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On 11 October 1835, Mary, queen of Portugal, wrote a note to the Duke of Palmela, then her foreign secretary: “I want you to pass a law appointing Luiz da Camara ambassador to Brussels; as to Garetti, he can go elsewhere [pode-se arranjar em outra parte]” (Carvalho 52). The note is remarkable, and not only for its sloppy syntax and imperiousness.<sup>1</sup> In fact, “Garetti” denotes, rather than the Italian tenor one would expect, the Portuguese writer and one-time ambassador to Brussels João Baptista da Silva Leitão, who had at that time already dubiously taken up the remote Irish family name Garrett for which he became, and is, known. On that count, this maneuver was a failure, at least from the standpoint of the admittedly dim lights of his sovereign: rather than evoking a bard, the person’s name suggested to the queen little more than an opera singer. In a devious way this was almost true. The Marquis of Fronteira, in his memoirs, perhaps the best and most detailed account of the first half of the Portuguese nineteenth century, recalls seeing the poet for the first time at the Lisbon opera, reciting political poems to the general acclaim of the audience, and being later carried in triumph around the room, much like an opera singer or a bullfighter.<sup>2</sup>

On a second count, however, the queen’s note proved to be even more accurate: “he can go elsewhere” is an apt description of both the erratic life of the character and the main literary predicament of the author of *Travels in My Homeland*, which concerns us today. For reasons that will become apparent, I

shall not busy myself with those minutiae that have given us in the past fine ontological distinctions between the powers, virtues, dominions, and thrones of narratology. As Victor K. Mendes has remarked, there is no useful and clear-cut way to tell apart the person, the author of the book, the narrator, and even several of the characters in it.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, when, in a melodramatic moment, one of these characters, in a letter, describes his heart as being “in England [. . .] in India [. . .] in Vale de Santarém, ‘In pieces scattered round the world’ . . . everywhere except there” (Garrett 242), one can say this description echoes the command uttered by Garrett’s queen: “he can go elsewhere.” Should this be true, and contrary to the opinions of most critics, there would not be much of a homeland left, either for Garrett or for his book.

Still, there is something to be said for the standard interpretation of the book. In fact, *Travels in My Homeland* uncontroversially describes a journey to Santarém that begins, and presumably ends, in the author’s own bedroom, in Lisbon. The motto and the model for such a journey, explicitly invoked at the beginning and later on in Chapter V, is Xavier de Maistre’s *Voyage autour de ma chambre*. That in fact the author describes himself as traveling outside his own bedroom is attributed to the accidental circumstance that the Portuguese weather, contrary to the weather conditions of Saint Petersburg, where de Maistre had written his own book, allows for some movement to take place: “even Xavier de Maistre,” Garrett remarks, “if he were writing here, would at least go as far as the backyard” (21).

Despite the fact that Santarém, like the Moscow of Chekhov’s three sisters’ constant yearning, is only forty miles away from Lisbon, and that the very notion of associating “traveling” to Santarém would nowadays elicit little more than a grin, one should not merely leave Santarém to the account of de Maistre’s backyard. That the trip is to Santarém is not a negligible detail. That the trip to Santarém is portrayed as an extension of a trip in one’s own bedroom is equally important.

On to bedrooms, then. The bedroom recurs only once more in the book, in a scene of reading which is of interest to my argument:

I picked up my Camoens and went over to the window. My windows are now the foremost in Lisbon, they overlook the whole expanse of the Tagus. It was one of those brilliant winter mornings such as you find only in Lisbon. I opened *The Lusiads* at random, chanced upon canto IV and began to read those lovely stanzas that begin: “At last in Lisbon’s noble harbour . . .” Gradually my blood stirred inside

me, I felt the arteries throb in my temples . . . The letters flew from the page, I raised my eyes and found myself looking at the pitiful galley, the *Vasco da Gama*, which sits there as a caricature-monument [em monumento-caricatura] of our naval glory . . . Yet I saw none of that: I saw the Tagus, I saw the Portuguese flag fluttering in the morning breeze, the Tower of Belém in the distance . . . and I dreamed, I dreamed that I was Portuguese, that Portugal was Portugal again. (147; translation altered)

If one is not to trust the deceptive tone of the passage, very little appears to have been gained from this scene of bedroom reading.<sup>4</sup> Rather, the insight derived therein is merely that of the lack of connection between what you read and what you see, redeemed in the end of the passage by a reversion into the kind of hot-temperature dreaming that was educed by reading in the first place. Once you look out the window, you're bound to be confronted by the embarrassing sight of the "caricature-monument" of your own enthusiasm.

It has been argued, rightly in my view, that this is the precise structure of the trip to Santarém. External reality never seems to offer any corroboration to literature or history. Literature is therefore always bedroom literature, and, in the vocabulary of faculties that Garrett sometimes uses, fancy or imagination are essentially domestic faculties, that is, faculties only fit for bedroom usage. What Kant has memorably called the "feeling of sublime" is nowhere to be found in the book, let alone to be gained from nature. Accordingly, the initial description of Santarém in the following chapter obeys the same structure of epistemological corroboration, with analogous disastrous results. At first, the author professes to be "excited and impatient at finding myself face to face with that profusion of monuments and ruins [profusão de monumentos e de ruínas] which I had pictured in my imagination, and which I was by turns afraid and eager to compare with the reality" (149–50), and indeed triumphantly proclaims upon sight that "my imagination has not deceived me" (150). A short description of the "wonderful and sublime" (150) aspect of the town follows, "irregular and rambling like a romantic poem" (150).

Alas, one does not have to wait much for the artery-throbbing to acquire more sober, and somber, proportions, and for this brief infatuation with the charm of monumental ruins to be over. Once Santarém is available for corroboration, it becomes literally a ghost-town:

all deserted, all silent, mute, dead! One thinks one is entering the great metropolis of an extinct people, of a nation that was powerful and famous but disappeared

off the face of the earth and left only the monument of its gigantic constructions [o monumento de suas construcções gigantescas]. (150)

The use of “monument” in the passage above is far from being unequivocally complimentary and indeed recalls previous occurrences of the word, namely in the phrase “caricature-monument” of the reading passage in the previous chapter. In any case, the inadequation between monuments and imagination is simultaneously thematized in this passage both as a comic incident, where the powerful and the glorious have abjectly disappeared “off the face of the earth,”<sup>5</sup> and as a ghost story of Gothic proportions, albeit not the kind of gentle Gothic that Garetti occasionally saw himself to be reenacting.<sup>6</sup>

Up to this moment, I have been emphasizing the parallel between the bedroom-reading scene of Chapter XXVI and the first description of Santarém in Chapter XVII. There is, however, an essential difference between the two passages, even if the difference will only become apparent much later on in the book. The difference has to do with the absence, in the later passage, of any equivalent to the redeeming daydreaming of the earlier one. In fact, the author, rather than finding solace in the pleasures of the imagination (or in a putative essay thereon, as he is ever the prolific moralizer of his own convictions), gets bored and merely decides to go back to his own bedroom:

Well, I too want to leave, I want to get away. I am bored with Santarém; I am tired of these never-ending ruins [estas perpétuas ruínas], these interminable, dilapidated shacks [estes pardieiros intermináveis], the unsightly appearance of these heaps of rubble, the sadness of these empty streets. (213)

One should not rush however into turning this fable into a modified reiteration of what, with Stanley Cavell, one might call the bedroom scene of instruction of Chapter XXVI. To be sure, such a fable would end in a different way (author reads, author organizes crucial experiment, experiment fails, author gets bored), but would also end through some sort of intentional act (in the first case by activating one's fancy, in the second by removing oneself from the source of one's discomfort). Indeed, to look for a situation that precludes any such forms of intentional therapy, one has to go elsewhere in the book.

On his way back to Lisbon, Garetti has to pass once more by a certain house in the vale of Santarém. This is of course the setting of what most critics, wrongly as we shall shortly see, persist in calling the embedded novella

in the book, the place where most of its story is actually, if not always clearly, told to the author by one of his fellow-travelers, and where in fact most of it takes place. As he goes by the house, as empty as Santarém itself ("not a soul thereabouts" [220]), his eyes "hit upon an unexpected sight, which might have been conjured up by magic [uma evocação como de encanto]" (220). And then, of course, he sees no less than two crucial characters of the alleged embedded novella. One could pause at this moment if only to briefly remark that this very scene is also the fitting caricature-monument of narrative theory. In fact, no description of story-telling which entangles itself in the hygienic consideration of entities such as narrative levels can ever quite come to terms with the simple fact that it is possible to tell the story of someone who tells the story of one's meeting with the characters in one's own story (or someone else's story, for that matter). Should this be an embedded incident, then the author would in fact be in bed with his characters, if, ironically enough, some thirty-eight miles away from his own bedroom.

A more detailed exam of this highly problematic meeting might therefore be in order. Given to skepticism as he occasionally is, the author goes to great lengths to reassert the non-refutable evidentiary nature of the whole scene:

On the same spot, in the same manner, with the same clothes and in the same posture as I described her in the opening chapters of this story, sat our old sister Francisca . . .

She it was and could be no other, sitting in her old chair, winding her interminable skein of yarn, like Penelope weaving her tapestry. (220)

Ten lines below, an analogous conclusion is apposed to the description of a man: "He, too, could be none other than Friar Dinis" (221).

So much, one could say, for the identification of the characters and for my harmless polemics against narrative theory. The paratactical reiterations in which the actual identification is expressed, as if to redeem through insistence an author who had, up to that moment, been notoriously inept at identifying things, appear to be beyond doubt. In the book, one could add, parataxis is always the syntactical and rhetorical equivalent of Humean association—even if "Condillac" appears as a rule to be the name for Hume therein. Be that as it may, as soon as the identities are cleared, the author concentrates, much as if he were still dealing with the monuments of Santarém, on the differences between *what* he sees and what he *sees*:



The only difference, now, was that the reel did not stop and the yarn went on and on, rolling on and on, with the same uninterrupted rhythm, on to the ball; and that the old woman's arms labored on slowly, but unceasingly, like in the movement of an automaton, a distressing sight. (220)

By whose sight is the author so distressed? *Who* is this? The only answer that can possibly accommodate the apodictic certainties of identification and the subsequent enumeration of the differences is "Francisca-as-an-automaton." Analogously, he who could be none other than Friar Dinis is portrayed "shriveled as a skeleton, livid as a corpse and motionless like a statue" (220). The author is in this latter case contemplating no less than a ghost.<sup>7</sup> Not to pun, Friar Dinis and Francisca become, in this sequence respectively, the ghost and the machine. Here too the author is facing the caricature-monuments of his own characters, "entering the great metropolis of an extinct people," namely the necropolis where the identification between characters and persons lies buried.

One first gets a hint of this process in the painstakingly meticulous notation of the slow but unceasing labors of the automaton. These are indeed the means through which the disjunction between person and character is effected, that is, the sign that Francisca-the-character's "same uninterrupted rhythm" is not that of a person. This machine Garetti curiously calls Penelope. Not quite a misnomer, the word is used here rather as a portmanteau concept for a confusion of Fates: Clotho the spinner is indeed Atropos the inflexible, as spinning means little less than that the thread has already been cut off.

Like most ghosts, Friar Dinis will specialize instead in the somber kind of loquaciousness for which the species is justly famous. Presumably pointing at Penelope the machine, he remarks: "Behold this dead woman, who is still there because I killed her, and who is waiting here for the time to come for me to bury her, that is all. I am alone and I wish to be alone. Everything is dead. [. . .] Santarém is dead too, and Portugal" (221). Such an austere sweeping verdict may hide what one could again call (albeit in a different context) its portmanteau nature. Indeed, the final words of Friar Dinis encapsulate simultaneously, if *per antiphrasim*, the final episode in the bedroom reading scene of Chapter XVI ("I dreamed that I was Portuguese, that Portugal was Portugal again") and the close description of Santarém ("all deserted, all silent, mute, dead!") in Chapter XVII. That Friar Dinis is absent from both these latter instances only goes to show that there really is no important difference between the two in this respect:

both are ghosts of a same feather. And yet, as I remarked above, the existential predicaments of Garetti when faced with other caricature-monuments are susceptible of being dealt with within the coeval available repertory of possible actions and intentional acts. There are proven therapies available for the unsatisfactory nature of both the present and the past. The nineteenth century has often expressed them through special faculties (e.g., the imagination) or special states of consciousness (e.g., boredom). No such therapy is available, however, for the distressing sight of both ghosts and machines. Garetti possesses neither a special ghost-neutralizing faculty nor can he any longer *decide* to go elsewhere (as in Chapter XLIII's "I am leaving" [187]).

To be sure, *narrative oblige* and Friar Dinis will still hand the author a suspiciously long letter that disposes of the leftovers of the novella in five painfully constricted installments. Chapter XLIX, however, the final chapter in the book, after some preliminaries in which Friar Dinis supplements a few unspecified points in the letter, returns to the Sabbath-scene of Chapter XLIII as Friar Dinis runs out of information and the rest of us run out of narrative theory:

the monk crossed himself, picked up his breviary, and began to pray. The old woman carried on and on with her winding. I got up and watched the two of them for a few seconds. Neither of them paid any attention to me, nor did they seem conscious of my being there.

I felt as if I were in the presence of death and it scared me [e aterrei-me].

In an effort against myself [Fiz um esforço sobre mim], I went resolutely to my horse, mounted, spurred him impatiently and did not stop until Cartaxo.

[. . .]

I woke up next day and [. . .] left for Lisbon, my mind full of ominous feelings, forebodings and gloomy premonitions. The steamer was almost empty, but did not travel any faster for that. It was past five in the afternoon when we disembarked at the Terreiro do Paço.

So ended the journey to Santarém and so ends this book. (245–46)

I will go back shortly to this last sentence, which is parently false, as the book goes on for another fifteen lines or so. The point is that, like in any ghost story, he who has seen a ghost is horrified by the sight and, in this case, returns in an effort against himself to the safer environment of his bedroom, and not a minute too soon: the brief description of his return to Lisbon contains some indications as to the traveler's impatience concerning the duration of his trip

back, namely the masterful and brief remark about the inexplicable slowness of the steamer. Again, no narrative considerations can explain away the very fact that the *cause* of its abrupt end lies in the very story that was being told. In other words, ghosts and machines creep out of the bed of narrative and indeed tell its author to go elsewhere. Garetti, whom we will no longer take for one of those acrobatic narrators of the Shandyan persuasion, obliges. Once arrived, he declares, the book is over.

Or is it? Here are the last few lines of the book:

I have seen some parts of the world and recorded something of what I saw. Of all my travels, however, those which have interested me most were still my travels in my homeland.

If you think the same, benevolent reader, who knows, maybe I shall once more take up my pilgrim's staff and go wandering around this Portugal of ours, in search of stories to tell you.

On the baron's railways I swear I shall not travel. My oath is unnecessary, though. If the railways were of paper, they would make them, I do not deny. But of metal?!

Let the government be sensible and make them of stone, which it can, and we shall travel, with great pleasure and to our great advantage and benefit, in our good land. (246)

The passage appears to rival in awkwardness the closing chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This happens, first and foremost, for its stylistic ineptitude, which translates in incomparable involuntary comedy. Indeed, what is one to make of the "of all my travels, however, those which have interested me most were still the travels in my homeland," which follows the abrupt escape from the terrifying sight of one's own story, which, even before that climactic moment, was already a self-professed bore? The second reason is of course the status of this after-the-end apposition, which against all odds resurrects the narrative back from the grave in an effort against its author.

Such stylistic ineptitude Garetti called, when he still could afford being lucid, "caricature-monument." The last paragraph of *Travels in My Homeland* looks at us as a lucid caricature-monument to the author's narrative ambitions, as if bad literature, bad storytelling, and involuntary farce were all that one is bound to learn when one leaves one's bedroom. In this awkward sense, what Garetti deplores in Portugal has infected his own bedroom, his very prose: from this moment on, he has no place to go. And still, he has to obey his queen, and go elsewhere.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Carvalho calls it indeed an "imperious note" (51).
- <sup>2</sup> In the fall of 1820 the Marquis recalls seeing Garrett at work for the first time, during an intermission at the opera, reciting "a beautiful ode [To freedom] to enthusiastic applause" and then "being taken in triumph around the room several times" (Andrada 2: 212).
- <sup>3</sup> Namely in his *Almeida Garrett. Crise na representação nas Viagens na minha terra* (17–55).
- <sup>4</sup> Clearly not the case for Carlos Reis, who sees in this passage a "hypertextual" "travel in time, helped by the power of words" (115–16). More of a skeptic, Cesário Verde describes this predicament (as well as this passage, whether he knew it or not) in "O sentimento de um ocidental" as "Singram soberbas naus, que eu não verei jamais!" (Sail ships superb which I shall never see!)—which I take to mean that for this poet such ships are not meant for seeing.
- <sup>5</sup> Later on in the novel this predicament will notably recur in the visit to the empty tomb of S. Frei Gil together with its farcical conclusion, "Who stole my saint?" (206).
- <sup>6</sup> "I am like those medieval painters who worked into their pictures distichs with maxims, ribbons embroidered with moral judgements and conceits" (116).
- <sup>7</sup> "Yellow, purple, ashen, black, the monk trembled; his eyes receded still more and flashed like two live coals within their sockets. He made a great effort to speak and said, with a hollow, cavernous voice, as if from the tomb" (99).

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