

Travels in My Homeland as Hypertext: Working Hypotheses

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1.

In a particular passage of Chapter XXVI of *Travels in My Homeland*—the section that in the text's first edition corresponded to the opening paragraph of the second volume—Garrett attempts a sort of journey in time (another journey), enabled by the evocative power of words. Tired of reading Bentham, he picked up *The Lusiads* and went towards the window:

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 monumental caricature 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. . . I dreamed, I dreamed that I was Portuguese, that Portugal was Portugal again.

Such was the power that the prestige of the scene gave to the images evoked by those lines of poetry.

At that moment, the galley salutes some approaching gigs. . . It was the navy minister who was going abroad. (Garrett 147)

For the time being, we will disregard a very important aspect of this passage (the dialectical contrast between historical periods, previously referred to by Augusto da Costa Dias [67–68]), to focus at this point on what constitutes a process of discursive construction, eminently dynamic and virtually hypertextual. First of all, and taking into consideration a very broad concept of *hypertextuality*, it must be noted that the text examined here outlines, in an epic tone, an incipient representation (“I dreamed that I was Portuguese, that Portugal was Portugal again”), whose hypertext (and also architext) is *The Lusiads*, explicitly quoted, in fact.¹ Secondly, and moving towards a different conceptualization of the notion of hypertext (with which we will mainly be concerned in the present study), it can be said that the text is dynamic, for its functions are not limited, strictly speaking, to those of verbal representation: the narrative focus moves from a written text (an excerpt from *The Lusiads*) to the visual observation of the location that inspired the text (Lisbon’s *noble harbour*), and from there to another space, this time an interior evocation, that leads to another form of visualization, once again stemming from the initial starting point, the verses of *The Lusiads*. Reading, seeing and imagining are, thus, interdependent procedures, couched in a dynamic of representation in which the visual is predominant, and all of which are completed by a movement that enables, within the same text (or within the already incipient *hypertext*), the narrative focus to move from the present to the past, from the present to the absent, from reality to virtual reality.

2.

We will now attempt to consider, in very broad terms, the most significant aspects of the construction of discourse in *Travels*, even before reviewing the predominant elements of the text’s structure; and we will try to do this in light of the conceptualization of discourse formulated by Michel Foucault. According to Foucault, discourse corresponds to “a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation.” Foucault continues as follows: “it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined” (117).

In accordance with this concept, we will refer to the discourse of *Travels* as the enunciated result of a process that is institutional, transindividual and strongly linked to anonymous and historical rules, of a socio-cultural

and psycho-cultural nature. As such, the discourse of *Travels* occurs from a rhetorical-discursive strategy, indissociable from the Romantic tradition of travel literature, although this strategy is not adopted passively and without critical awareness.

It is important that this be the case in order for the discourse of *Travels* to be enriched by a construct of hypertextuality such as the one in question. Or, in other words, in as much as it incorporates the movement of a journey, not only as a narrative form (that is, not only in terms of the literary genre), but also by absorbing its specific logic, *Travels in My Homeland* creates the necessary discursive conditions to transcend the level of mere verbal representation of a determined trajectory.

That which we refer to as the “specific logic” of the journey has to do with attitudes that are not only physical but also pertain to the scope of an ethical-cultural and even epistemological nature, implying broadened restraints for what is hoped to be represented in discourse. The travel discourse (and the discourse of *Travels*) thus results from spatial movement, but also implies the passing of time, the sense of change, the awareness of distance and the value of difference. The discursive homologation of movement is processed in the narrative because its fundamental constitutional principle—the principle of narrativity—provides functional resources that correspond to what can be referred to as the attitudes of the journey (movement, change, the passing of time, etc.)—resources that the theoretical school of narratology has for the most part attempted to clarify.

In the case at hand, the travel narrative is based on the tradition and institutional weight of Romantic travel accounts, taken by Almeida Garrett as the starting point to be re-interpreted. Indeed, even long before *Travels*, Garrett sought to valorize the metaphorical and symbolic potential of narrative travel, evoked through a discourse that is shaped by the capacity to transcend what is immediately visible and susceptible of being represented. We are referring here to a fundamental text of Garrett's lyrical corpus, the 1828 prologue to *Lírica de João Mínimo*, entitled “Notícia do autor desta obra” (Notification from the author of this text), a text that has always been considered a sort of *rehearsal* for *Travels*. What is of interest is the beginning of a travel account—a rather short account, a short journey—but it is also a reflection on the digressive power of travel discourse as a means to overcome one's surrounding space and immediate experience, drawn by the evocation of other places, texts and various illustrations, as a tentative approach to hypertextuality.²

At several moments in *Travels* the narrator enunciates reflections that hint towards the discrete rejection of literary models and also towards the invigoration of travel discourse as virtually transversal. We will draw attention to three of these passages: first, the section where the narrator, in Chapter I, proclaims the purpose of going beyond Xavier de Maistre's experience in *Voyage autour de ma chambre*, a reference that is, in this manner, convoked and then surpassed. "My pen was always ambitious," declares the narrator; "poor yet presumptuous, it needs a broader theme. That is just what I will give it. I shall go to Santarém, no less, and I swear that everything I see and hear, everything I think and feel, shall be chronicled" (21). Next, at the beginning of Chapter II, the narrator returns to the theme of attempting to fix the parameters that direct this journey and its discourse: it is here a question of refuting the paradigm established in *Impressions de voyage*, largely popularized by Romantic literature and its bourgeois consumerism, and affirming the journey as symbol.³ The narrator declares: "Now this journey of mine up the Tagus symbolizes the march of our social progress: I hope the reader has understood this by now. I shall be careful to remind him from time to time, for I very much fear he will forget" (28). Which means the reader must accompany this evocative movement of feelings that is situated beyond the description of places and events. This should be accomplished through participation, or at least at times tentative interactivity. The third passage that is worthy of mention here is found quite a lot further ahead in the narrative when the narrator definitively (and even somewhat insolently—could it be that he is responding, for Garrett, to remarks in fact made by readers?) rejects travel discourse as inventory and narration:

I am very sorry, dear reader, if you expected something else of my *Travels*, if I unintentionally fail to keep promises you thought to see in the title, but which I certainly did not make. Perhaps you wished me to count the leagues of the highway milestone by milestone? The height and breadth of the buildings palm by palm? Their foundation dates number by number? To summarize the history of every stone, of every ruin? Go to Father Vasconcelos: there you shall find everything about Santarém, truth and fabrication, in massive folio and large print. I cannot write books of that sort, and even if I could, I have other things to do. (157)⁴

It is necessary to note, first of all, that the promises had in fact already been made, up front, in the very first chapter, and read as follows: "everything I see and hear, everything I think and feel, shall be chronicled"; this led to

the concept of chronicle being interpreted in a relatively poor, factualist, and anecdotal manner, a meaning that is now rejected. This is not, however, what is essential at this point; what is of interest is the implicit purpose (the purpose that is here reiterated) of transcending the concrete and the referential of the representation of the journey by means of the dynamic evocation of texts and images, referred to immediately before this paragraph—and certainly because of this it was necessary to render explicit the elements of this passage. The narrator declares: “This is what I was thinking—for I was not thinking about anything, just musing, while those lines of Faust were in my memory and that moving view of the Tagus and its banks before my eyes” (156).

In summary, to travel and recount a journey becomes: thinking, remembering (or quoting), and seeing, in a process of plural and simultaneous enunciation of discourses and evocation of scenarios seen. This confirms the tendency that we have been underlining to interpret the journey and specifically its account as the result of a dialectic between acceptance and rejection, architextual reference (in relation to a model of genre), and hypertextual transcendence, here (and once again) as perceived in Garrett's work.⁵

3.

We will now analyze the structural properties of the discourse in *Travels*, as a discourse that emerges from principles of plurality and dynamism, principles that we will seek to view in light of another and more complex analysis of the concept of *hypertextuality*. The narrative communication that encompasses and determines the discourse of *Travels* is eminently interpellant and, because of this, potentially interactive. This means that the discourse of *Travels* is an overtly perlocutionary discourse, in that it exerts an action on its receiver, seeking to produce effects that transcend the closed circuit of communication and prolong it to the level of social, political, and ideological behavior.⁶ The most visible manifestations of this tendency are the famous interpellations towards the male (and female) reader, but they are obviously not the only ones. Even the specific logic of composing *Travels in My Homeland* as a serial publication reveals not only this perlocutionary investment, but also this cult of a diffuse interactivity that it is necessary to recuperate. Indeed, when we read *Travels* nowadays in book form, we often forget that the narrative was not initially conceived nor enunciated in these terms—despite the fact that the narrator makes reference, at a certain point, to this “preposterous, unclassifiable book of my *Travels*” (169), suggesting an awareness of its singularity

that extends beyond the limits of the normality of a book. Interactivity is here referred to, already, in the sense that it is not only the narrator (or someone in his stead: a prickly issue that we will not examine at this point) who maintains the reader's curiosity and determines the rhythm of the narrative, the moments in which it is interrupted and the momentary suspension of the action. It is the reader, through his/her formally silent presence, who in a certain way requires and determines these rhythms, interruptions and, in general, the strategies that prolong the attention that is interrupted only to demand new development once again: in a certain manner, it is the reader who dictates the narrative by demanding to be captivated by it.

One might say that this has always been the case ever since the appearance of the very first narratives, and that is partly true. Yet this concept has probably never been so explicit as at the present time: a present that not only includes Garrett, but refers to a tradition that stems, at least, from Sterne and that became more refined when the logic of the cultural production of the nineteenth century required a greater readership, an interest, also commercial, fueled by the captivation of the reader's attention (it became important to sell newspapers, magazines, and books) and strategies of communication adapted to these purposes. It is also because of this that, progressively, the reader became a public, as underlined by Eça de Queirós, forty years after *Travels*.⁷ *Travels* constituted a long narrative published in a magazine with a broad readership (in this case, the *Revista Universal Lisbonense*), consisting of relatively autonomous chapters but also somewhat connected to each other, a text that we can consider interactive as it conducted an initial dialogue between the beholder and the receiver of the word, given that the receiver was more and more entitled to determine the direction and rhythm of the narrative. Let us recall an excerpt of this dialogue, instigated by the narrator, in relation to the choice of a particular aesthetic orientation, in the famous passage where the Azambuja inn is described:

On with the description of the inn and an end to all these digressions. It cannot be classical, that is clear, this description of ours. Then it shall be romantic. Not that either. Why not? I have only to put in a Chourineur sharpening a huge knife a foot and a half long, fit to carve up any man or beast that gets in his way. (33)

Thus, as can be read (or better: as can be heard) there are practically two voices: one that refuses the classical register and the one that refutes the romantic

solution; the voice that rejects this second solution and the one that finally, in a parodic fashion that is not necessary to analyze here, dares to adopt it.

4.

Another structural property of the discourse of *Travels* is the plurality of narrators that contribute to its enunciation, in a movement of diversified voices that the main narrator can only control to a certain point. Let's note: he who proposes to "chronicle" (and then, as it is already known, does many other things) is a traveler who "by the insistence of a friend" (21) decides to surpass the example of Xavier de Maistre and travel to Santarém. Afterwards, as the movement of the journey leans towards unchaining the movement of the narrative, a story motivated by the contemplation of a window and an old house in the valley of Santarém is told. It is one of the travel companions who volunteers to tell this story, but the narrator manages, in this case, to reduce the voice of the other to his own and thus disguise this secondary account. At the conclusion of Chapter X, the narrator declares: "This chapter's end shall serve as a prologue and the subject matter of my tale shall go into the next" (67).

Lastly, Friar Dinis, in Chapters XLIII and XLIX, becomes momentarily the narrator of the episodes that constitute the epilogue of the story of the Maiden of the Nightingales, immediately before and after Carlos who, in epistolary discourse, has assumed the role of a hybrid narrator: memorialist, autobiographical, and confessional. Thus Carlos becomes at least the fourth narrator with a certain functional prominence found in *Travels in My Homeland*.

What is here at stake is a double plurality: plurality of narrators, as we have already seen (and of voices in this case, as well as discourses and subjective registers); plurality of narrative levels, for the narrative of the journey, the sentimental story, and Carlos' autobiography belong, theoretically, to different narrative spheres. Ultimately this does not prevent a final interaction from being established when the narrator-traveler (and his travel companion, whose discourse he appropriates) meets Friar Dinis. Here the present of the journey (and that of the narrative) incorporates what appears to be the narrated past; here, in a communal space, takes place the encounter of entities that appear to belong to distinct worlds.

5.

The working hypothesis that we are considering here can now be theoretically founded and characterized in more detail. We are considering *Travels*

as hypertext, first of all in relation to a redefinition of the notion of *text*, a redefinition made possible for the most part by aesthetic transformations and meta-literary experiences that it is important to recall briefly in order to aptly situate Garrett's *Travels* and its hypertextual potentialities. Before doing so, however, it is pertinent to remember that, even without an excessively detailed theoretical approach, the concept of hypertext, as it is understood here (and as it is generally perceived nowadays), stems from the surpassing of a concept of text founded on principles that this new postulation challenges. Indeed, when in conventional terms we use the term *text* and in particular, the *written text*, we accept several principles: the principle of *verbality*, in accordance with the fact that a text is made of words; the principle of *stability*, according to which the written text is a construct with a certain *fixedness* (*scripta manent*, as the ancients used to say); the principle of *coherence*, on syntactic and semantic levels, a decisive principle to assure the stability of the text; the principle of *linearity*, which implies that the overwhelming majority of texts unfold sequentially (in the Western tradition, from the left to the right of the page); and the principle of *discretion*, that ensures the limits of the text (even the physical limits), as a finite entity.

It is true that not all texts are like this, but the majority are, without doubt, and these are the ones we are dealing with here, especially as we are not taking into account pictographic or ideographic texts. It is also certain that we frequently challenge many of these principles, when we take notes, make schemas, and break the sequence of the written text, jumping forward to the conclusion of the text, skipping sections or altering syntactic arrangements. In other words, without being aware, and as was the case with Monsieur Jourdain's discovery that he was speaking prose, for a long time now we have been attempting hypertextual writing, attempts that are all the more fecund as we can have access to a privileged instrument, the text processor and its "grammar" *software*, valuable aids from the point of view of working with the text as a dynamic entity. In summary, we have at our fingertips a great deal more than what was available to Molière's character attempting to produce his prose.

In regard to the written literary text, the hypertextual adventure is not, nonetheless, as recent as it might first appear, although it should be mentioned that it is only recently, through information technology, that it has reached a level of sophistication that previously could not have been attained. Be that as it may, certain poetic or similar experiences that invested in the plastic and iconic dimension of the word, as well as in the internal virtual dynamism of

the written alphabet—in emblematic texts, in acrostics, in mosaics, in anagrams, etc.—have translated, since ancient times, the purpose of canceling the static and linear character of verbal texts. It is, however, in the aesthetic period following Garrett (but that remains, from several points of view, indissociable from the Romantic revolution) that the written verbal text definitely and, especially, consequently, breaks away, not only from aesthetic, but also ideological and epistemological traditions. The main representatives of these trends are well known: Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Joyce, Álvaro de Campos, Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Apollinaire, Ezra Pound. With these and other writers the text becomes plastic and also fluid, irreducible to fixed limits, intensely dynamic and immune from rigid syntax; the word convokes an image and is its vehicle, not only because of its capacity of evocative conceptualization, but also because its graphic support imitates that which is represented. Calligrams and experimental poems are also of this nature.

6.

We will now attempt to link several key concepts together, by bridging the gap between that which we have referred to as hypertextual attempts and approximations, in Garrett and others, both before and after him, and the notion of *hypertext*, as it is presently understood. Without embarking on a thorough analysis that we could not do justice to here, we understand hypertext in a relatively stabilized manner, based upon Theodor H. Nelson's definition formulated in the 1960s: for Nelson, hypertext signifies "*nonsequential writing—text* that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read in an interactive screen," offering the reader "different pathways." From here the definition is extended: reference is made to text composed of blocks of text, and the electronic links that join them, and leads on to another concept, that of *hypermedia*, expanding the notion of text whereby to include "visual information, sound, animation, and other forms of data" (qtd. in Landow 4).

How then does *Travels in My Homeland* anticipate the hypertextual dynamic of enunciation and reading, long before information technology bestowed upon hypertext the very meaning to which we have just referred? In similar terms as those that allow us to affirm, as it is generally known, that the discourse of the novel anticipated cinematographic techniques of representation—for example, through scene setting—apparently only possible in the image era. In other terms: the hypertextual suggestions of *Travels* are founded on the principles that govern it, even before the availability of technical instruments that we utilize

today, such as machines and languages—instruments that came to respond to these principles, rather than provoke their emergence.

We will attempt to enunciate succinctly in variably expressive terms how these principles come into play in *Travels in My Homeland*. The principle of *interactivity*, represented by a male (and female) reader as an interpellant entity, challenged to react, even through an eminently rhetorical form, to the text; the principle of *openness*, which implies the concept of the text (the whole of the text of *Travels*), as syntagmatic of fluid syntax, allowing steps forward and backward, and narrative gaps, as well as the configuration of a differentiated reading trajectory; the principle of *plurality*, which implies recourse to distinct stylistic registers, varied genres, and diverse narrators and narrative levels, without excessive fixedness nor rigid compartmentalization; the principle of *atomization*, that is, the possibility of fragmentation of the text into autonomous unities, almost self-sufficient, that the work of the reader attempts to interrelate; the principle of *simultaneity* of time and space convoked for a reception that brings past and present together, presence and absence, in a fulminating manner and without transitions; the principle of *playful activity*: reading *Travels* should be a game that unfolds in this privileged state of mind, that of vacillation between entertainment and knowledge, risks and security, certainty and uncertainty, fiction and reality.

7.

It is widely known that *Travels* constitutes a difficult read, a fact that causes hesitations and not rarely leads to the rejection of the text (and even of the author) altogether. A lot of what has been explored here leads to the following conclusion: reading *Travels* is not the same as reading a novel (which *Travels* is not), a story (which *Travels* is), or a tale of unambiguous denouement, which *Travels* rejects. Reading *Travels in My Homeland* is (and should be) above all an adventure understood as such, with its risks, its challenges, and its discoveries: an adventure that is not carried out methodically or foreseeingly, as though the path to follow (the book to be read) were unrestrained, rectilinear, and well delimited. This is not the case, as we have seen; most importantly, *Travels* ends up becoming a textual and hypertextual quest *avant la lettre*, because Garrett dared to anticipate a dynamism of textual enunciation and reception that before being already existed. This is also a manner, possibly one of the most daring, with which to surpass contemporaries and transcend one's own time. For these reasons, Almeida Garrett continues as a literary presence among us, alive and active.

Notes

¹ From this point of view, the text is also a representation of intertextuality, in the strictest sense of the term.

² Garrett writes: "These digressions kill me: it is my terrible and unpardonable vice.—Where were we going?—in the direction of Odivelas: that's right" ("Notícia" 19).

³ [Translator's note.] In Garrett's original text, the author refers to Dumas' text *Impressões de viagem* that Reis mentions here. However, in the English version of *Travels in My Homeland*, the title was translated literally as "Travel Notes," although the English version of Dumas' text bears the title *Adventures in Spain*. We have chosen to use the original French title of Dumas' text, *Impressions de Voyage*, to stay closer to Garrett's original text for the purposes of Reis' interpretation.

⁴ In an endnote to this section, the translator indicates that Father Vasconcelos was "a native of Santarém, who published (1740) a history of the town" (253, note 1).

⁵ It is useful to remember, though it may appear rather evident, that this is one of the typical procedures that Garrett adopts to secure his particular aesthetic position in the Romantic tradition: by negating the Romantic model and, by this very negation, configuring a rebellious attitude that is, naturally, typically Romantic. This process is initially apparent in the prologue of Garrett's poem *Camões*.

⁶ We are referring here to the concept of perlocutionary act as established by John R. Searle in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

⁷ We are here referring to an extremely shrewd text in which Eça relates social, cultural, scientific, and technical transformations that occurred during the nineteenth century to modifications verified in the process of literary communication, that become, due to these transformations, impersonal and almost generalized (see "Prefácio dos 'Azulejos' do Conde de Arnoso," in *Notas contemporâneas*).

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