying 'Representations of Portugal in Non-Portuguese Fiction'. This is my first essay on the subject; others are forthcoming. My next papers have the titles 'John Berger's Lisbon in *Here Is Where We* Meet' and 'Death in Lisbon: Antonio Tabucchi's *Pereira Declares'.*

In very simple terms, the aim of my research is to answer the question: How is Portugal seen by non-Portuguese fictionists? For the present paper I selected three writers of the 20th century: the German Hermann Hesse and the North-Americans Philip Roth and Paul Auster.

1. State of the Art

The main object of study of Portuguese essayists like Eduardo Lourenço and José Gil (2005) is the image or representation of Portugal as conceived by the Portuguese. Indeed there is a tendency in Portuguese cultural studies (and, to a certain extent, also in Portuguese philosophical studies) to focus on studying the so-called 'portugalidade' (portugueseness), i.e., the essence of being Portuguese.

Particularly the essays collected in Lourenço (2004) and in Gil (2005) involve both a subtle and a strong criticism on the essence of being Portuguese, or, to put it in very simple words, on the Portuguese way of being or Portuguese mentality. Lourenço (2004) in his *Mythical Psychoanalysis of the Portuguese Destiny*[30] relies for support of his critical views largely on accounts of Portuguese historians and fictionists[31]. Gil (2005), in turn, seems to draw more upon observation and analysis of past and present-day life in Portugal, with a certain stress on the interpretation of political developments – particularly those recent when he was writing the essays –, while at the same time not precluding important elements of pop culture. The title of

[30] My translation of the subtitle of Lourenço (2004).

[31] One of the essays collected in Lourenço (2004) is even called 'Literature as an Interpretation of Portugal', but references to the way Portuguese fictionists (and historians) portray Portugal is all pervasive.

his widely discussed book in Portugal is suggestive enough: *Portugal, Hoje. O Medo de Existir* (*Portugal Today. The Fear of Existing*). In this work he develops the thesis that a serious problem – or perhaps the most serious problem – that Portugal has to come to grips with is the long settled practice of non-inscription, i.e., the fact that collective traumatic experiences (like Salazar's and Caetano's long period of dictatorship) are not inscribed either in consciousness or in discourse.

Gil recognizes, of course, that non-inscription also happens in many other countries, like Germany[32], for example, but he claims that this practice is different in Portugal mainly by two reasons: because it has become a pattern throughout Portuguese history and culture, and because its mechanisms are more complicated and subtle than elsewhere. The most important consequence of this phenomenon in Portugal is that non-inscription creates blank spaces in individual and collective consciousness, which, in turn, paralyse the subject(s) when it comes to jumping from thought into action. Quoting from a graffito written in downtown Lisbon, Gil says:

> *"In Portugal nothing happens, 'there's no drama, only intrigue and plot*"[33].

Now, as a Portuguese, I have to agree that a strong difficulty in jumping from thought into action is, in fact, one of the characteristics of 'portugueseness'; as a linguist, I have to agree that non-inscription has a good share of responsibility for that, and as a keen observer of Portuguese reality and as a researcher on Cultural Studies, I have to say that there are many important factors at play here other than non-inscription. In my view, the problem with the studies I have been referring to is that everything is self-referential, and if 'portugueseness' is an issue, it might be useful, when dealing with it, to separate subject from object of observation. That is the reason why we, in the CEI, decided to start this line of research, which is an inversion in the current tendency of the studies about 'portugueseness': instead of studying the image or representation of Portugal by the Portuguese, our research aims at studying the

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[32] About the consequences of the non-inscription of the 3rd Reich and Nazism in Germany see Gil (2005:16).
[33] My translation. In the original: "Em Portugal nada acontece,'não há drama, tudo é intriga e trama'" (Gil, 2005:15).

image or representation of Portugal by the non-Portuguese, in this case, in non-Portuguese fiction.

2. Image and Representation

Lourenço and Gil frequently use the words 'image' and 'representation' in their work. They do it rather loosely, giving them a common-sense meaning: they never define what they mean by 'image' or 'representation'[34], although these words are indisputably at the core of their argumentation.

In this paper, I found it necessary to discuss the concepts of image and representation at some length, particularly bearing in mind Ludwig Wittgenstein's and Charles S. Peirce's theories. Based upon reflection on these two authors, I start out by putting forth my own definition of representation, which I then sustain and develop, both in this section and in section 3.

I consider *representation* as the inscription of mental images/concepts of entities of a real or possible world by means of signs, be they icons, indices or symbols (Peirce's terminology).

But, unlike Peirce, who thought that objects (entities) 'determine' signs, for me, the mental image of an entity (of a real or possible world) is paramount[35]; it is the mental image that makes us chose the sign to be inscribed. In fact, it is enough to bear in mind that for entities with no ontological existence there is but a mental image and a choice of signs to inscribe them.

The question of the possible worlds is not addressed by Peirce, but it is now hardly a matter of dispute, and even as far back as 1918, when Wittgenstein finished writing the Tractatus, he stated that "the thought contains the possibility of the state of affairs which it thinks. What is thinkable is also possible" (3.02 Tractatus).

Hence, there is no point in arguing about the truth value of representations[36], particularly in fiction.

It could, nevertheless, be argued that representations in fiction are inscribed in a (limited) universe of discourse, and that that universe of discourse is made up of

[34] See, for example, Lourenço (2004: 18).
[35] It should be reminded that for Wittgenstein the mental image is a fact. (2.1.4.1 Tractatus).
[36] This is further supported in 2.201, 2.202, 2.22, 2.221, and 5.6 of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

individually selected representations. This could entail a danger for essays like this: perhaps not so much the danger of taking representations in fiction by their truth value (we are, of course, aware and warned against that), but the danger of making generalizations from individual, particular and selected representations. But then again overgeneralization is not so much a danger in itself when we are dealing with possible worlds. As Wittgenstein puts it "[…] The single thing proves over and over again to be unimportant, but the possibility of every single thing reveals something about the nature of the world" (3.3421 Tractatus).

What I have written down in section 2 of this paper seems to be made up of scattered and sometimes apparently unconnected thoughts. This was deliberately done so, because my objective in this section was just to collect some thoughts about the issue of image and representation; these thoughts will then be discussed and articulated in more detail in the following sections.

Like Wittgenstein, who has been largely quoted here, writes in the 1945 preface to his *Philosophical Investigations*:

> "I have written down all these thoughts as 'remarks', short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another.[…] But the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks." (Wittgenstein, 1945, 1963: ix).

3. Signs: Peirce's Theoretical Apparatus[37]

My definition of 'representation' above includes reference to signs, be they icons, indexes or symbols. This is clearly Peirce's terminology. As the work of

[37] Section 3 of this study follows a bit closely 'Peirce's Theory of Signs' (2006), which seems to me to be a good and clear account of Peirce's theory. I chose to do so because I am more of a text linguist than a semiotician and also because a personal exegesis of Peirce's writings would clearly fall out of the scope of this study. Peirce's theoretical apparatus is nevertheless important for the development of my line of research about representations of Portugal, and so I decided to extend the presentation of Peirce's semiotics in this paper more than I had planned at first, namely dealing with the three phases of his work and the correspondent completions and reformulations of his classification of signs. In spite of following a bit closely 'Peirce's Theory of Signs' in section 3 of this study (as I said), I also include in this section contributions and interpretations by Ransdell (1997) and Elgin (1996), as well as my points of view, particularly in matters that touch theory of reference.

Charles Sanders Peirce is complex, encompassing three phases, each of which presents new developments of his first concepts, I think it is convenient to shed some light on this evolution, all the more so as his concepts and terminology are relevant to this study.

3.1 The Basic Structure

Common to Peirce's many definitions of a sign is the fact that he considers a sign as consisting of three inter-related parts: a sign itself – which, to avoid confusion, is called by some authors the sign-vehicle –, an object, and an interpretant. The sign-vehicle can be considered as the signifier, e.g., a word, a molehill in a lawn as a sign of moles, a picture, etc. The object is the entity referred to or suggested by the sign-vehicle. If the sign-vehicle is a word, the object would then be the entity connoted by the word; if the sign-vehicle is a molehill, the object would then be the mole whose presence is suggested by the molehill; if the sign-vehicle is a picture, the object would then be the entity depicted in the picture. Finally, the interpretant can be characterized as our understanding of the sign-vehicle/object relation. It should be added here that Peirce considers each of these three instances (sign-vehicle, object and interpretant) as a sign in itself. Moreover, it should also be pointed out that from the examples just given one can easily conclude that in each of them the sign-vehicle stands in different relations to the object.

3.2 Peirce's Account of 1867-8

At this stage, Peirce called signs 'representations' and divided them in three types: *icons, indices* and *symbols*. His definitions of these three types of 'representations' are, at this stage, a bit blurred, but, as this division remains throughout his work and what is intended by each of these categories is clarified as his work progresses, I shall consider, from this very beginning, their now (almost) commonly accepted definitions.

According to Ransdell (1997:36),

> *"If the sign's representative clue is based on, or grounded in, a similarity (resemblance, likeness) to its object, then it is [...] iconic. If it is based on a dyadic or existential relationship with its object, then it is [...] indexical. And if it is based on nothing but the fact that it has the power to generate an interpretant sign of itself in which it will be interpreted as being a sign of that object – that is, if it is based on nothing but the fact that it has the power to generate an interpretant sign of itself in which it will be represented as a sign of that object – then it is a symbol."*

Elgin defines icons, indices and symbols in much the same way, except for the definition of index, in which she clearly mentions correlation as an instance of dyadic relationship:

> "A sign's status as an icon, índex or symbol derives from its mode of reference. Icons refer by resemblance or, as Peirce said, "mere community in some quality". Indices refer by a natural correlation or "correspondence in fact". Symbols refer by convention. Thus, a portrait is considered an icon, its reference being secured by its likeness to its subject.
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> A symptom is an index in that it in fact corresponds to a disease. And most denoting terms are symbols in Peirce's sense, for their relation to their objects is a matter of arbitrary convention." (Elgin, 1996:181)

Taking the examples given in 3.1, the word would then be a symbol, the molehill an index and the picture an icon.

At this early stage, Peirce emphasized his conception of the interpretant as being the interpreting thought, and also the fact that interpreting thoughts are signs, or as he called them 'thought-signs'. He also considered that all thoughts are signs. One interesting characteristic of this early account is also the fact that Peirce focussed his attention on symbols rather than on indices and icons.

3.3 Peirce's Account of 1903

In this interim account, Peirce enlarged his trichotomy suggesting ten classes of signs instead of three. He reached this new classification by developing his conceptions of sign-vehicles, objects and interpretants.

In what concerns sign-vehicles, he thought that they could be divided into three broad areas, depending on whether they signify in virtue of a quality, existential fact or convention/law. Signs with these sign-vehicles would then be, respectively, *qualisigns, sinsigns,* and *legisigns*[38]. If I, for instance, wanted to buy a piece of cloth of a particular shade of blue and brought a sample to the shop just in order to get the right shade of blue, then the sample would work as a qualisign, because *only* one quality (the shade of blue) of the sign-vehicle (the sample) would be essential. Size, shape or material of the sample would in this case be irrelevant. As instances of sinsigns, the examples usually given are smoke as a sign of fire, symptoms as signs of a disease or the example above of a molehill as sign of a mole. Typical examples of legisigns are traffic lights as sign of priority and most verbal signs.

As for objects, they could be classifiable according to how they function in signification. Peirce strangely thought that objects determine their signs, and here again, we have three broad classes: qualitative, existential or physical, and conventional or law-like. If successful signification requires that the sign should reflect qualitative features of the object, then it is an icon; if the requirement is that of a physical or existential connection between sign and object, then it is an index; finally, if successful signification of the object requires that the sign should utilize convention or law that connects it with the object, then it is a symbol. This does not seem to bring anything new to the earlier account, but indeed there is here a broadening of the scope of the trichotomy, as Peirce, in this version, considered, for instance, deixes and proper names as indices[39], and speech acts as symbols. At this time, he also seems to be aware that any single sign may be a combination of iconic, indexical and symbolic characteristics[40].

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[38]Or, as Ransdel (1997:11) puts it "[…] if we are interested in some particular semiotical identity the sign has, in virtue of a monadic property of it, we are, then interested in it as a qualisign; if it is in virtue of a dyadic property of it, as a sinsign; and if in virtue of a triadic property, as a legisign".

[39] And he was quite right, in my view, because in terms of theory of reference, both deixes and proper names function as ways or terms of reference not by means of any semantic content (as, for example, common nouns do), but rather by an existential relationship with the object (deixes) or correlation (proper names).

[40] For further development of this conception see Randell (1997).

Finally, in what concerns interpretants, Peirce considers three categories according to which feature of the relationship with its object a sign uses in generating an interpretant. If qualitative features are at play, then the sign is a *rheme*; if existential features are at play, then the sign is a *dicent*; if conventional or law-like features are at play, then the sign is a *delome* (or argument). Examples of rhemes would be predicates, examples of dicents would be propositions, and examples of delomes would be arguments or rules of inference.

It follows from this three-fold classification of each of the three inter-related parts (sign-vehicle, object and interpretant) that there would result twenty-seven possible classificatory combinations, but because of certain restrictions on how to combine elements, Peirce arrived at ten permissible combinations, i.e., ten possible kinds of signs[41]. We can then have combinations like a *dicentic-symboloic-legisign*, a *rhematic-indexical-sinsign,* and so on.

3.4 Peirce's Account of 1906-10

In this final account Peirce's terminology gets a bit more complicated as he tried to reassess his account of signs and sign structure by refining and subdividing his already complex classifications. As he does so, he leaves a lot of under-explained terminology and he himself does not seem to be quite at ease with his final typology.

This final typology results from divisions of both object and interpretant. He conceives the object of the sign as an *immediate object* and/or a *dynamic object*, the former being the object as we understand it at a given point in the process of semiosis, the latter being the object as it stands at the end of that process.

Peirce's conception of the dynamic object is important as it is considered to have the power to generate a *chain of signs*. At the idealized end of the semiosis we will have a complete understanding of the object and we arrive at that understanding by going through a chain of signs and by assimilating that object into the system of signs.

The interpretant is, in turn, divided into the *immediate, the dynamic* and *the final interpretant* and that is so because, as a chain of signs moves towards a final end, there are different interpretants, each playing its role. The immediate interpretant

[41] See examples in 'Peirce's Theory of Signs' (2006:11).

would be a general understanding of the relationship between the sign and the dynamic object; the dynamic interpretant would be our understanding of the sign/dynamic object relationship at some instance in a chain of signs; the final interpretant would then be our understanding of the dynamic object if we went so far as to reach an ultimate opinion after sufficient development of thought.

Peirce believed that by making all permissible combinations he would come to a final classification of sixty-six signs, but there is really not enough in Peirce's writings to indicate how one should set about the task of combining them.

Perhaps the best way to deal with Peirce's theoretical apparatus is not to focus so much on his terminological frameworks (and I use the plural here, because he changes his terminology so much from phase to phase and from work to work), but rather to recognize that he is notorious for looking at the same things from different angles and then translating his views into experiments with terminology that is rather difficult to apply. His views reveal an extraordinary deep insight into the process of cognition in general and particularly into the process of interpretation, but he seems to take refuge in constructing a logical theoretical apparatus that holds together, while leaving us with only a small and very limited set of examples of application.

4. Signs and Fiction

In spite of what has just been said, several attempts have been made to set about the process of interpreting fictional texts (and other) largely based on Peirce's theoretical apparatus. Indeed, it is difficult to talk about text interpretation without at least referring to some of Peirce's concepts.

For Ferraresi (1996), the fictional text is a sign (I would say a macro-sign), composed of several signs (I would say micro-signs) which *are woven into a fabric whose texture is connective and inferential.* For each text, there is a *liminal writer*, i.e., *a semiotic mechanism whose function is to filter the author's intentions and passions through the text.* It is the liminal writer's semiotic intention that makes the text hang together, thus allowing critics and readers to interpret it. The liminal writer's counterpart is the *liminal reader*, whose function is to fully capture the liminal writer's intentions. Ferraresi further introduces the concept of *neoemes* (from the Greek *neos, new*), signs that constitute nodes in the web-like structure of the story and

act as triggers for inference. Neoemes may be found at all levels of a text: at the macro level they are signs that set the story in motion, and are thus essential to the development of the plot; at the micro level they provide something with which to weave the web-like structure of the text (keeping the etymon, the text may be metaphorically described as a fabric).

Ferraresi's views seem to me to be quite sustainable, except for the fact that for him the role of the liminal writer's semiotic intention seems to be paramount, while the role of the liminal reader is left to a secondary position, i.e., that of capturing the liminal writer's intentions[42]. As it seems hardly possible to be sure what the liminal writer's intentions are and as it is expectable that not all readers interpret the same sign in the same way, Ferraresi's position on this seems to me not to be sustainable. I would rather support Johansen's view in the matter of sign interpretation which he explains as follows:

> *"In order to interpret [...] any fictional or non-fictional text, we rely on the use of three sources: a general knowledge of the linguistic codes, including conceptions about word meanings, textual specifications, i.e., the specific information made available by the way less complex signs are combined within the text, and contextual constraints, i.e., the culture specific meanings and significance including the communicative context and the relation between different universes of discourse within the culture in question."* (Johansen, 1996:279)

In what concerns the question of the relationship between fiction and reality, Ferraresi clearly states that *fiction involves raiding reality* (Ferraresi, 1996: 256), i.e., non-semiotic space, but, by means of the liminal writer, the events covered by the story are put into a semiotic space, the text. However, a theoretical question emerges: if we remember Peirce's basic structure of signs with its three inter-related parts, it is pertinent to ask, when it comes to fiction, where the object of the sign is. Addressing this question, and based on Peirce's recognition of fictitious signs on the condition

[42] See, for example Ferraresi (1996:257-258) where he considers interpretations that focus on the text rather than on trying to capture the liminal writer's intentions are not interpretations, but rather *slides into something else*.

that they in some way announce or display their fictionality, Johansen (1996:276) writes:

"Works of fiction […], by convention, are taken to refer, not to the common life-world of the parties of the dialogue, but to a fictional universe of discourse, created by the author by writing the text and accepted by the reader as a sign offered for meditation and pleasure."

Clearly then, the answer to the question above is that the object of the sign in fiction is in the universe of discourse[43]. The universe of discourse is built by the creation/interpretation of the fictional text, with all that it entails[44].

To finalize section 4 of this paper, we are left with a question that most authors avoid: What type of sign is a fictional text?

Taken at the macro level, a fictional text, according to the basic structure definitions of Peirce, would be classified as a symbol, but one should not forget "that a symbol, in order to mean, necessarily has iconic and indexical features attached to it and that the iconic and indexical features of verbal utterances are revealed in the interpretants of the signs in question" (Johansen, 1996: 277-278). 'The signs in question' are detected at the micro level; they may be icons, indices or symbols. Furthermore, if we take Peirce's ten classes of signs – which, as we know, result from the admissible combinations of the threefold divisions of sign-vehicles, objects and interpretants (see 3.3 above) – a fictional text would be classified as a delomatic-symbolic-legisign. That it is a symbolic legisign is hardly questionable given what has been explained above; that it is a delome seems to be a matter for some discussion, because some authors tend to believe that it should be rather classified as a rheme, based namely on the aesthetic experience as a quality[45]. There are, of course, arguments in favour of this position, but it has the great disadvantage of not taking

[43] About the question of the object of the sign in fiction one could also corroborate what has been said by remembering Searle's theory of reference (Searle, 1969). The first of his three axioms that govern reference is the axiom of existence, which is enunciated as follows: *Whatever is referred to must exist* (Searle, 1969:77). By declaring this, Searle is not in the least precluding reference to objects with no ontological existence, but rather the opposite. As he immediately afterwards explains, *reference to fictional (and also legendary, mythological, etc.) entities are not counter-examples. One can refer to them as fictional characters precisely because they exist in fiction.* (Searle, 1969:78).
[44] For more detailed explanations about the concept of 'universe of discorse' see, for example, Johansen (1996:281) or Lopes (2001:3, 5-6, 238).
[45] More about this discussion in Johansen (1996).

into account structural features that are essential in any fictional (and also non-fictional) text.

5. Representations of Portugal in Fiction

As I said in the Introduction, this paper is part of a larger research project and my part in it is to study how Portugal is represented in non-Portuguese fiction. Being my first paper on the subject, I had a quite wide number of sources and choices; I decided to start with Hermann Hesse's *Beneath the Wheel* (BW), Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (AP) and Paul Auster's *Oracle Night* (ON). Because I had it in my mind to apply – and thus put to test – in this paper Peirce's categories, the choice of these three novels has to do with the fact that the representations of Portugal in each of these novels fit, at first sight, into Peirce's basic categories: icon, index, and symbol. The representations, their categorization and their role in the overall text seemed to me to be a good way to start.

5.1 Representations of Portugal in Hermann Hesse's *Beneath the Wheel*[46]

5.1.1 The Context

The local and time setting of this novel is Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. The story constitutes an attack on educational systems that foster intellect, purposefulness and ambition to the detriment of creativity, insight and freedom of spirit. The young protagonist, Hans Giebenrath, is a talented middle-class country boy, who, at fourteen, is selected for a scholarship to study at the Cistercian monastery of Maulbronn. Little by little his emotional nature is crippled by the educational system at the monastery, and he seeks relief in friendship with a liberated and rebellious fellow-student, Hermann Heilner. Hans Giebenrath and Hermann Heilner are complementary figures: while Hans makes strong efforts to fit in, Hermann escapes through art and rejection of the system.

5.1.2 Representations of Portugal and their Role in the Novel

[46] Original title *Unterm Rad.*

In the novel there is but one reference to Portugal, namely to the map of the Iberian peninsula:

> "One day Hans [Giebenrath] had left his *atlas* in the lecture hall and since he wanted to prepare himself for an upcoming geography lesson he borrowed Heilner's. With disgust he noted that entire pages had been dirtied with pencil markings. *The west coast of the Iberian Peninsula had been reshaped to form a grotesque profile with a nose reaching from Porto to Lisbon, the area about Cape Finisterre stylized into a curly coiffure while Cape St. Vincent formed the nicely twirled point of a beard.*"[47] (BW: 82) (My Emphasis)

In terms of signs, maps are typical examples of icons as there is a relation of similarity between map and territory. But what we have here a is parody of the map, in that Hermann Heilner marked the west coast of the Iberian peninsula – the strip of land corresponding to Portugal's territory plus the northern part (the area around Cape Finisterre), which is Spain's province Galicia – with a pencil to give it the form of a human male profile.

For all the iconicity of this sign, it should be pointed out that it has a strong indexical component: the parody is really an index of Hermann's rejection of the educational system through a peculiar form of art. Furthermore, this is to be understood as a reproachable attitude: that it is reproachable is linguistically supported by words like 'disgust', 'dirtied' and 'grotesque' which are used in the quote to express Hans's reaction to what he seems to consider a profanation of the atlas. This, in turn, is also indexical of Hans's attitude towards the system: in his efforts to fit in, he sees Hermann's behaviour as the system does.

The double character of the sign in question – iconicity and indexicallity – is hardly a theoretical problem. As Ransdell points out:

[47] In the original: "Er [Hans Giebenrath] hatte einmal seine Bücher im Hörsaal liegenlassen und entlehnte, da er sich auf die nächste Geographiestunde vorbereiten wollte, Heilners Atlas. Da sah er mit Grausen,dass jener ganze Blätter mit dem Bleistift verschmiert hatte.Die Westküste der Pyrenäischer Halbinsel war zu einem grotesken Profil ausgezogen, worin die Nase von Porto bis Lissabon reichte und die Gegend in Kap Finisterre zu einem gekräuselten Lockenschmuck stilisiert war, während das Kap St. Vincent die schön ausgedrehte Spitze eines Vollbartes bildete." Hermann Hesse, Unterm Rad (1906), p.75.

> "[…] when we identify some sign as being iconic, for example, this only means that the iconicity of that sign happens to be of peculiar importance to us for some reason or other implicit in the situation and purpose of that analysis, with no implication to the effect that it is therefore non-symbolic or non-indexical." (Ransdell, 1997: 7)

At this point it should be added that we are here talking about a map, but a map that is described, not a map that is printed on the page of the book. So, the language used to describe the map is, of course, symbolic. All that has been said so far brings us to considering this sign as a rhematic-iconic-legisign, even though the iconicity of the sign also involves indexical and symbolic components.

As a representation of Portugal there is nothing particularly interesting about this: it is common knowledge that Portugal's map looks like a human profile, just as it is common knowledge that Italy's map looks like a boot. But, in what concerns its role in the novel, it is to be considered as one among other signs that convey the complementarity of Hermann's and Hans's characters.

5.2 Representations of Portugal in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*

5.2.1 The Context

Swede Levov, the protagonist of this novel, was a famous athlete at his Newark high school. He later inherits his father's glove factory and marries a former Miss New Jersey. The narrator, one of his high school colleagues and admirers, depicts him as the kind of person who, from the very beginning, does everything right, avoids hurting people or letting them down, up to a point when we do not know for sure what he really wants; he just does what other people expect of him, and they expect a lot. But he always complies.

One day, his teenage daughter, Merry, plants a bomb in their home town as a protest against the Vietnam War, and disappears. Her parent's idyllic life falls completely apart: particularly Swede Levov, who is always the one who takes responsibility for everything, is left with the shame and the guilt for the killings

provoked by her daughter's terrorist attack – something that he never understands – and overnight everything that he has built along the years begins falling apart as well.

Eventually, he finds his daughter: malnourished and dressed in rags; she lives in a room full of debris and filth in the worst sector of Newark. His efforts to bring her back home are in vain. She has become a complete fanatic: she is now a Jain (a follower of a relatively small Indian religious sect) and will not come back to face justice. Swede Levov accepts her decision, leaves her there and comes home devastated. Once again, he complies.

5.2.2 Representations of Portugal and their Role in the Novel

In the whole novel there are three references to Portugal, either direct or indirect.

The first one comes up in the following chunk of text describing the celebrations of the end of the 2nd World War:

> "The celebration party at the playground back of the school that night, everyone they knew, family friends, school friends, the neighborhood butcher, the grocer, the pharmacist, the tailor, even the bookie from the candy store, all in ecstasy, *long lines of staid middle-aged people madly mimicking Carmen Miranda and dancing the conga, one-two-three 'kick' until after two A.M. The war. Winning the war. Victory, victory, victory had come!*" (AP: 208-209) (My emphasis)

I hesitated in considering the reference to Carmen Miranda, because it only refers to Portugal indirectly. In fact, not many people know that she was Portuguese; she is usually considered as being Brazilian, in spite of the fact that she always made a point of stating that she was Portuguese. Only in Brazil, where she made her career as a singer, and in Portugal, where se was born and largely appreciated, do people know that she was Portuguese and I really am not quite sure if the author knows that. Besides, she is usually considered as representative of Brazil, and in fact, culturally, she was more Brazilian than Portuguese. It should also be added that she made some success in Hollywood movies, in which she appeared singing and dancing in her

bizarre outfits, wearing a very peculiar kind of headgear with heaps of tropical fruits on top of it.

The only reason why I considered this occurrence is because it raises an interesting theoretical question: as I referred to above, Peirce thought that objects determine their signs, and when I reported this in 3.3 I added the adverb 'strangely'. I did so because I really do not agree that objects determine their signs, but rather that the interpretant determines the object's sign. If the interpretant can be characterized as our understanding of the sign-vehicle/object relation, then, in the case under consideration here, we really do not know what was the understanding of the author and so we do not know if he was making a reference to Portugal or to Brazil (or even to Hollywood for that matter).

In any case, it would be to consider as a rhematic-indexical-legisign. That it is to be considered as a legisign derives from what has already been explained in sections 3 and 4; that it is indexical derives from the fact that proper names are, according to Peirce, indices; that it is rhematic is to be explained by the fact that qualitative features are at play, namely joy.

It should be added that this is an analysis at the micro level; the chunk of text in question includes the reference to Carmen Miranda and the fact that people were mimicking her to express their joy for the end of the war. Now, by the act of mimicking, the long lines of people celebrating the end of the war were not saying Carmen Miranda's name (nor were they in any way representing Portugal), but rather they were trying to portray her way of dancing the conga as a way to express their joy. So, because they were trying to behave or move like she did, there is a relation of similarity between them and her, i.e., an iconic relation. This interpretation of the chunk of text under analysis leads to considering it as a rhematic-iconic-legisign.

As I said when I started analysing this quote, it is hardly to be considered as a representation of Portugal and I only took it in consideration because of theoretical questions. As for tits role in the novel, it is of little relevance. The novel could very well do without it.

Let us now move to another reference. That Levov's daughter was prone to fanaticism is pre-announced, namely in the following quote:

> *"Once when she was nine and some diehards down at Cape May reported that the Virgin Mary appeared to their children in their barbecue and people flocked in from miles around and kept vigil in their yard, Merry was fascinated, perhaps less by the mystery of the Virgin's appearance in New Jersey than by the child's having been singled out to see her. "I wish I could see that," she told her father, and she told him about how apparitions of the Virgin Mary had appeared to three shepherd children in Fátima, in Portugal, and he nodded and held his tongue, though when her grandfather got wind of the Cape May vision from his granddaughter, he said to her, "I guess next they'll see her at the Dairy Queen," a remark Merry repeated down in Elizabeth. Grandma Dwyer then prayed to St. Anne to help Merry stay Catholic despite her [Jewish] upbringing, but in a couple of years saints and prayers had disappeared from Merry's life; she stopped wearing the Miraculous Medal, with the impression on it of the Blessed Virgin, which she had sworn to Grandma Dwyer to wear "perpetually" without even taking it off to bathe. She outgrew the saints just as she would have outgrown the Communism."* (AP: 159) (My emphasis*)*

Now here we have a direct reference to Portugal, namely to Fátima's apparitions. The truth value of such apparitions is not a matter of discussion here, but it should be pointed out that it has been a controversial issue, even among the Portuguese catholic clergy. An interesting point is that Salazar's regime profited from it, in that he gave credit to it, supported the building of a huge sanctuary at the site (1953) and encouraged people to make and fulfil promises to go on pilgrimage there; particularly during the Portuguese Colonial War, faith in 'Our Lady of Fátima' grew among the Portuguese, and Salazar used it to distract people from the traumatic developments of the war in Africa. Later on, Pope John Paul II, declared his strong devotion to 'Our Lady of Fátima', and went there to pray more than once, which made the phenomenon even more notorious.

One detail that may be of some importance is that, by the time of the apparitions (1917), the Virgin Mary (or, as she is called in Portugal, 'Our Lady of Fátima') allegedly revealed three secrets to the shepherd children, which they were supposed to keep. The only survivor of the three children (who died recently) became a nun, Sister Lúcia, and, when she met Pope John Paul II in one of his visits to Fátima, she

allegedly told him the third secret – the only one that was left to tell. The third secret was the fall of Communism (in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries); interesting is that this was only publicly revealed after the Communist regime had already fallen.

In terms of signs, reference to the Virgin Mary is an index (let us not forget that it is a proper name), in that it is correlated to faith. But then again, if we analyse the whole quote, Merry declares that she wished she could see the Virgin Mary who had appeared at Cape May, i.e., she wished she had been singled out as a child to experience an apparition, and, it is in that context that she refers to the apparitions in Fátima. Now, if she had actually seen somebody at Cape May, who she had taken to be the Virgin Mary by resemblance to the apparitions in Fátima, then we would have an icon here. As it is, the representation is to be considered as a rhematic-indexical-legisign.

It is difficult to conceive that a nine-year-old American child should have known about the apparitions in Fátima; two explanations may be admissible: one is that she might have heard about it by some Portuguese immigrant(s) – one should not forget there are plenty of them in Newark –, the other is that she knows because she is prone to fanaticism and this is, I think, what is implied here. Further implied is that Merry is unstable in her beliefs. That both 'Our Lady of Fátima' and Communism are referred to in this quote as indexical of fanaticism is a funny coincidence in the light of what I have explained above about the third secret of Fátima.

Other than in the previous quote, the representation of Portugal here plays a role, even if a small one, as it is combined within the whole text with other signs (indexical or not) to convey features of Merry's personality.

I will now proceed to the analysis of the third reference. It concerns an issue that is very dear to Eduardo Lourenço: that of the Portuguese emigrants abroad.

When Swede Levov, years after his daughter's disappearance, finds out where she is, his first reaction is of complete astonishment at the fact that, after all, she is living (and hiding) not far way from him, but in a place where he would never dream of looking for her:

> *"It was preposterous. His daughter was now living in Newark, working across the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks, and not at the end of the Ironbound*

> *where the Portuguese were reclaiming the poor Down Neck streets but here at the Ironbound's westernmost edge, in the shadow of the railroad viaduct that closed off the Railroad Avenue all along the western side of the street."* (AP: 218) (My emphasis)

That she is working at the Ironbound´s westernmost edge, an even worse sector than that now reclaimed by the Portuguese – Down Neck –, is a complete shock for him; in fact, he knew Down Neck all too well. When he was a child, he used to drive Down Neck alongside with his father on Saturday mornings to pick up the week's finished gloves from poor Italian families paid to do piecework in their homes. Even as a child, he had been shocked by the extreme poverty of those people and of the area; now his daughter has fallen so low in the social and economic rank that she is taking up an even worse place than that that was once occupied by the poor people who did piecework for his father's factory.

Reference to the Portuguese immigrants is once again here indexical: an index of poverty. The representation is to be considered as a rhematic-indexical-legisign, which is combined within the novel with other signs (indexical or not) to convey the decadence of Swede Levov's only daughter, and, by consequence the disruption of his life.

5.3 Representations of Portugal in Paul Auster's *Oracle Night*

5.3.1 The Context

Sidney Orr is a writer and lives in Brooklyn, New York. He is recovering from a severe illness that confined him to hospital for quite a long time. Although he is feeling much better now, he has not been able to write since he has been discharged from hospital. In one of his daily walks, which were advised as a part of his recovery, he spots a stationary store called Paper Palace. He goes in, meets the owner, a Chinese called Chang, and decides to buy a fresh set of supplies, perhaps, as he says, because he secretly wants to start writing again. There he finds some Portuguese notebooks which seem to be very attractive to him and he buys a blue one. The purchase of the

blue Portuguese notebook triggers off a number of odd developments which are decisive for Sidney Orr's life and for the development of the plot of the novel.

5.3.2 Representations of Portugal and Their Role in the Novel

Other than in the two novels studied so far, references to Portugal and representations of Portugal are here in great number and play an important role in the novel.

Let us start with the purchase of a Portuguese notebook in the Paper Palace:

> *"There was also a stack of notebooks from Germany and another one from Portugal. The Portuguese notebooks were especially attractive to me, and with their hard covers, quadrille lines, and stitched-in signatures of sturdy, unblottable paper, I knew I was going to buy one the moment I picked it up and held it in my hands. There was nothing fancy or ostentatious about it. It was a practical piece of equipment – solid, homely, serviceable, not at all the kind of blank book you'd think of offering someone as a gift. But I liked the fact that it was cloth-bound, and I also liked the shape: nine and a quarter by seven and a quarter inches, which made it slightly shorter and wider than most notebooks. I can't explain why it should have been so, but I found those dimensions deeply satisfying, and when I held the notebook in my hands for the first time, I felt something akin to physical pleasure, a rush of sudden, incomprehensible well-being. There were just four notebooks left on the pile, and each one came in a different color: black, red, brown and blue. I chose the blue, which happened to be the one lying on the top."*
> (ON: 4-5) (My emphasis)

Although so far we do not know what is going to happen afterwards, there seems to be some relevance in this quote for the future development of the plot (otherwise, why would the narrator bother to be so precise in describing the notebooks and his feelings towards them); to support this, there is also the contextual factor that Sidney Orr is a writer who has not been able to write for a year.

It should also be added that when Sidney Orr is about to pay for the Portuguese notebook Mr. Chang makes the following comments: "'Lovely book', he said, in heavily accented English. 'But no more. No more Portugal. Very sad story'." (ON: 5)

At work in these two quotes there is a neoeme both at the macro and the micro level: at the macro level it signals a moment in the narrative that is going to prove to be essential to the subsequent development of the plot[48]; at the micro level it provides something with which to weave the web-like structure of the text.

In fact, as soon as Sidney Orr comes home, he immediately starts to write on the blue Portuguese notebook, and, as he says:

> *"The words came quickly, smoothly, without seeming to demand much effort. I found that surprising, but as long as I kept my hand moving from left to right, the next word always seemed to be there, waiting to come out of the pen."* (ON: 12)

Some neoemes at the micro level are worth noting. When Sidney Orr writes in the notebook, he looses track of time, and when he stands up from his desk and goes to the kitchen, he is rather surprised to find out that his wife has already arrived; she, in turn, is also surprised to see him, because she had been looking for him in his workroom and he was not there. None of them can explain what happened[49]. The fact is that on the following days Sidney Orr keeps writing and writing on the Portuguese blue notebook and other strange things happen: he does not hear the phone ring when he writes[50], which is something that never happened to him before.

As the story progresses, the Portuguese notebooks seem to be everywhere in the the plot. On the very same day Sidney Orr bought the notebook, he has dinner with his friend John Trause, an important writer. He happens to go to Trause's study and sees a o blue notebook exactly like his lying out on Trause's desk. This baffles and excites him at first, but then he finds a plausible explanation for the coincidence:

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[48] Cf. Ferraresi's (1996: 258) comments on a neoeme in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*: the moment when the mayor of Verriéres hires Julien Sorel as a tutor in the first citizen's home.

[49] For more details see page 23.

[50] For more details see page 99.

"He [John Trause] had lived in Portugal for a couple of years, and no doubt they [the blue notebooks] were a common item over there, available in any run-of-the-mill stationary store. Why shouldn't he be writing in a blue hardbound notebook that had been manufactured in Portugal? No reason, no reason at all – and yet, given the delicious pleasant sensations I'd felt that morning when I'd bought my own blue notebook, and given that I'd spent several productive hours writing in it earlier that day (my first literary efforts in close to a year), and given that I'd been thinking about those efforts all through the evening at John's, it hit me as a startling conjunction, a little piece of black magic." (ON: 37)

There follows a conversation between Sidney Orr and John Trause about the Portuguese blue notebooks:

"'The strangest thing happened to me today. When I was out on my morning walk, I went into a store and bought a notebook. It was such an excellent notebook, such an attractive and appealing little thing, that it made me want to write again. And so the minute I got home, I sat down at my desk and wrote in it for two straight hours.'

'That's good news, Sidney,' John said. 'You're starting to work again.'

[…]

The notebook seems to have charged me up, and I can't wait to write in it again tomorrow. It's dark blue, a very pleasant shade of dark blue, with a cloth strip running down the spine and a hard cover. Made in Portugal, of all places.'

'Portugal?'

'I don't know which city . But there's a little label on the inside back cover

that says MADE IN PORTUGAL.'

'How on earth did you find one of those things here [New York]?'

'There's a new shop in my neighbourhood. The Paper Palace, owned by a man named Chang. He had four of them in stock.'

'I used to buy those notebooks on my trips down to Lisbon. They're very good, very solid. Once you start using them, you don't feel like writing in anything else.'

'I had that same feeling today. I hope it doesn't mean I'm about to become addicted.'

'Addiction might be too strong a word, but there's no question that they're extremely seductive. Be careful, Sid. I've been writing in them for years, and I know what I'm talking about.'

'You make it sound as if they're dangerous.'

'It depends on what you write. These notebooks are very friendly, but they can also be cruel, and you have to watch out that you don't get lost in them.'

'You don't look lost to me – and I just saw one lying on your desk when I left the bathroom.'

'I bought o big supply before I moved back to New York. Unfortunately the one you saw is the last one I have, and I've almost filled it up. I didn't know you could get them in America. I was thinking of writing to the manufacturer and ordering some more.'

'The man in the shop told me that the company's gone out of business.'

'Just my luck. But I'm not surprised. Apparently there wasn't much demand for them.'

'I can pick one up for you on Monday, if you want.'

'Are there any blue ones left?'

'Black, red and brown. I bought the last blue one.'

'Too bad. Blue is the only color I like. Now that the company's gone, I guess I'll have to start developing some new habits.'

'It's funny, but when I looked over the pile this morning, I went straight for the blue myself. I felt drawn to that one, as if I couldn't resist it. […]'". (ON: 38-39) (My emphasis)

Now, adding to the fact that the Portuguese blue notebooks seem to have some kind of 'black magic', as the narrator has put it (page 37), there seems to be the danger that it will be impossible to get more of them (neither in Portugal nor in New York).

Anyway, Sidney Orr decides to go to the Paper Palace to buy the only ones left, and he does so in a moment when he 'black magic' of the notebooks does not seem to be working anymore:

> *"[…] I would go out and pay another visit to Chang's store […] to buy whatever Portuguese notebooks were still in stock. It didn't matter to me that they weren't blue. Black, red and brown would serve just as well, and I wanted to have as many of them on hand as possible. Not for the present, perhaps, but to build up a supply for future projects, and the longer I put off going back to Chang's store, the greater the chances were that they'd be gone.*
>
> *Until then, writing in the blue notebook had given me nothing but pleasure, a soaring, maniac sense of fulfillment. Words had rushed out of me as though I were taking dictation, transcribing sentences from a voice that spoke in the crystalline language of dreams, nightmares, and unfettered thoughts. On the morning of September 20, however, […] that voice suddenly went silent. I opened the notebook, and when I glanced down at the page in front of me, I realized that I was lost, that I didn't know what I was doing anymore.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *Perhaps that had been what John had been referring to when he spoke of the 'cruelty' of the Portuguese notebooks. You flew in them for a while, borne away of a feeling of your own power, a mental Superman speeding through a bright blue sky with your cape flapping behind you, and then, without any warning, you came crashing down to earth.".* (ON: 92-93) (My emphasis)

But Sidney Orr finds out that the Paper Palace has been closed and emptied overnight:

> *"Just forty-eight hours earlier, Chang's business had been in full operation […], but now, to my absolute astonishment, everything was gone.[…] I saw that a small handwritten sign had been mounted on the window: STORE FOR RENT."* (ON: 94)

Now this constitutes another neoeme, in that it completely changes the course of action: the blue Portuguese notebooks seem to have lost their spell for Sidney Orr, and his hope to purchase even the black, red or brown ones is now lost.

We will have to leave the leitmotiv of the blue Portuguese notebooks just for a while because, in between, there is another development in Sidney Orr's story, in which Portugal plays a role. This new development comes up in the form of a conversation between Sidney Orr and his agent Mary Sklarr.

> *"'A Portuguese publisher has made an offer on your last two novels'*
>
> *'Portugal?'*
>
> *'"Self-Portrait" was published in Spain while you were in the hospital. […] The reviews were very good. Now the Portuguese are interested.'*
>
> *'That's nice. I suppose they are offering something like three hundred dollars.'*
>
> *'Four hundred for each book. But I can easily get them up to five.'*
>
> *'Go for it, Mary. After you deduct the agents' fees and foreign taxes, I'll wind up with about forty cents.'*
>
> *'True. But at least you'll be published in Portugal. What's wrong with that?'*
>
> *'Nothing. Pessoa is one of my favourite writers. They've kicked out Salazar and have a decent government now. The Lisbon earthquake inspired Voltaire to write "Candide". And Portugal helped get thousands of Jews out of Europe during the war. It's a terrific country. I've never been there, of course, but that's where I live now, whether I like it or not. Portugal is perfect. The way things have been going these past few days, it had to be Portugal.'*
>
> *'What are you talking about?'*
>
> *'It's a long story. I'll tell you about it some other time.'"* (ON: 133) (My emphasis)

There would be nothing particularly interesting in the news that one of Orr's novels is going to be published in Portugal, except for the fact that Sidney Orr, himself, recognizes that Portugal, in one way or the other, is always present in his recent life (*The way things have been going these past few days, it had to be*

Portugal). There is also here a somewhat cliché-like representation of Portugal which will be analysed further on.

Let us now retake the topic of the Portuguese notebooks. Some time after Sidney Orr had found out that the Paper Palace was closed, he happened to discover that the stationary store had reopened in another area of New York. He will not lose this last chance of buying the Portuguese notebooks. So, he goes in and finds just one that happens to be red. To his surprise and rage, Mr. Chang is not willing to sell it to him by any price whatsoever. They both fight and Chang kicks him out of the store (pp.172-178)[51].

This and the following quote confirm the neoeme, referred to above: that the blue Portuguese notebooks have lost their spell for Sidney Orr, and that any hope to purchase them is now lost.

> *"If I had learned anything from my ferocious encounter with Chang on Saturday, it was that the notebook was a place of trouble for me, and whatever I tried to write in it would end in failure. Every story would stop in the middle; every project would carry me along just so far, and then I'd look up and discover that I was lost. Still, I was furious enough with Chang to want to deny him the satisfaction of having the last word. I knew I was going to have to say good-bye to the Portuguese 'caderno', but unless I did it on my own terms, it would continue to haunt me as a moral defeat. If nothing else, I had to prove to myself that I wasn't a coward."* (ON: 179)

After having realized this, the only solution is to put an end to it:

> *"I returned to my workroom with a small plastic garbage bag. One by one, I ripped the pages out of the blue notebook and tore them into little pieces. […] Everything went into the garbage bag. After a short pause. I decided to tear up the blank pages and then shoved them into the bag as well. I closed it with a tight double knot, and a few minutes later I carried the bundle downstairs. […] I dropped the bag into a trash can on the corner […]."* (ON: 187)

[51] Chang's attitude towards Sidney Orr does not really come out of the blue. In fact, they had previously met by chance in a bar and Chang had allured him into a predicament, from which he came out full of regret (pp.119-130).

When dealing with the representations of Portugal in this novel, I hesitated a lot between going in into so much detail or not. In fact, in what concerns the blue Portuguese notebooks, I could sum it up in a couple of sentences. But then I thought that they are really so intermingled in the plot, and the narrator, Sidney Orr, is so vocal when it comes to talking about them, that I decided to follow the twists and turns of the story and let the text speak for itself.

Now we are in a position to ask the question: What have we really got here in terms of signs and in terms of representations of Portugal? I should say that we have two kinds: one is provided by the Portuguese notebooks, the other by associating Portugal to a definite description[52].

As for the Portuguese notebooks, they work for Sidney Orr (and to a certain point also for John Trause) as a fetish. As a fetish, they are symbolic: there is nothing in them that compels people to write or makes writing easier, but it is enough to read some of the quotes above in which Sidney Orr talks about them to understand that he somehow created a conviction that they have special powers. Such a conviction is, of course, conventional, and in that sense the blue Portuguese notebooks are a symbol. And the fact that they suddenly lose their spell does not deny their symbolic nature, but rather confirms it, i.e., it confirms the fact that, as signs, they are conventional (not qualitative or existential). They are then delomatic-symbolic-legisigns that work in the plot as neoemes. In terms of representations of Portugal, I would not go so far as drawing any connection between the characteristics of the items in question (*solid, homely, serviceable, attractive, appealing, very good, very solid, very friendly, also cruel*) and the country in which they were manufactured, i.e. Portugal. That would be both farfetched and, what is more important, it would deny their classification as symbols (which is something I maintain) and would make them indices. Now, one could wonder why I consider them as representations of Portugal, based on the argument that they would work the same way in the text if they were manufactured, say, in Spain or any other country for that matter. That would be true, but only if we took them isolated from the overall context, i.e., if references to Portugal were not all

[52] A definite description can be defined as one that provides the necessary and sufficient information for identifying the referent apart from any others in the universe of discourse. For more details about definite descriptions see, for example, Frege (1892) or Kripke (1972).

prevailing in the text[53]. As things are, the fact that they are Portuguese acquires a relevance that is given to them by the text itself.

Let us now turn to the quote from page 133 of the novel; that is the conversation in which Sidney Orr's agent tells him that the Portuguese are interested in publishing one of his novels. Orr's first reaction is lack of interest, and he expresses it a bit ironically: "That's nice. I suppose they are offering something like three hundred dollars. […] Go for it, Mary. After you deduct the agents' fees and foreign taxes, I'll wind up with about forty cents". This first reaction is indexical of a representation of Portugal as a poor country (small market, few readers, no profit). Then there is a second reaction triggered by his agent's words: "True, but at least you'll be published in Portugal. What's wrong with that?". This second reaction is completely different: it leads him to the conclusion that "It's a terrific country" after making some comments[54] that constitute a (personal) definite description of Portugal. Let us go through them one by one.

Orr's first reference is to Fernando Pessoa, who he considers one of his favourite writers. There is nothing particularly original about this: in fact, Pessoa is well-known abroad; he was one of Beckett's favourite writers and he was also very much admired by the Beat Generation. Then, Sidney Orr goes on saying that the Portuguese have kicked out Salazar and have a decent government now. This is putting things too simply: in fact, Salazar was not kicked out, he just died after having fallen from a chair where he was sitting, and his place as 'Presidente do Conselho' (the equivalent to Prime Minister) was taken by his protégé Caetano, who resumed his predecessor's dictatorship. It was Caetano, and not Salazar, who was kicked out by the Revolution on April 25th 1974. Orr then says that the Lisbon earthquake (1755) inspired Voltaire to write *Candide*. Well, being a writer, it is perfectly plausible that Orr is familiar with the work of Voltaire and he would know that the Lisbon earthquake plays a very important role in *Candide*. Then there is a reference to the fact that Portugal helped get thousands of Jews out of Europe during the war. I take it

[53] In fact, I only selected for analysis the references to Portugal that I considered relevant for the plot, but there are many others, for example on pages 181 and ff.

[54] There is another quote from page 5 in which Chang seems to be making some comments about Portugal when he says "But no more. No more Portugal. Very sad story." But his does not deserve analysis here, because Chang, in his insufficient English, is, in fact, referring to the Portuguese notebooks, and not to Portugal, and the leitmotiv of the Portuguese notebooks has already been analysed.

to be an indirect reference to the work of the Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who was the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux when the Nazis invaded France in 1940. Against Salazar's orders forbidding the issue of any visas to a number of 'categories of people', including Jews, Aristides de Sousa Mendes signed thousands of visas to everyone who came to the Portuguese Consulate in Bordeaux, just because he could not help feeling moved by the despair of those people. When he was compelled by Salazar to leave his position as consul and come back to Portugal, he had already saved thousands of lives: with the visas, the refugees could get out of Europe thus escaping Hitler's claws. Back in Portugal, Aristides de Sousa Mendes was found guilty in an inquiry installed by Salazar; he appealed to court more than once, but it was in vain. Left with no money to live on, he was helped by his brother and by the Portuguese Jewish community. He died in 1954. The epitaph on his grave reads "Quem salva uma vida, salva o mundo" (He who saves a life saves the world). Because there was a strong censorship in Portugal at the time, his death was not even reported by the Portuguese press.

As Sidney Orr admits, he has never been to Portugal, so his opinions about the country and some of its representative events or personalities probably come from what he has read or from hearsay. But what he says has to be considered a definite description of Portugal in that it provides the necessary and sufficient information for identifying the country apart from any other country. In that sense, we have here an association of a proper name (Portugal) to a definite description. In fact, as Donnellan says:

> *"In general our use of proper names [...] is parasitic on uses of the names by other people – in conversations, written records, etc. Insofar as we possess a set of identifying descriptions in these cases they come from things said about the presumed referent by other people."*
>
> (Donnellan, 1972: 373).

That is why I called it above a somewhat cliché-like representation of Portugal[55].

[55] This representation is completely different from that of John Berger in *Here Is Where We Meet*, which is the subject of my next paper.

But what is it in terms of signs? In my view it has to be considered a symbol exactly because the association between the object (the country) and the definite description is conventional: the events and personalities referred to here are, as I said, cliché-like; they could be replaced by others and still constitute a definite description. So, as in the case of the Portuguese notebooks, we have here a delomatic-symbolic–legisign.

However, I would like to add that in both cases, it should be clear that the representation of Portugal is achieved through *pars pro totus*: items manufactured in Portugal, Portuguese writers, politicians or diplomats and events of Portuguese history are taken as symbols of the country.

6. Coda

Mapping out representations of Portugal in non-Portuguese fiction is a long task. As this paper is only the first step, it would be too hasty to rush to conclusions based on three novels where representations of Portugal do occur, but in which the fictionists are not really writing *about* Portugal. More will be said in my forthcoming papers 'John Berger's Lisbon in *Here Is where We Meet*' and 'Death in Lisbon: Antonio Tabucchi's *Pereira Declares*'.

For now, I would just like to leave two final notes. The first one is to stress the difficulty in applying Peirce's classification to the representations under analysis here; but putting it to test raised some interesting theoretical questions that should not be disregarded, and perhaps his taxonomy has to be applied with more flexibility than he had foreseen. The second one has to do with the fact that most of the representations analysed here were clichés, but this cannot lead us to generalization as will be seen in my forthcoming paper. Leaving details apart, all that remains in terms of representations of Portugal here is very little, and if I want to answer the question asked in the beginning of this paper, *How is Portugal seen by non-Portuguese fictionists?*, I can only say that it is seen as poor, but *terrific*, or *terrific* but poor. We can put it as we like it, as long as we bear in mind that what comes after the 'but' is more relevant than what comes before.

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