

THE VOYAGE TO “SÃO MARTINHO DE BORNES”: TIME DILATION AND SPATIAL IMMENSITY IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRAVELER’S INNER SELF

A viagem a “São Martinho de Bornes”: dilatação temporal e imensidão espacial na descoberta do «eu»

RIBEIRO, André¹

Abstract

Travel, which has been a constant presence in Portuguese literature since the 16th century, is the common factor in the narratives of Antero de Figueiredo’s “Jornadas em Portugal” [“Journeys in Portugal”]. Among the narratives inspired by the author’s empirical travels, “São Martinho de Bornes” unveils itself as a dual journey, in which Einstein’s Theory of Relativity explains the striated, almost stagnant, time in mind of the traveler, whilst Bachelard’s philosophical insights allow us to acknowledge the spatial sweetness found in the orogenic vastness of the mountain of Bornes de Aguiar. Depicting himself as a shepherd – a nomad characterized by ancient tropisms, as Onfray describes in his “Travel Theory”, – the traveler immerses in the rural environment of Trás-os-Montes in an ascetic journey where the presence of trees, which fall into two incessant archetypes in literature – the Tree of Life and the Cosmic Tree –, plays a predominant role in his personal development.

Resumo

A viagem, que desde o século de ouro português marca presença assídua na literatura portuguesa, é o denominar comum que concatena as narrativas da obra novecentista “Jornadas em Portugal”, de Antero de Figueiredo. Entre as várias narrativas motivadas por viagens empíricas do autor matricial, “São Martinho de Bornes” vem a descobrir-se como uma viagem dupla, em que os preceitos da Teoria da Relatividade de Einstein explicam o estriado, quase estagnado, tempo vivencial do viajante, ao passo que os reparos filosóficos de Bachelard nos permitem compreender a suavidade espacial que o viajante encontra na imensidão orogénica das montanhas de Bornes de Aguiar. Figurando um pastor amador de fluxos – um nómada que concentra em si, conforme identifica Onfray na sua “Teoria da Viagem”, tropismos milenares – o viajante a Bornes adentra-se no ambiente campesino transmontano numa viagem ascética em que a presença das árvores, que recaem em dois arquétipos incessantes na literatura – a Árvore da Vida e a Árvore Cósmica –, desempenham um papel preponderante no seu desenvolvimento pessoal.

Keywords: *Antero de Figueiredo; Voyage; Time dilation; Spatial immensity; Trees.*

Palavras-chave: *Antero de Figueiredo; Viagem; Dilatação temporal; Imensidão espacial; Árvores.*

Submission date: January 2023 | **Publication date:** June 2023.

¹ ANDRÉ LUÍS SANTOS RIBEIRO – MUNDIS & Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro. PORTUGAL. Email: andresrib@outlook.com.

INTRODUCTION

In the course of the social, cultural, and economic changes that resonated from Italy, which Portugal came in contact with at the beginning of what would become its Golden Age, the ideals of man expanded. From the 16th century onwards, a plethora of new themes emerged in arts and literature. Travel, which took root in national literature around the 1500s, remains a constant in Portuguese literature until the present days (Soares, 2019), within a diverse range of manifestations that oscillate between travel as a theme or motif, imaginary journeys, and empirical travels (Seixo, 1998). However, it must be said that, as a genre, it does not always have an active presence throughout all literary epochs (Soares, 2017).

First published in 1918 by Livraria Aillaud e Bertrand, *Jornadas em Portugal* [*Journeys in Portugal*], by Antero de Figueiredo², gathers a collection of narratives (*Braga antiga – A procissão dos fogaréus, Trancoso, O coração do Minho, Terra de Miranda, São Miguel de Seide, A caminho do Barroso, Penacova, São Martinho de Bornes, São Mamede de Riba Tua, Braga antiga – O braguês, Leça da Palmeira, A Terra-Negra, Bussaco, and Portugal velho – O Morgado de Sabariz*) inspired by real journeys undertaken by its empirical author.

In the form of an account of the author's journeys through the central and northern interior of the country – which is why the diegesis shares the names of real towns and villages, as well as their geographical and cultural characteristics – the initial narratives (*Viajar, recordar..., Portugal e Terrinhas e cousas portuguesas*) provide a concise description of the old national provinces, as well as the customs and traditions of the Portuguese people of the 20th century, while highlighting the nation – Portugal – as the ideal destination for traveling. In all of them, the author's esteem and appreciation for his motherland are evident:

² Antero de Figueiredo was born in Lourosa, Viseu, in 1866. He had attended Medicine at the University of Coimbra but was forced to drop out due to health issues. After a diplomatic career in Washington, D.C., serving the Brazilian Ministry, he returned to Portugal and pursued his academic studies in Literature at the University of Lisbon. He began his literary journey as a writer in 1895 with the work *Tristia*. In his various published works, many focus on traveling, most likely as a result of the numerous trips he had made across Europe. He passed away in Oporto in 1955. Cf. Saraiva, J. (2004). *História de Portugal. Dicionário de Personalidades – de Ferraz a Hélder*. QuidNovi.

As composições dêste livro brando serão um relembrar terno de factos passados, e um demorar por gosto em aspectos de viagens idas – aqueles, trechos de vida que vivi; estes, cantos lindos da terra, que entraram em mim e em mim floriram. Desta vez, porêem, as viagens não serão por êsse mundo vasto e estreito, onde me perdi, mas na minha terra pequenina e grande, onde jamais me encontrei a mim próprio...

¿E Portugal é tão lindo! Mas que fôra feio, o mesmo carinho lhe devíamos. Demais, nunca é feio o que muito amamos. ¿Não é sempre bela a mão da mãe a abençoar, seja ela encarquilhada por velhice, ou tontinha por doença?

Escritas com o coração transportado, a vibrar de tristeza enamorada, quisera eu que estas páginas, por suas qualidades e jeitos lusos, só fôssem entendidas e queridas por gente da minha igualha no sentir português; e que os demais, estrangeiros de fora e estrangeiros de cá, não as lessem, se as lessem não as entendessem, e se as entendessem as desestimassem... (Figueiredo, 1919, pp. 8-9, 11 e 15).

Antero de Figueiredo, distancing himself from the comparative discourse of *self*-discovery through an analogy to *others*, which is evident in various compositions of the 16th century – particularly in Pêro Vaz de Caminha’s *Carta sobre o Achamento do Brasil* [*Letter about the Discovery of Brazil*], in Dom Lopo de Almeida’s *Cartas de Itália* [*Letters from Italy*] sent to King Afonso V, or even in Fernão Mendes Pinto’s *Peregrinação* [*Pilgrimage*] –, questions the exaggerated importance with which the Portuguese regard other countries, as well as the immense recognition of the *others* in comparison to an undervaluation of *themselves*:

¿Para que havemos de ir procurar, longe, o convívio frio das almas estrangeiras, se temos aqui, perto, o trato sincero das terras que foram dos nossos, onde viveram e morreram os nossos, onde pessoas e cousas nos são achegadas pelo sangue, pelo coração, pelas alegrias, pelas dores, pelos desastres e pelas glórias?

Portugal é, há séculos, uno e contínuo. Estas árvores, estas searas, estas flores são nossos parentes próximos (...).

¿Para que ir lá fora pisar terras alheias, que somente delas próprias nos falam, quando as nossas sempre nos recontam o que foram e a tôda a hora nos mostram a sua beleza presente (...) (Figueiredo, 1919, pp. 12-14).

In the core of the work, the narrative *São Martinho de Bornes*, greatly fortified by description (*ancilla narrationis*, a true servant of the narrative), portrays a dual journey where its narrator/protagonist³ explores the plant species that surround a park in Pedras

³ The autodiegetic narrator – whose focalization is fixed, internal, restrictive, and interventionist –, “co-referenced with the protagonist” (Silva, 2007, p. 762), is the only character in the entire diegesis, apart from “a young boy” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 246), whose name is unknown, who, in a moment of brief dialogue, tells him about the story of São Geraldo [Saint Gerald]. Therefore, despite the physical location being

Salgadas, the mountainous path trodden to the summit of the mountain range of Bornes de Aguiar, an old parish atop the mountain, the panoramic view of the countryside, as well as all the reflective thoughts and inner journeys that, during the physical journey, the rural spatiality and the vegetation arouse in the traveler.

THE DOUBLE JOURNEY

Initially, as he walks through the park in the city of Pedras Salgadas and gazes at its trees, the traveler, fascinated by a white church among the hills of Bornes, seems to suppress and overlook the curiosity it causes him. However, during the course of his stroll, as he realizes that the park trees are not native to Trás-os-Montes, he begins to gradually discover, in a process that leads him towards humanizing the vegetation, that those trees, although slender and well-cared for, suffer from immense spiritual poverty and inner emptiness, which greatly displeases him. Meanwhile, the trees in the mountain woods, always before his eyes as he walks, slowly start to captivate him:

Aqui, neste parque das Pedras-Salgadas, todos os dias, de além, me chama os olhos e a alma, uma igreja branca, entre massas de arvoredos, no alto de um monte de curvas de paz e verdades de esmalte: – São Martinho de Bornes. No entanto, vou-me ficando cá por baixo, nas sombras doces dos plátanos com suas comas floridas de luzes verdes e amarelas; – vou-me ficando no prudente prazer de não realizar o desejo de lá subir... (...). Êste parque é um artifício mundano no meio da rudeza natural da serra. Os aldeões do termo daqui, diante destas árvores e destes arbustos, sentem-se estranhos e acanhados como se estivessem a falar com senhoras de qualidade – com fidalgas da côrte. As árvores querem-se dadas como pessoas de família; e o lavrador do norte só se entende bem com aquelas com que êle e os seus, sempre teem lidado. As crianças brincam com velhas árvores como brincam com velhos parentes, velhos amigos ou velhos servos; e os seculares castanheiros ou carvalhos teem para com a gente pequena as mesmas sábias festas moderadas dos bons anciãos (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 236 e 239).

centered in Bornes de Aguiar, in Vila Pouca, the presence of a strong personal atmosphere, related to the traveler's psychological space, as well as, due to the absence of other characters besides the traveler, the absence of a social atmosphere should be noted. The concept of atmosphere should be understood here as a metaphor of space (Reis, 1995, p. 361). Cf. Silva, V. (2007). *Teoria da Literatura*. (8th ed.). Almedina; cf. Reis, C. (1995). *O Conhecimento da Literatura: Introdução aos Estudos Literários*. Almedina.

Figure 1 – «Parque das Termas» in Pedras Salgadas.

Source: <https://visitaltotamegaebarroso.pt>. Accessed on 19th May 2023.

Surrendered to the desire the church caused him and realizing that the nirvanic spaces of the park will not allow him to transcend himself, he ventures along a rural path leading to the woods in the heart of the mountain. His departure does not grant him an immediate arrival but rather leads him through an intermediate space – a space between the vanishing point and the destination – where he progressively comes closer to realizing himself in his entirety. In this interstice, he is “connected to two landmarks, in a state of spatial and temporal lightness” (Onfray, 2021, p. 37), in a serene and equanimous zone that leads him to a “zenithal point” (Onfray, 2021, p. 37) – the summit of the mountain. Amidst “a mound of curves of peace” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 236), the body appears to lean towards balance, not mechanically but spiritually and psychically, as if he transited from the profane world to the sacred. It is in this borderland space that, gradually, “the body plunges into its profound, visceral, and animal truth” (Onfray, 2021, p. 40), and the nomadic traveler unravels and examines everything he perceives from the natural surroundings, reflecting on the vegetal nature of the space around him:

Para lá chegar, sobe-se a fêsto por um carreiro de cabras. Os pés embaraçam-se em fetos, urzes bravas e margaças lilases, agora em flor. Depois, mete-se ao caminho – duro trilho apertado entre velhos muros, de enormes pedras recobertas do veludo dos musgos negros e das placas, esverdeadas e cinzentadas, de ressequidos líquenes seculares que se incrustam no granito marmoreando-o. (...) Vêem-se coevos de D. Dinis, velhíssimos castanheiros, só casca, roídos pela doença da idade que os cavara (...). E faz pensar o ver, na ruína destes troncos carcomidíssimos, nascer-lhes, à ilhagra, o riso dos ramos tenros da folhagem verde – geração nova a viçar em macróbios exaustos (Figueiredo, 1919, pp. 243-245).

Figure 2 – Rural path in the mountain range of Padrela, near Bornes de Aguiar, Vila Pouca.



Source: <https://visitaltotamegaebarroso.pt>. Accessed on 19th May 2023.

As he traverses the mountain path, he becomes aware that the ancient, towering trees of the woods bear immense pains, which, however, they have learned to endure from an early age, remaining resilient in the face of the challenges posed by the mountain's climate and slopes. Despite their suffering, none of them has ever ceased to strive in life, and this realization deeply penetrates and marks the traveler's soul. But it is a medieval parish from the 12th century, nestled on the slopes of the mountain, that serves as the dividing marker between the profane world of the city and the sacred world of the mountain plains, and the "white church" (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 246) adjacent to the parish – built in homage to the first archbishop of Braga, São Geraldo [Saint Gerald] – a wide panorama of the world: "*ecclesia enim figuram mundi gerit*" (Gheerbrant & Chevalier, 1994, p. 374). As a symbol of sacredness, it seems to guide the traveler to the summit of

the mountain, where he encounters a vast space and a stagnant timeline that allow him to reflect and reach the peak of his inner development. In fact, Belo, Daveau, and Mattoso (2010) had already acknowledged this phenomenon in their work, *Portugal – O Sabor da Terra* [*Portugal – The Flavor of the Earth*]: “The number of hermitages in Trás-os-Montes (...), especially those located in remote and wild places, gives them a sacred aura simply due to their proximity to nature untouched by civilization and daily life” (pp. 161-162).

Figure 3 – Parish of São Martinho de Bornes and Chapel of São Geraldo.



Source: <https://visitaltotamegaebarroso.pt>. Accessed on 19th May 2023.

It is indeed a fact that mountains, whose peaks resemble the prows of boats that transcend borders and traverse the world, have the capacity to make the traveler pause before an inviting panorama where they can reflect upon themselves. However, there is an undeniable and incessant organic inclination that resides within our essence driving us to desire vastness as a fertile space for self-encounter. It is in the timeless, unchanging, and perennial terrain of mountains that the traveler to Bornes seeks refuge and protection; it is to this vast place that those who cannot escape the omnipotence of God turn to seek life lessons, or in their quest for forgiveness and redemption. Thus, the mountain allows the traveler to unburden himself from his mundane worries and anxieties, leading him to connect with his core essence deep within the untamed vastness, detached from all societal needs.

É quieto o vale. Não chega aqui, às cumiadas de Bonres, o rumor dos quinhentos hóspedes que enchem os hotéis: as preocupações mesquinhas, que inquietam êsses mesquinhos regimentos de almas, dissolvem-se na paz do ar lavado, alimpam-se na beatitude desta altura purificadora.

Do alto dos montes vêm-se os panoramas das serras, meditam-se os da vida, alcançam-se os da eternidade. Sim, montanhas, sois sábias por vossos silêncios e pela vossa antiguidade que muito tem vivido e visto. Sois como provérbios remotos mas sempre vivos, a rola nos tempos (Figueiredo, 1919, pp. 249-250).

The traveler also realizes that traditional cultural expressions, when turned into moral codes, are merely a deception for those who regard them as divine laws, as men are selfish and have long convinced themselves that their own truth is nothing but the ultimate truth. They may believe they respect and accept diversity, but all their choices, even if they think they are made for the sake of humanity, are ultimately centered on their most innermost ambitions:

Nascer é ser condenado a viver; e viver é percorrer a fatal trajectória do devaneio à desilusão, do êrro à verdade, do pecado à virtude – da mocidade à velhice! Cada homem nasce nu de saber a experiência que adquiriu vivendo, mas de que tarde se aproveita, pois, como os bens da fortuna, a lição da vida leva mais tempo a ser amealhada que a ser gozada... Ninguém aprende senão por si. A experiência dos outros a raros é prestável. O homem é um ser orgulhoso: ama-se e confia-se (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 251).

Like Pythagoras, Marcus Aurelius, La Rochefoucauld, and many others, in the midst of their contemplations, attempted to find their own elixir for their restlessness, the yearning to discover an analgesic that would immunize him against the adversities of the world still lingers in the traveler to Bornes. By the end of the journey, he comes to realize that, after all,

Só a vida ensina. Há erros que temos de repetir em nós próprios, para nêles aprendermos lições. Cada homem vive em si a humanidade inteira; e ao morrer tem composto, por sua própria reflexão, um livro de sentenças – inconsciente plágio dessas outras considerações herdadas, de que se não servira. A vida é preciso andá-la e cada um por seu pé (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 254).

TIME DILATION AND SPATIAL IMMENSITY

In his *Teoria da Viagem [Travel Theory]*, Onfray (2021) points out two antithetical realities: that of the nomads and that of the sedentary, as well as “two ways of being in the world” (Onfray, 2021, p. 14), represented by the shepherd, who roams with the flock through pasturelands, and the peasant, who, rooted, confines himself to one place. The traveler to São Martinho de Bornes resembles the nomad, the “lover of flows” (Onfray, 2021, p. 13), and adopts the way of life of the shepherd, hence embodying in himself:

tropismos milenares: o gosto pelo movimento, a paixão pela mudança, o desejo insano de mobilidade, a incapacidade visceral de comunhão gregária, a raiva da independência, o culto da liberdade e a paixão pela improvisação dos seus mais ínfimos atos e gestos, acarinha mais o seu capricho do que a sociedade onde se sente um estrangeiro, ama a sua autonomia que coloca claramente acima da salvação dessa cidade que habita como um ator de uma peça cuja natureza desconhece (Onfray, 2021, p. 17).

Maria Alzira Seixo (1998), in her work *Poéticas da Viagem [Travel Poetics]*, describes how “movement is the heart of travel, the impulse of continuity that makes it exist after the initial thrust that pulls the body out of a state of inertia” (p. 13). It’s true that not all “ancient tropisms” are fully evident in this traveler, who explores the interior of Trás-os-Montes, but the “impetuous nomads come from an element that surrounds, envelops, animates, and gathers their feelings” (Onfray, 2021, p. 24), with “mountains and plains being those of the walkers” (Onfray, 2021, p. 24). They evoke a sense of aversion to rootedness and petrification while also serving as a driving force that compels the traveler’s body to overcome inertia, prompting him to convert his potential energy into kinetic energy:

De um modo afinal muito platónico, solicitamos a ideia de um lugar, o conceito de uma viagem, depois partimos para confirmar a existência real e factual do lugar desejado, entrevisto [pela imagem]. Sonhar com um lugar, nesse estado de espírito, permite não tanto encontrá-lo, mas sim redescobri-lo. Toda a viagem esconde e revela uma reminiscência (Onfray, 2021, p. 33).

Einstein⁴ taught us that time and space do not exist as independent units, nor do they exhibit universal constancy; instead, they are fused into an elastic fabric that binds

⁴ Cf. Gruber, L. (1923). *The Einstein Theory. Relativity and Gravitational with Some of the More Significant Implications*. Burlington.

them together. It was from this observation that he formulated the concept of relativity: the way time «passes» depends on the spatial distortion caused by matter, so the experience of time is relative from observer to observer. From this, some important conclusions follow: space can be deformed by matter, and the experience of time can become more extensive, prolonged, or, conversely, faster, swifter.

The experiential time of the protagonist, inherently heteromorphic, seems to function in a similar way to what Einstein proposes in his Theory of Relativity. While admiring the trees, his time slows down, tends towards staticity, and stagnates, leading to the concentration of the traveler's psychological atmosphere to a time span where his contemplations, detached from real physic time, stretch into a personal time, a unique moment whose duration only he knows, understands, and feels. This slow, almost stretched-out time in the protagonist's mind prevails from the beginning to the end of the brief journey to Bornes and contrasts with the speed of the physical journey, where the path from Pedras Salgadas to the summit of the mountain range of Bornes de Aguiar is described fleetingly. It is only in the intermediaries of the physical journey that time, occasionally, extends itself through the traveler's reflections.

From another perspective, Gaston Bachelard (1994) – who, in *Poetics of Space*, presents a series of reflections on his journey into the philosophy of imagination, where he explores the human relationship with time, particularly in vast, grand, immense spaces, such as the mountains of the Bornes de Aguiar – leads us to reflect on the inner spatial atmosphere that the exterior space prompts within us. Contrary to what one might initially think, spatial vastness can soothe the soul and stimulate the relationship between the profound vastness of the universe and our inner selves. In the words of the philosopher:

Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man. It is one of the dynamic characteristics of quiet daydreaming (Bachelard, 1994, p. 184).

Amidst the expansion of time, the traveler, immersed in the vastness of the mountain, expands and projects himself into the world through reverie, becoming an immense being himself in a coalition with the boundless universe that surrounds him:

E dilatada a vista que se abrange lá de cima. Quanto mais trepamos, mais panoramas a montanha nos mostra. A montanha é prestigiosa como alma de mulher amada: mais a conhecemos, mais se nos revela, e menos a vemos! De longe, atraí-nos; nela, esquecemo-nos de que a vida vive... A terra de montanha, vista a distância, parece de sêda; seus penedos de veludo; macios os tojos em que nos rasgamos... Terra de montanha, és feiticeira por teus desconhecidos; és mulher por teus perigos e encantos; és religiosa por teus mistérios; és mestra por teus silêncios (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 247).

O volume das montanhas, a extensão indefinida da planície, o afloramento das rochas rasgadas pelo sulco das águas e desagregadas pelas intempéries, a vastidão do céu, a cobertura vegetal, a terra virgem, enfim, permanecem na sua inteira pureza, indiferentes à passagem do homem (Belo et al., 2010, p. 145).

No alto ermo dos montes naturais temos, quando chegamos, a sensação do privilégio. Somos mais altos, de toda a nossa estatura, do que o alto dos montes. O máximo da Natureza, pelo menos naquele lugar, ficamos sob as solas dos pés. Somos, por posição, reis do mundo visível. Em torno de nós tudo é mais baixo: a vida é encosta que desce, planície que jaz, ante o erguimento e o píncaro que somos (Pessoa, 2017, p. 94).

Figure 4 – Panoramic view of the Padrela Mountains, near Bornes de Aguiar.



Source: <https://visitaltotamegaebarroso.pt>. Accessed on 19th May 2023.

As explained by Onfray (2021), the ability to internalize and absorb a new place is not determined by the duration of contact but rather by the quality and capacity for abstraction. This implies that the traveler, in his quest to examine different peculiarities, apprehends space in a spontaneous and thoughtless manner. However, the exploration of

spatial details has become increasingly challenging since the Industrial Revolution, especially in urban spaces, as they are becoming more and more alike. This is precisely why the journey to Bornes is especially peculiar: the bucolic space retains the characteristics of *diversity*, thus avoiding the decay due to the saturation of the *uniform* and allowing the spirit to free itself, almost as the Cartesian method suggests:

Se a modernidade tivesse triunfado sobre o Diverso – bem como se tivesse obtido a pele de Deus, da Arte, do Belo, do Verdadeiro, do Bem, e outras tantas quimeras factícias –, a viagem já não seria possível, pois o Diverso teria desaparecido em proveito do triunfo do Mesmo (...). E apesar de os sinais de erradicação das diferenças e da supressão do Diverso serem evidentemente identificáveis, não devemos confundir os movimentos oscilantes da história e a permanência da geografia indexada à perenidade geográfica. Evidentemente, todas as cidades do planeta se assemelham a ponto de se confundirem. Mas o real do planeta não se resume somente a elas. Pensar o mundo sem os rurais e sem as paisagens, eis a visão e a obsessão urbanas. Pois a paisagem permanece, persiste, mesmo quando colocada em perigo pelos homens. E o Diverso reside nela, nos campos, visível e identificável nas epifanias naturais, longe dos artifícios da cultura (Onfray, 2021, pp. 64-65).

The physiognomic beauty of the orogenic and vegetative structures of the mountain range mark the existence of a point of tangency with a harsh reality, just like violence, as a property of greatness, has a gentleness that allows us to coexist as small beings in the face of vastness. Perhaps that is why the traveler recognizes a human rationality to the trees of the mountain, which in an adverse, unexpected, and violent environment surpass themselves and rise vertically, and points to the slopes of Bornes as the preferred place for contemplating life:

A característica mais saliente é, decerto, a da dureza. A dureza do solo áspero, seja ele granítico ou xistoso; a dureza do clima rudemente contrastante, nos seus excessos de calor e de frio, de humidade e de secura, de ventos e de calmarias; a dureza com que a crosta terrestre se levanta nas enormes pregas das serrarias e com que as rochas se opõem ao ímpeto das torrentes sem conseguirem impedir que elas as despedacem, cavando tenazmente os seus leitos atormentados. Mas ao mesmo tempo, a esta dureza, resultante da violência com que os elementos lutam entre si, corresponde também um traço comum e igualmente contraditório pela sua evidente doçura e serenidade (...) (Belo et al., 2010, p. 14).

The arrival at the mountain summit corresponds to the intense moment when the traveler, “more inclined to the phenomenological test: immersed in reality” (Onfray, 2021, p. 50), penetrates in a vast “place that must be captured in all its primitive brutality, like a mystical and pagan offering” (Onfray, 2021, p. 59) and expands into its diffuseness.

THE INTROSPECTIVE SPACE: vegetation as an inducer of a reflective journey

Aligned with the Jungian perspective⁵, Mircea Eliade (1961) suggests that the connotations inferred from symbols⁶ correspond to the most intrinsic and visceral aspects of human reality. While they are not mere arbitrary creations, symbols seem to have a genotypic foundation, emerging and blossoming in our minds from properties that resurge within us, and that were originally firmly present in our ancestors. This does not mean that humans escape from their own current history, at least not as individuals, but rather that they are products of a specific historical and sociocultural context. Thus, the traveler, contemplator and heir to universal characteristics residing their own humanity, without losing his individual identity, approaches his most nomadic traits. In other words,

he recovers the language, and sometimes the experience, of a “lost paradise”. Dreams, walking dreams, the images of his nostalgias and of his enthusiasms, etc., are so many forces that may project the historically-conditioned human being into a spiritual world that is infinitely richer than the closed world of his own “historic moment” (Eliade, 1961, p. 13).

Regarding the symbolic recovery of images, in *Air and Dreams*, Bachelard (1988) clarifies that imagination is not based on the formation of images that originate from reality: we mustn't mix up the imaginative process with the perceptual one. Imagination arises from the distortion of images that we deduce and collect from the real universe. This means that from a present image, humans have the capacity to induce a plethora of absent, unusual, and ambiguous images, and the fact that imagined images are not static but mobile – which leads to the fertility and productivity of the image structure to be directly dependent on its kinetics – corroborates this. It is, therefore, understandable why

⁵ Carl Jung, in line with Charles Peirce's considerations – who perceived the symbol, one of the three types of signs he identified, as a conventional relationship between a form and the concept it represents – acknowledges that symbol has, beyond its conventional meaning, a connotative significance. Jung recognizes, within symbols, a meaning that goes beyond the boundaries of reason and delves into the realm of imagination. For Jung, certain conceptualizations surpass the realm of human knowledge, which is why we often use symbols to point to concepts that we cannot fully grasp. In other words, “even when our senses react to real phenomena, sights and sounds, they are somehow translated from the real of reality into that of the mind. Within the mind they become psychic events, whose ultimate nature is unknowable (for the psyche cannot know its own psychical substance). Thus every experience contains an indefinite number of unknown factors, not to speak of the fact that every concrete object is always unknown in certain respects, because we cannot know the ultimate nature of matter itself” (p. 23). Cf. Jung, C. (1964). *Approaching the unconscious*. In C. Jung (Eds), *Man and His Symbols*. (pp. 18–103). Anchor Press Doubleday. Cf. Peirce, S. (1991). *Peirce on signs: Writings on Semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce*. (J. Hoopes, Ed.). The University of North Carolina Press.

⁶ It is pertinent to recall the definition presented by Gilbert Durand (1998), for whom the symbol has “three characteristics that define its significance. Firstly, the concrete aspect (sensory, imagistic, figurative, etc.) of the signifier, then its optimal characteristic: it is the best for evoking (making known, suggesting, epiphanizing, etc.) the meaning, and finally, ‘the fact that it is impossible to directly or indirectly apprehend’ (to see, to imagine, to understand, etc.)” (pp. 73-74).

imagination, the elixir of fictionality, is so dear to the galactic system that is literature: the imagined images “add hope to a feeling, a special vigor to our decision to be a person, even have a tonic effect on our physique. The book that contains them suddenly becomes for us a personal letter. They play a role in our lives” (Bachelard, 1988, p. 1).

During the journey to Bornes, two classes of trees, classified not based on taxonomic or biological characteristics but on their origin, are presented. The allochthonous trees of the park – Canadian poplars, Indian canes, linden trees, acacias, plane trees, tree of heaven, maples, birches, tulip trees, privets, bromeliads, and poplars – most of which are only “ten years old” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 237), embody affable “gallant young ladies” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 246) whose “graceful gestures” (Figueiredo, 1919, pp. 236-237) and “fresh smile” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 237) identify their tender age, their “youthfulness” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 251). On the other hand, the autochthonous plant species of the mountains – chestnut trees, oaks, hawthorns, and boxwoods – are compared to wise “old relatives” (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 239), as the traveler finds in them an example of resilience and discipline that the hopes to adopt as his personal *ethos*:

[As] árvores estóicas, que, no tórrido verão, se alimentam de fogo, e, em trágicos invernos (em pé e de cabeça erguida), se defrontam com tempestades, batendo-se com chuvas, resistindo ao gélido azorrague do nordeste varredor ventado do mar cantábrico e das serras nevadas da vizinha Espanha (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 240).

Figure 5 – «Parque das Termas» trees.



Source: <https://visitaltotamegaebarroso.pt>. Accessed on 19th May 2023.

In the core of the same work – *Air and Dreams* – Bachelard (1988) wondered: “how can we fail to understand that attached to the vegetable world is a world of such characteristic reveries that we can consider vegetables as inducers of a particular kind of reverie. Vegetable reverie is the slowest, most tranquil, most restful of all reveries” (p. 203). Now, daydream prompted by the trees becomes particularly fruitful when we take into account the fact that both the trees of the park and the trees of the woods exhibit characteristics of two archetypes⁷ frequently found in literature: the Tree of Life and the Cosmic Tree, which are often confused and merged into one.

The trees of the city park, on whose bark lovers carve their initials, resemble the Trees of Life⁸ – they symbolize the connection with the divine and eternal existence, and the life that will perpetuate in the realms of heaven. Therefore, the femininity and motherhood, anthropomorphic characteristics associated with women, are concentrated in these trees (Gheerbrant & Chevalier, 1994, pp. 89-90), as well as typical psychological characteristics of a mother-woman (Pontes, 1998) – constant concern, great counseling ability, comfort, protective care, affection, and nurturing:

A árvore é bondosa. A árvore é companheira; a árvore aconselha como pai, e abençoa como mãe; e tão acolhedoramente nos envolve, que, na nossa velhice, a árvore esbelta, sorridente e meiga, talvez substitua o carinho da mulher. A árvore, que já é teto dos que não teem casa, será, então, o último afecto feminino com que os «sem família» podem contar na vida... (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 243).

⁷ An archetype represents a primordial and universal image whose antiquity dates back to the origin of humanity itself, and, as such, it lies at the heart of aesthetic, religious, ethical, and other creations. Archetypes, authentic “ways of perceptual differentiation or exogenous distancing” (Durand, 1998, p. 76), play a dynamic role in structuring the human psyche, as they reveal a collective unconscious that corresponds to the ultimate spirit of the human being. According to Durand, these images can be “epithelic” or “substantive” (Durand, 1998, p. 76), depending on whether they refer to “sensible qualities” or “objects apprehended and substantively named,” respectively.

⁸ There seems to be a logical plan for the construction of the archetype of the Tree of Life around the young trees of the park: “In fecundity (...) the primordial image of the Tree of Life insinuates itself before the *homo religiosus* as a figure that allows us to anticipate, in the realm beyond the visible, a vast and profound symbolism of eternal youth, regeneration, wisdom, and immortality. It is enough to evoke the miraculous fruits of the Tree of Life in Paradise (...)” (Pontes, 1998, p. 204).

Figure 6 – Representation of the Tree of Life by Carl Jung.



Source: <https://www.botanicalmind.online>. Accessed on 22nd May 2023.

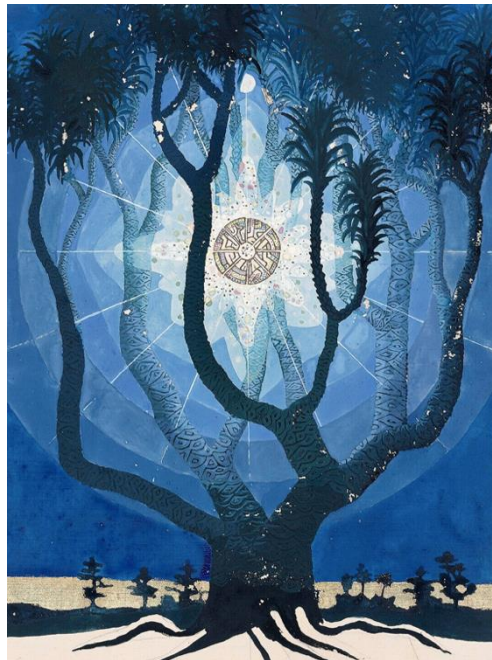
Figure 7 – Representation of the Tree of Life, created on the Coromandel Coast, India, around 1760.



Source: <https://www.botanicalmind.online>. Accessed on 22nd May 2023.

In the woods of Borneo, the old oaks and chestnut trees assume the Cosmic Tree – a symbol of verticality, balance, and upward dynamism representing expansion and transcendence. These stoic trees embody the four fundamental natural elements – symbols of essence – and establish a connection between the underworld, the surface, and the sky, thus personifying the resilience that the traveler should adopt in his quest for ontological integrity. It's worth noting that these plant elements, despite all the adversities imposed upon them, remain steadfast, standing year after year, growing towards the heavens, where they expand their canopies, resisting the gravitational force that constantly tries to hold them to the surface.

Figure 8 – Representation of the Cosmic Tree – *Axis Mundi* – by Carl Jung.



Source: <https://www.botanicalmind.online>. Accessed on 22nd May 2023.

THE ANTI-HUMANISM OF THE TRAVELER IN SEARCH OF ONESELF

The beauty and innocence of the park trees, which are crowned queens in an urban environment but were stripped of their noble titles in Borneo, contrast with the harsh and uncivilized wilderness of the hills. In this rugged terrain, the suffering of the trees is exponential, and their agony matches the thickness of the oak trunks:

Num parque namora-se; numa floresta reza-se. Num parque de árvores tenras a vida é um sorriso leve; num bosque de árvores antigas moram ideias. À sombra das velhas árvores, carregadas de anos e de dores, tôda a cogitação se torna paz, todo o pensamento se desdobra e ala em sonho... Os conceitos morais não pousam na inconsciente juventude das árvores novas que a mão do homem cuida e acarinha (...). (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 241).

In a reflective stance about his character and adopting an undeniable anti-humanist position⁹, the traveler does not place himself as the final beneficiary in the quest for happiness, nor does he seek to imbue or ascribe his life with reasons or meanings; however, as he does not shirk the responsibility for seeking for his own life's purpose nor relinquish this right, he begins his journey in search of integrity, taking countryside trees as an example.

By renouncing to the mere acceptance of a possible tragic life, one he cannot succumb to and merely accept as his own, the traveler seeks to learn lessons of conduct from the trees and mountains. He realizes that, like the trees, he will only achieve harmony in life when he learns to be balanced, patient and resilient when facing the countless challenges he will encounter throughout his life.

The humanization of the natural elements allows us to recognize that trees overcome their own vegetative nature, enabling them to be compared to men who battle through life, and therefore recognize that they are not less deserving of thriving. Actually, considering all the vicissitudes and hardships they face, they even manage to overcome more adverse difficulties than those faced by man himself. Hence, making use of the words of Bernardo Soares, one cannot “consider humanity other than as one of the last schools of decorative painting by Nature. I fundamentally don't distinguish a man from a tree, and certainly prefer that which decorates more, that which piques the interest of my thoughtful eyes” (Pessoa, 2017, p. 161).

⁹ The traveler does not consider himself as a “measure of all things” – Protagoras's expression that still to this day defines those who consider themselves humanists – and his view of nature is not merely sensory and empirical, as it allows him to discover his inner self. Regarding contemporary Humanism, cf. Copson, A. (2015). What Is Humanism?. In A. Copson & A. C. Grayling (Eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

CONCLUSION

Michel Onfray's, unknowingly sharing Sá de Miranda's perspective¹⁰, bestows upon literature a power that he does not grant to other art modalities, attributing it the ability to reproduce memories through the creation of a timeless record, stemming from a past of discoveries:

A prosa do mundo, a escrita do eu, a retórica mnemónica e a poética da geografia combinam-se para produzir uma composição singular, quimicamente pura: uma memória fixa no mármore ou fundida no bronze. Apenas a experiência escrita permite dar conta da experiência dos sentidos (Onfray, 2021, p. 97).

Recordar é poetizar. Tão nobre é o valor da recordação que, às vezes, recordar uma viagem comum é desvulgarizá-la, é engrandecê-la. Da realidade ficou apenas uma imagem depurada – a essência da verdade que existiu. A recordação superioriza, porque espiritualiza. O tempo é o poeta da saúde (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 2).

The incomplete journey to São Martinho de Bornes ends with an invocation, in a larval state, for the traveler's return, as the departure represents the possibility of cementing the lived experience, or its transformation into a memory that will stagnate the experience of the journey in the form of a remembrance, immortalizing the journey as a path of learning, knowledge, adventure, and as the ideal moment to get lost so that we can find ourselves again, more convinced of who we are or the people whom we no longer want to be. When we travel,

nunca nos sentimos um estrangeiro face a nós próprios, mas sempre mais íntimos, mais pertos, mais unidos à nossa sombra. Face a nós próprios, mais do que nunca impelidos a observarmo-nos, pelo menos a vermo-nos, mergulhamos mais profundamente no nosso centro de gravidade de tal forma o outro nos faz falta para nos distrair da nossa presença forçada. O destino de uma viagem coincide inevitavelmente com o núcleo indestrutível do ser e da identidade (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 77).

Following the traveler's departure, it is important that they form memories from the fragmented recollections captured by his sensory machinery, rather than relying on the usual electronic "mnemonic procedures" (Onfray, 2021, p. 93), as it was the body itself that retained what marked it the most: the geography that allowed the body to function as a sense and emotion-capturing machine requests a proper time to solidify and crystallize the journey into a consistent and clear memory:

¹⁰ In the poem *Ao príncipe* [*To the prince*] sent to Prince Dom João: "To war, the great Scipio takes with him / **The gentle natural Muses** / Who, without weapons, are of great aid, / And they **still sing of that ancient time.** / **The statues of metal will fall!** / **What could be expected from mute things?**" (Miranda, 1885, p. 95) – emphasis added.

Emquanto se anda a pisar terras estranhas, vistas pela primeira vez, o espírito, entontecido pela scintilação do imprevisto, goza tão alarmado e sôfrego, que todo êle desliza, fugaz, pela fácil aparência irisada das cousas transitórias, as quais, passando por nós como relâmpagos, lá ficam para trás sem as termos vincado com o nosso comentário enternecido e invadi-as de entendimento e de estima penetrantes. Só depois, mais tarde, reflectindo, nos apercebemos do que vimos, do que sentimos, – mais tarde, quando analisamos, miúda, demorada e saboreadamente, as imagens belas trazidas connosco dessa correia luminosa e vertiginosa (Figueiredo, 1919, p. 3).

The possibility immersing oneself in the rural environment and traversing the steep and rocky paths to the mountain's summit to contemplate the infinite horizon allows us to escape the monochromatic framework of city constancy and mechanized routines:

As matas de carvalhos que felizmente ainda existem na serra (...) de Bornes (...) tornam os lugares onde permanecem francamente acolhedores, como se os génios que os habitassem quisessem temperar pela sua benignidade as temerosas cóleras dos espíritos da terra e do céu. (...). De facto muita coisa se vai perdendo. Não se sabe se a maré da civilização transformará por completo a fisionomia desta província que ainda permanece co um reservatório da natureza e um testemunho de tudo aquilo que continua inalterável apesar das mutações trazidas pelo tempo e a ação do homem. Por enquanto ela permanece ainda como o apelo à harmonização da «cultura» com a «natureza» e uma afirmação da prevalência do permanente sobre o transitório (Belo et al., 2010, pp. 145-146 e 184).

REFERENCES

- Bachelard, G. (1988). *Air and Dreams*. The Dallas Institute Publications.
- Bachelard, G. 1994. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press.
- Chan, L. (1991). «Molecular Story Structures: Lao She's "Rickshaw" and F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby"». *Style* 25(2) (Possible Worlds and Literary Fictions): 240–50.
- Chevalier, J., & Gheerbrant, A. (1994). *Dicionário dos símbolos: mitos, sonhos, costumes, gestos, formas, figuras, cores, números*. Teorema.
- Copson, A. (2015). «What Is Humanism?» em *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Doležel, L. (1972). From motifemes to motifs. *Poetics*, 4, 55–90.

- Doležel, L. (1976). *Narrative Semantics*. PTL.
- Durand, G. (1998). *Campos do Imaginário*. Instituto Piaget.
- Eliade, M. (1961). *Images and Symbols*. Harvill Press.
- Figueiredo, A. (1919). *Jornadas em Portugal*. Livraria Aillaud e Bertrand.
- Gruber, L. (1923). *The Einstein Theory. Relativity and Gravitational with Some of the More Significant Implications*. Burlington.
- Jung, C. (1964). *Approaching the unconscious*. Anchor Press Doubleday.
- Mattoso, J., Daveau, S., & Belo, D. (2010). *Portugal - O Sabor da Terra. Um retrato histórico e geográfico por regiões*. Círculo de Leitores.
- Miranda, F. (1885). *Poesias de Francisco de Sâ de Miranda*. Max Niemeyer.
- Onfray, M. (2021). *Teoria da Viagem. Uma Poética da Geografia*. Quetzal Editores.
- Pessoa, F. (2017). *Livro do Desassossego*. Assírio e Alvim.
- Pierce, S. (1991). *Peirce on signs: Writings on Semiotics by Charles Sanders Perice*. The University of North Carolina Press.
- Pontes, M. (2020). «A Árvore - Um Arquétipo da Verticalidade (contributo para um estudo simbólico da vegetação)». *Revista da Faculdade de Letras - Línguas e Literaturas*, 197–219.
- Reis, C. (1995). *O Conhecimento da Literatura. Introdução aos Estudos Literários*. Livraria Almedina.
- Seixo, M. (1998). *Poéticas da Viagem na Literatura*. Edições Cosmos.
- Silva, V. (2007). *Teoria da Literatura*. Livraria Almedina.
- Soares, M. (2019). O mar e a viagem: sua expressão na literatura portuguesa. *Humanitas* 74, 119–37.