6

IDENTITY BUILDING IN PHOTOGRAPHIC TRAVEL BOOKS

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Books as travel objects

The history of travel has been for long associated with the production of books. From travelers' private journals to albums made to report survey expeditions, ethnographic studies or archaeological campaigns, the astounding diversity of styles and shapes one finds in books related to travel, reflects an obvious multiplicity, also present in travel typologies and travel practices over the centuries. At a time when the act of travelling is so widespread and generalized, it is important to keep in mind how the concept of travel has evolved and changed tremendously throughout history. From pilgrimages to commercial journeys, from scientific expeditions to field trips, from *grand tours* and cultural tourism to honeymoon packages – to name but a few – vast and varied is the number of different realities that come together under the same designation of *travel* [1].

Despite all categories of travel in all conceivable contexts and historical periods, it is however possible to point out a common feature in this wide panorama. In general terms, travel, in its motivated variant, is often associated with cultural fabrications that are meant to make the transient nature of every journey last in time. From the production of journals, books, reports, pictures or souvenirs, all these objects can be understood within the same logic: they are meant to give a certain journey a concrete materialization – a materialization by which travel can, up to a certain extent, be re-enacted or at least remembered. Ultimately, their aspiration is to transform the transitory nature of any journey into something tangible, that one can take hold of and apprehend. And what is remarkable in this process of materialization is the fact that a particular trip can later be accessed by anyone, including by those who didn't even perform it.

t is through this mediation procedure – of travel objectification – that travel can thus become something desirable and, most decisively, transactio-

1 The cases provided to exemplify the diversity of travel typologies are merely illustrative and not exhaustive. Moreover, the notion of travel, as it is used throughout the article, consciously excludes the cases of involuntary and non-motivated types of travel.

nal and consumable. In the complex processes of travel objectification, travel books configure a particularly interesting example. Among other reasons, their particularity chiefly relates to the fact they not only correspond to a *post-travel stage* (should we understand them as a result of the journey, as a memory or a record); but they are also especially relevant in an *anticipatory travel stage* (should we regard them as foreseeing and prefigurative devices). Instead of merely conveying an account of a journey already completed by someone else, travel books evolved in such a way as to create in the reader the desire to perform a journey, which is yet to be experienced. Travel became thus something people are yearning to and willing to pay for; and this transformation is precisely what lies at the heart of current tourism industries.

Travel books, which typically cover specific countries or cities, configure then a perfect locus wherefrom to examine the construction of visual and identity processes concerning places and communities. Therefore, the main purpose of this article will be to analyze how photographic travel books have materialized many of these identity-building processes which are also extraordinarily active in the framework of tourism. Examining a particular post-war period, and through the example of photographic representations on Portugal around the 1950s and 1960s, our aim here will be to demonstrate how photographic travel books – due to the complex word and image negotiations they enact – are especially meaningful objects to tackle identity building phenomena within the context of tourist travel and photography. Yet, and before any closer photographic analysis, a broader assessment on the nature of touristic travel and travel books seems nevertheless necessary.

The photographic experience of tourism

Although sightseeing has not always configured the major aspect of travel practices, and, as Judith Adler has demonstrated (1989), is something historically and culturally bound, touristic travel seems to be chiefly motivated and experienced in visual terms, like Johh Urry has ingeniously pointed out in his classic study *The Tourist Gaze* (1990). In this sense, I would like to begin with a revealing episode, about the centrality of seeing, to be found in Honor Wyatt's 1955 book *The Young traveller in Portugal* (see Wyatt 1955)[2]. The text depicts the adventures of an English couple who is travelling to Portugal with their two kids: Patience, a 15 year-old girl and little William, aged 12. Right after their arrival, the family goes on a short train trip under intolerable heat and, for this reason, the curtains of the train were closed in order to keep the sun out. Under such circumstances and at a certain point, little William, who had been quietly looking round the edge of the curtain interrupts the family conversation with an unexpected exclamation: «I say, look at that!» And suddenly he pulled the curtain aside in a quick gesture. «The effect», recounts the mother, «was dramatic. It was as if we had been in a darkened theatre whose scene was suddenly revealed; as if William had said: «Look! Portugal!» (Wyatt 1955: 14).

This little passage masterfully pinpoints the spectacular dimension inherent to touristic travel. If the notion of spectacle has already been defined by Maurice Samuels in his book *The Spectacular Past* as something mounted to be seen, and to be seen for a price (Samuels 2004:6), I believe it is also important to focus here on the representational character of touristic spectacle, by which what is *seen* is inevitably objectified; and those who see are always voted to an ineluctable condition of exteriority. Moreover, what also grabs our attention in

2 This particular book is part of a wider movement of book collections on countries, particularly devoted to young adult audiences, during the 1950s and 1960s. Besides the series *The Young Traveler in…,* other examples can be mentioned, like the British collection *We Go to…* , the French *Connais-tu mon pays?* or the Dutch one *Dit is ons land.*

the excerpt mentioned above is the fact that the spectacular country is enclosed and framed by the window, suggestively favouring the country's perception as an image, and not so much as reality.

Although this article has started with the reference to the long relationship between travel and books, the role of images in tourist travel is also too decisive to be ignored and, for this reason, it is all the more important to highlight the prominent role photography played, as well, within the contexts of travel and book production. The development of photography, in particular, was principally bound together with the consolidation of tourist practices. To give but a small, yet significant example, if the invention of photography is conventionally located in 1839, it should be noted that the first large-scale train excursion was organized by Thomas Cook in Leicester, only two years later, in 1841 (Crawshaw 1997, Simmons 1973-4). And if photographic images have undergone some changes throughout the years, they have however remained closely and prominently related to almost all kinds of travel practices, including the touristic one. Additionally, and keeping this ubiquitous and powerful connection in mind, photographs become even more attractive objects to study when comprehended as *agents* or, in other words, as objects who can initiate something, or originate a certain effect, in their vicinity (see Gell 1998; Latour 2005).

This is particularly evident as we analyze photography within the scope of travel books and verify that photographic travel books operate significantly in the anticipatory condition of tourism travel. More often than not, travel destinations are chosen in function of a previous image (normally but not exclusively visual[3]) one has of a place, and photographic travel books seem not only to attest how a certain location looks like, but they are also influential agents that suggest the kind of experience the traveler should expect or seek in a gi-

3 In the article *What is an image?,* W.J.T. Mitchell has importantly clarified how the image may not only be exclusively visual, for it also comprises crucial mental, verbal and perceptual dimensions to it (see Mitchell 1984: 505).

ven place of visit. In promoting the will to travel to a given place, photographs participate in the process of ingeniously inventing and advertising a unique experience associated with that place, so that it can be desired and, eventually, exchanged. As we think of the wide diversity of interests centralized by the commodity quality of travel, it is easy to acknowledge that the «image» of a city, for example, no matter how innocent it may look, carries both a responsibility and a potential too high to be overlooked. Additionally, if photographs appear to be this significant and influential at an anticipatory stage of travel, it should be underlined how they also seem to be strongly structural of the act of travelling itself.

Fig. 1 View of Rovinj, Croatia, 2008

In fact, tourist travel can be characterized as well by means of a certain quest for images (Fig.1). Tourists not only tend to make photographic records of their journeys, but sometimes, and for authors like Urry, it seems that «pho-

tography gives shape to travel» in the sense that people should go to particular scenes in order not to miss the photo-opportunity (Urry 1990). Even if they don't take photographs, Peter D. Osborne claims, all tourists «consume places and experiences which are photographic, as they have been made or have evolved to be seen, above all to be photographed» (2000: 79).

When visiting a city or a country, the images and photographs we normally access via travel guides (or other channels) are present in many different ways. Most importantly, the traditional touristic travel is structured by the desire to see in reality what we already know through mediations. Travel becomes then an act of «returning to where we have never been» (Martins 2009), for it does not seem to imply knowledge or discovery; it is rather a process of confirmation, a verification that reality corresponds to the previous images one had constructed of it. This pursuit of *the photographic* is something we find in the words Marc Augé wrote concerning tourism practices: «the travel will look like a verification: in order not to deceive the traveller, the real should look just like its image» (2003:65).

If photography has long ago assumed great primacy in travel contexts, it also seems to be the medium that better answers, at different levels, the specific demands of touristic practices. Photography and tourism are united by their massive, and to a certain extent also *reproducible*, character, but they can also be approximated otherwise. Both common practices of photography and tourism are defined by an opposition to the normal, working, regular life, and can be articulated around the same idea of *exceptionality*. Among several other characteristics listed by John Urry as specific to the touristic travel (1990), he identified the rupture with the regular rhythms of everyday life. Likewise, Pierre Bourdieu noted in his analysis of the social uses of photography that we photograph weddings and all sorts of family rituals not only because they reaffirm the unity of the family group but also because they are extra-ordinary ceremonies (like the vacation tourist travel) that people photograph for they escape all quotidian routine (1965:62).

But photography is connected to tourism through other instances that are

not merely limited to tourist's photographs but also include pictures made *for* tourists (and not just *by* tourists). It is in this light that one can place the case of photographic travel books and of the city representations they include. As we analyze these objects, it becomes evident that photography is also the preferred visual medium (among all other possibilities such as painting or drawing) to be included in these guides. Faced up with this reality, the question must inevitably be formulated: what is it that people actually expect from travel books and that photography seems to help reinforcing and fulfilling?

Seeing as believing: the documentary tradition and photographic travel books

Earlier in the beginning of the photographic era, visually illustrated travel books were mostly intended for people who were not supposed to perform that travel. They would function as a means by which distant or inaccessible territories were to become visible and imaginable in those representations. However, as we consider the role of travel books in touristic times, something other than this simple mediation task is at stake. More than merely bringing an unknown reality to presence, these objects are charged with the anticipation and possibility of a future travel to the location in question. In terms of production, these books are conceived for potential travellers, whose desire to visit that destination can be produced and/or awakened by these very same books. The fact that touristic travel was (and still is) an increasingly accessible reality, allows us to face the readers of travel books as individuals who carry a large probability of confirming the veracity and reliability of the offered data. However, even the readers who do not intend to visit the destination they read about, do expect the information provided by the books to be instructive, exact and trustworthy. Accordingly, photographic images are also primarily read, at least on a first level, as something believable.

Photographs, empowered by their persistent myth of transparency and faithful depiction, are there to convincingly accomplish the basic task of showing what a country, a city and its people are like. Furthermore, they are invested with a documentary authority that is better characterized in the very etymological sense of the word *document*. The latin term *documentum*, derives from *docere* (to show, to teach), but its meaning has later evolved in the direction of proof or evidence. In the same way, these photographs hold a similar function: being at the same time educational (through pictures we can visually learn some features of a city) and proofs (these are the pictures of the city and its inhabitants, *as they really are*). As in History, which is based on this understanding of the document as evidence, and where the historian is supposed

to make an impartial reading of the document without adding any information that would lead to a distorted view of facts, also in these photographs we find the same liaison that brings the *document* together with the notion of *truth*. Photographic records in travel books sustain and corroborate the written word in the same way the historical discourse is based and validated by the almost unsuspicious power of documents.

In the complex word-and-image relationship outlined in photographic books, what is at stake is not only the illustrative role of images towards the text or, inversely, the descriptive position of the text before the pictures. What matters the most is to observe how the legitimation of the photographs and the text is operated in reciprocal terms, by having the written word (and consequently all sorts of discourses) being sustained by the documentary and proof-like character of the photograph, and the image being legitimated and validated by the gravity of the written word. Much of the power and reach of travel books can be located thus in this mutually reinforced dynamics between photography (especially in their document-value) and text.

Generally speaking, and despite all the necessary variations in multiple cases, it can however be stated that most part of photographs included in travel books bear a strong documentary style. Since our purpose here is to pay special attention to the way photography contributes to forge identity discourses in the 1950s and 1960s, it seems therefore important to briefly characterize the photographic travel books of these decades in terms of a wider documentary tradition which took place in the post-war period.

Despite the widespread circulation of the term documentary, its use relates to many different realities, thus revealing the somewhat inaccuracy of its meaning. The documentary uses and conventions of photography, although present since the very early years after photography's invention, tend to be principally associated with a golden period in the 1930s, characterized, among other aspects, by a significant number of photobooks and government-based projects such as the emblematic Farm Security Administration photographic enterprise. In the same years, fundamental magazines started to make a central

use of photographic images, inaugurating a new, visual and highly successful way of spreading out information. Along with the creation of magazines such as *Vu* (1928), *Life* (1936), *Look* (1937) or *Picture Post* (1938), and with the diffusion of photojournalism, a new age of documentary photography has also started. And naturally enough, this pulsating period of picture-magazines has also influenced the shape of many subsequent *magazine-derived photobooks* (Parr and Badger 2004: 120).

This influential period was greatly responsible for an understanding of documentary photography as a practice primarily interested in emphasizing its social content. These common associations between documentary photography and socio-political concerns, often related to periods of crisis, have however been cleverly challenged by Olivier Lugon who, in his book on the documentary style in photography, argues that the turn of documentary towards reportage and social commitment happens only in the late thirties. Earlier figures like Walker Evans or August Sander, particularly during their work in the 1920s, clearly demonstrate the initial «non-coincidence between the documentary function and the style with the same name» (2001: 106). The documentary style is then defined by a number of formal characteristics – extreme clearness of the represented subject, frontal advantage points, simple framing, stillness and sometimes serial work – and is not necessarily connected to any social concern. In the particular case of photographic travel books, pictures are documentary, more because they serve a documentary strategy and function than because of a plain documentary style (although the two dimensions, function and style, are often merged).

After the Second World War however, and this is the period in focus here, a second period of documentary photography emerged. Within a broad postwar logic of reconstruction of Europe, the dominant solution in photography was defined, in general terms, by a second wave of politically committed social documentary images. Along with the neorealism movement, both in film and photography, the years after the war witnessed another succession of picture magazines, especially in Europe. The publication of *Réalités* (1946) or *Paris*

Match (1949), together with the creation of picture agencies from which *Magnum* (1947) is the most celebrated example, represent the public and growing dimension of a humanist «concerned» photojournalism that was to prevail as the dominant photographic tradition in Europe of those years.

This paradigm of humanist photography, chiefly materialized in Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* (Cartier-Bresson 1952a)[4], can also be exemplified in the work of many other photographers (Robert Capa, Robert Doisneau, Izis, André Kertész, Paul Strand, etc.) who have also embraced the project of making the world, in its great social and geographical diversity, transparently visible and accessible to a wide public. During the same years, there is a growing interest in books and publications devoted to countries, nationalities or group identities, which is particularly visible in emblematic works such as Robert Doisneau's *Les Parisiens tels qu'ils sont* (1954) or Cartier-Bresson's *Les Européens* (1955). On the other hand, however, other cases seem to embody what Parr and Badger labeled as the *indecisive moment*: a more personal photographic approach, embedded in a raw, almost existentialist tone (2004: 233). Some examples of this line would include books like William Klein's *New York* (1956), Robert Frank's *Les Américains* (1958), Vítor Palla e Costa Martins' *Lisboa: a Sad and Joyful City* [Lisboa, Cidade Triste e Alegre] (1959), or René Burri's *Les Allemands* (Burri 1963).

Both photographic directions (the *decisive* and the *indecisive* moments) have materialized in books and publications whose subjects tended to focus primarily on cities or groups. These books have importantly defined strong, yet sometimes contradictory, interpretations and positions towards the concepts of identity and belonging by means of photographic images. The use of photography, especially of documentary photography, as a vehicle for communitybuilding has therefore become as solid as recurrent a practice in those years (the

4 Before becoming a popular and pregnant photographic expression, *The Decisive Moment* was originally the title of the English translation of Cartier-Bresson's 1952 book *Images à la Sauvette* (Cartier-Bresson 1952b).

most representative example being perhaps 1955 Edward Steichen's exhibition *Family of Man* and its photographic forging of the great human community).

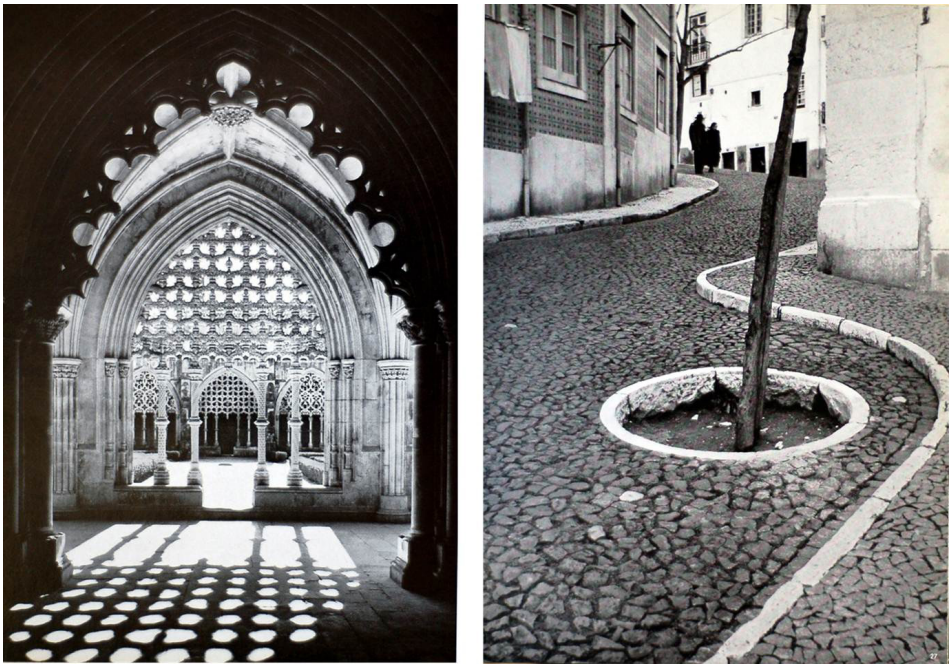

Fig. 2 Empty passages waiting to be crossed. Left: Jean Dieuzaide, *The Batalha Monastery* in *Le Portugal* (Bottineau 1956); right: Leo Jahn-Dietrichstein, picture from *Zeitloses Portugal* (Jahn-Dietrichstein, 1957)

Photographic travel books, in turn, are also in tune with such identity movements and have had countries, cities and community groups as their primary subject matters. Moreover, and according to this larger tendency, a sudden increase of this sort of publications throughout these years should also be noticed. The spreading of this kind of books is moreover related to a growing interest in the mutual knowledge of countries and peoples propped up by the end of the Second World War. The 1950s, also with the upcoming of touristic travel, were an intense period for photographic travel books in which series and collections such as *Les Albums des Guides Bleus, Les Beaux Pays, L'Atlas des Voyages,*

Petite Planète, Encyclopedie par l'image or *The (country) I Love* are just some examples in a much vaster scenario. This reaffirmation of countries and national identities has also its equivalent in young adult literature, in series like *Connais-tu mon pays?* or *The Young traveller in…*, combining facts and fiction to better serve their educative purposes.

With their own particularities, photographic travel books can still be placed together with the wider photojournalistic tendency to render the world visible, in assumedly informative, realistic and credible pictures. Even though their truth value can be questioned, for truth is not something intrinsic to the photographic image, photographs in travel books do obey the dispositions of a certain documentary style. It is however a rather composite documentary style for it combines an objective facet with a more subjective and humanist approach. Hence, pictures in travel books seem to define a twofold strategy. On the one hand they are organized in apparently external vantage points and neutral perspectives (global, distanced views on a place, generally landscapes or architectural views where people, if present, appear as anonymous, stereotyped creatures) that are intended to be read as uncorrupted records of reality «such as it is», as scenes in which the photographer, camouflaged in that distance, did not exert any influence or manipulation. Yet, these images (Fig.2), inviting as they can be, do not seem to be sufficient, since they normally need to be counterbalanced with another type of imagery.

For the sake of credibility, it is important that photographs look impartial – but not too much. The necessary distance for the photographer to be neutral and unobtrusive, is also the same distance that turns him into an outsider. And an outsider is charged with the suspicion of not having sufficient knowledge to provide an accurate and profound portrait of a city/country or of the people depicted in the photographs. So it seems equally important to make *proximity* noticeable. This is usually conveyed in more humanist images that seem to have been taken from closer vantage points, regarding their subject matter. In these particular books, I am concretely referring to pictures of people – no longer anonymous but carriers of a greater psychological depth – who are supposed to

embody a meaningful encounter, by staring back at the viewer (photographer and reader).

Fig. 3 Staring back at the viewer. Left: Jakob Job, picture from *Portugal* (Job 1956);
right: Leo Jahn-Dietrichstein, picture from *Zeitloses Portugal* (Jahn-Dietrichstein, 1957)

These pictures (Fig.3) indicate a closeness between the photographer and the represented people, many times expressed in the visual stare of the two, but also discerned in the type of portrayed activities in which they appear (a little more intimate, even if this intimacy can also be staged). In any case, if there is something in the image that directly points or refers to the figure of the photographer, then the photograph is also referring to a personal subjectivity which, in reflecting an encounter or nearness, implies a closer relation and a deeper contact. In doing so, there is an additional level by which the image – precisely for being a one-sided, personal perspective – can also be read as more reliable.

Like Olivier Lugon has perfectly pointed out, the subjective accent supplied in the affirmation of the photographer's presence is not necessarily read as a biased distortion of reality, but rather perceived as a trustworthy testimony, constituting therefore another form of documentary strategy (Lugon 2001: 106).

The photographic construction of «authentic» identities

Along with the documentary use and understanding of photographs, which contributes to an apparent discourse of veracity readers are compelled to believe, comes also the notion of *authenticity,* as a crucial element in the identity building processes here under analysis. The reading of photographs as documentary and credible objects suggests also a presupposed *authenticity*. We expect pictures in travel books to be authentic, in the sense that we expect these pictures to correspond to facts, to correspond to real views, real monuments, real people or real costumes of a given place. We will normally trust that, for example, in a travel book on Portugal, an image where we can identify, say, a Portuguese fisherman (so recurrent in these books and in the construction of a Portuguese iconography) was actually taken in Portugal before that very fisherman, and it is not depicting an Italian fisherman in the coast of Naples, or a farmer acting out like a fisherman. We tend to believe that the image is authentic and is not misleading us. However, if we did not know, maybe almost nothing would have changed if this figure had in fact been a «fake» Portuguese fisherman: we would have looked at his face, his clothes, his work or his boat in the same way in which we look at a «real» Portuguese fisherman. In other words, we would have probably perceived him in an authentic way, for the image is integrated in a bigger communication device (a travel book on Portugal) which, by following a number of codes and conventions and by an *authority* that does not exclusively lie on the pictures, would make us look at it in that light. The reader is inspired to find authenticity in travel book pictures in the same way that the tourist, in the actual travel, seems to be also driven by a pursuit of authentic experiences, which would be access platforms to the true nature of a people or a country.

Several authors have already discussed the notion of authenticity, which was first and foremost crystallized by Dean MacCannell (1976), in the contexts of travel and tourism. The argument of MacCannell starts with a distinction made by Goffman (1959, quoted in MacCannell 1999) between the existence of

a *front region*, the meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons, and a *back region*, the place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and to prepare (MacCannell 1976: 92).

From this distinction, he claims that tourists are normally exposed to situations that embody what he names as *staged authenticity* – experiences which are specifically mounted for tourists to perceive them as authentic and part of the *back region.* However, the author asserts that if one could ever be able to really move from the *front* to the *back region*, at that point, one would no longer be a tourist. All tourism is thus, in its quest for authenticity, ultimately rendered to be inauthentic. And this is probably the main reason why the term «tourist» has such a negative connotation, and is «increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experiences» (1976: 94). It is the superficiality of knowledge commonly associated with tourism that makes it be regarded as a morally inferior practice[5]. The subsequent denial of the «tourist role» even by tourists themselves, implies a general acknowledgement that tourism normally provides nothing more than inauthentic experiences; but it equally implies that people are still driven by the same old authenticity quest, for they still want to surmount the inauthentic level and move beyond, towards a more real one.

At this point, I believe the photograph by Agnès Varda clearly embodies MacCannell's considerations on authenticity and tourism (Fig.5). This picture opens the chapter entitled *Os Pescadores* («The Fishermen») in a photographic travel book on Portugal (Villier 1957). It should be noted that the social group of the fishermen is extremely relevant as it was one of the strong pillars of the Portuguese iconography. The symbolic strength of the fishermen is sustained not only by the picturesque dimension they usually hold, but also by a sense of permanence and constancy. Fishermen have been visually appropriated as a national fiction: they articulate a connection with the glorious past of the

5 For an insightful account on the historical bad reputation of the tourist please see Blaser 1999.

Age of the Discoveries at the same time that they symbolize and are the living proof of the Portuguese adventure in the sea. They personify the evidence of a maritime fate, of an Atlantic nostalgia for they are presented as part of a great historical genealogy, as direct heirs of the famous sailors of the past. They are


Du plus modeste au plus grand. De la paix à la guerre. Des moines bénédictins aux capitaines de la terre et de la mer. Des pêcheurs aux seigneurs. Du vieillard prosterné à l'enfant prince qui régnera. De la crosse au glaïve. Du filet marin au livre. Au-dessus du roi, un homme vêtu d'austérité, le chef couvert d'un chaperon sombre, joint en proue les mains: l'infant Anrique, Henri le Navigateur, qu'il faudrait appeler aussi l'Inventeur, car il invente et l'aventure et les moyens de l'aventure. Homme de technique et de songe. Le chroniqueur Azurara nous aide à le mieux connaître: « Il consacrait ses jours au travail acharné. Nous ne pouvons compter les nuits pendant lesquelles ses yeux ne se fermèrent pas... La luxure ni l'avarice n'habitèrent jamais son cœur. Si parfaite était sa chasteté qu'on le porta vierge en terre. » L'énergie de l'Europe est alors dans ce prince qui veille à la pointe sud. Il veut. Il rêve. Il veut son rêve. Il veut que ses marins dépassent la peur des caps inconnus. Sans cesse, de son ermitage de Sagres, il lance ses équipages vers la Terre des Nègres, d'où son écuyer Gil Eanes lui rapportera finalement une rose. Que les hommes de notre temps réfléchissent: ce qu'ils font aujourd'hui avec leurs projectiles dans l'espace interstellaire, le Navigateur le tentait avec ses *barcuts* dans l'espace des mers.

Sa devise était *Talan de bien fere*. Il l'abandonne. Il signe l'entreprise de ses initiales I. D. A., Infante Dom Anrique. *Ida*, en portugais, a ce sens: *départ*. L'Europe prend le départ pour le tour de la terre. Ici commence le temps du monde fini.

Dans le regard d'Henri le présent vire au futur. L'infant construit les nouveaux navires, les caravelles qui bientôt porteront le Portugal en Chine, plus loin même que ce royaume du prêtre Jean dont il rêve avec le moyen âge finissant. Henri meurt en 1460. Trente-huit ans plus tard, Vasco de Gama aborde l'Inde. Gloire des cordages et de l'astrolabe! Sur le corps de l'ermite de Sagres, comme sur les vieilles pierres romanes, se greffe la luxuriance manuéline.

L'avenir, toujours; ces hommes de Nuno Gonçalvès, s'ils ne le pressentaient pas, imposeraient-ils un tel silence? Eux, qui ouvrirent l'horizon et offrirent à l'Europe la perspective des espaces neufs, se juxtaposent en milieu clos, sans ouverture vers l'extérieur, sans perspective ni espace. Le trompe-l'œil des lignes de fuite à peine se prononce. Nulle fanfare dans cette œuvre. Mais un étrange recueillement. Comme de chapelle funéraire ou d'hypogée... Dirait-on que nous sommes au lendemain d'une victoire? Au lendemain, oui, déjà. Déjà sont passés les fastes que les descendants de ces hommes ont vus. Nous sommes loin du jour où le peintre pose sa dernière touche. Loin du jour où Pedro Alvarez Cabral découvre le Brésil. Nous sommes en 1578. Un siècle plus tard. Aucun des modèles de Nuno ne connaît le jeune roi Sébastien. Mais tous *savent* qu'il tente la conquête suprême du Maroc. Tous *regardent* la mêlée furieuse d'Alcacer-Kébir. Tous *assistent* à sa fin, à la fin de son armée. Tous *connaissent* la suite des temps. Le roi meurt sans héritier, la couronne tombe entre les mains des Espagnols. Une nouvelle dynastie n'empêchera ni les armées napoléoniennes d'envahir trois fois le Portugal, ni le Brésil de s'en détacher, ni l'empire africain de se morceler et réduire. Le monde échappe... La muette gravité de ces hommes est celle des témoins. L'histoire de leur peuple est devant leurs yeux. *Ils voient*.

Œuvre unique. Il n'est rien dans l'art portugais qui l'égale, ses autres achèvements paraissant dérisoires auprès d'elle. Pour trouver un tel dessin des visages, une semblable audace de composition, une égale intensité humaine, une vérité non moindre, il faut gagner les hauteurs de Piero, de Van Eyck, de Fouquet, de Dürer.

Œuvre unique pour autant qu'elle réunit toutes les heures, tous les caractères d'un peuple, seule. La Flandre a Memline et Breughel, Van der Weyden et Rubens. La France, les Le Nain et Watteau, Cézanne et Renoir. Le Portugal n'a que Nuno, et de Nuno, il n'a que la *Vénération de Saint Vincent*, mais dans cette œuvre, où s'estompent les différences et les étapes, il est entier, sans que rien soit omis de son réalisme et de son rêve.

Après Nuno, les chemins se reprennent, et les carrioles grincent vers les marchés, les barques se cabrent sur la barre, les moulins balisent le ciel. Sur les places de Lisbonne, des courtiers commentent les cours du café brésilien, avant d'aller le déguster à petits coups dans un bar du Chiado. Les agents de change s'affairent devant les taux des monnaies. Des bateaux descendent le Tage chargés à ras bord de liège, parmi les vapeurs en escale, et sur le Douro, les *rabelos* conduisent vers Porto le vin qui devra vieillir. *Senhor!* Un camelot propose des cravates. Une fille à sa fenêtre, dans une maison rose de l'Alfama, fredonne la dernière chanson d'Amalia Rodrigues. Sur une place du Minho, des maquignons boivent le *vinho verde*. Des enfants pauvres jouent avec un pauvre jouet. Une Cadillac passe. Des linges déteints sèchent, pavois de la vie difficile.

Fig. 4 Double page from *Portugal des Voiles* (Max-Pol Fouchet, 1959)

an actualization (and perpetuation) of Portugal's greatest national epopee and are supposed to incarnate concrete manifestations of this essential and almost unattainable Portuguese spirit (Fig.4). Evoking a little example to be found in Max-Pol Fouchet's book *Portugal des Voiles* (Fouchet 1959), it is remarkable to see how pictures of real fishermen have been so recurrently put side by side with figures extracted from the most famous Portuguese painting of the 15th century (Nuno Gonçalves' *St. Vincent Panels*), as to evoke a «glorious» past and historical continuity.

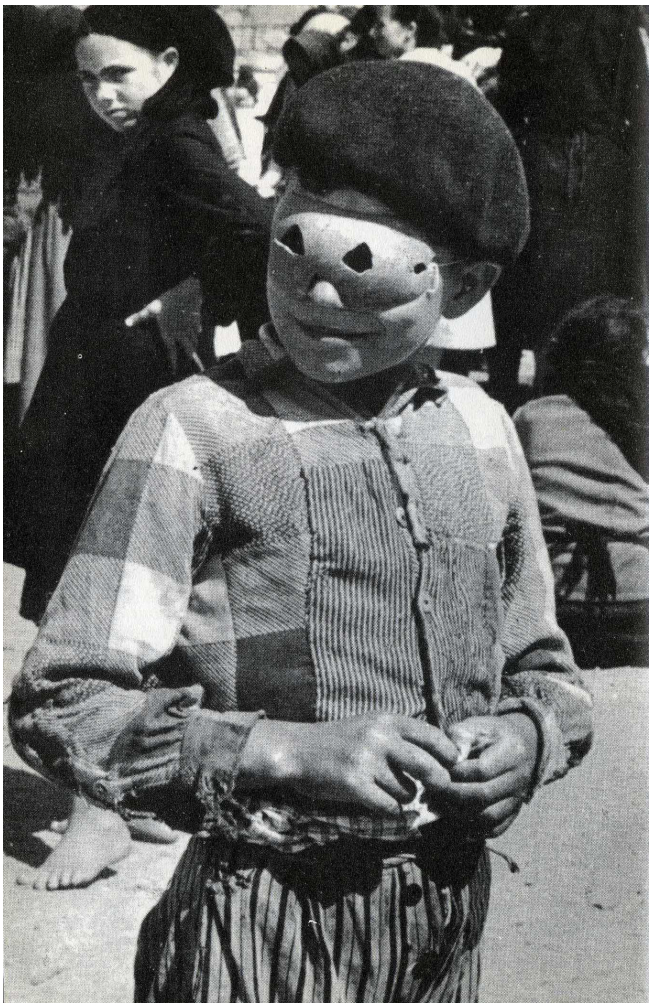

Fig. 5 photograph opening the chapter 'The Fishermen'in *Portugal* (F. Villier, 1957)

In particular, most images of Portugal in those years appear to reflect a past mythical time, of immemorial traditions and customs (for a deeper analysis of the photographic construction of this *mythical time* see Martins 2010a).

As we return to the aforementioned photograph by Agnès Varda (fig. 5), it is noteworthy how the picture, whose title is simultaneously the title of the chapter («The Fishermen»), shows absolutely no fishermen. Significantly, it

rather depicts a smiling little boy with a mask covering half his face. Judging by his outfit, he could perfectly be a member of a fishing-based family. However, the attraction pole of this image does not lie in any element pointing to fishing or fishermen; it lies precisely in the very simple, hand-made, yet striking mask. A mask possibly underlining the forged masquerade that stands behind common representations of fishermen and, I would add, of national representations in general. If this reading is to be done in these terms, it might be interesting to mention the girl who, in second rank, looks reluctantly at the first plane, where the boy and the photographer have met for the image production. Going back to MacCannell and Goffman, the central figure of the boy can be read as the *front region* while the girl would symbolize the *back region*. However, the boy in the *front region* seems to confirm also the notion of *staged authenticity* – a staging dimension that the mask, metaphorically, helps to confirm. Even if this reading proposal is not final, I believe it nonetheless addresses many of the issues about the construction of national imageries and fictions, if one focuses on the dynamics established in the photograph, between a non-conventional but masked figure in the foreground, and a second unmasked figure that seems to denounce, from the backstage, the fabricated image and its non-identification with it.

Varda's photograph therefore puts in evidence what normally remains undisclosed – i) the fact that tourism is shaped by many agents whose presence should remain invisible to be effective; and ii) the fact that photography does not constitute a neutral medium, even though it many times appears to do so. The documentary encoding – in its discretion and allegedly unbiased form – seems then to be the perfect means to render the «true» characteristics of a place and its people visible. No matter how fictional or invented the concepts of nation and identity can be, they have to be widely promulgated in order to become a profound and interiorized community feeling (Thiesse 1999); and pictures in travel books undoubtedly participate in the consolidation of these identity fictions.

The documentary convention, in its self-effacement and alleged transparency, seems to justify the reason why this style achieved such a stable place in

travel books. The veracity charge of these pictures reaffirms the existence of some places, groups, practices or characteristics, which are perceived as natural and genuine, and are therefore useful pillars in the construction of a particular identity. At a further level, the State and its different power institutions have a

Fig. 6 Chris Marker, photograph opening the chapter on tourism in *Portugal* (F. Villier, 1957)

strong interest in maintaining the *nation* (in its textual and discursive dimension) as the source of their legitimacy and, obviously, they are particularly responsible for shaping the very nation under which they stand. Their role as authenticators of the aspects that define a national nature or an identity in general is, for this reason, easily understood. But once again, all the processes of identity-building should be promoted and perceived as natural ones in order to be collectively and successfully apprehended.

In the attempt to make the constructed dimension of (national) identities in the intricate relationship of photography, tourism and travel books more visible, I would like to finally conclude with a pregnant image concerning the particular case of Portugal (Fig.6). In the last pages of the same photographic travel book I have previously mentioned (Villier 1957), the closing section, which is devoted to tourism, opens with a particularly interesting photograph.

To put it simply, this picture (taken by Chris Marker, who was also the photo-editor of the book and the director of the whole *Petite Planète* series from 1954 to 1958)[6] depicts a Portuguese woman selling magazines, papers and books in a newsstand on the street. Remarkably enough, in the picture, almost all the press we see is international, attesting also the popularity of picture magazines during those years (among *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* or *Daily American*, we can have the glance of picture magazines like *Picture Post, Life, Look* or *Paris Match*). In the midst of this great and cosmopolitan offer of international publications, the lack of titles in Portuguese is both striking and revealing of how this kind of information was not accessible to the common people. These newspapers were to be read either by foreigners or by those who had enough instruction to access texts in foreign languages. As the picture largely exemplifies, the fact that a newsstand is so foreign-oriented is very telling about the characterization of the Portuguese population's cultural behavior. Moreover, and returning to Marker's photograph, it is also very startling to notice how the

6 A deeper analysis of the role of Chris Marker as editor of the *Petite Planète* series can be found in Martins 2010b.

Portuguese seller is completely surrounded and obfuscated by the international titles of the press. The publications are spread almost through the entire surface of the picture, leaving only a little square uncovered, in the center, where this figure is barely perceptible – we can hardly discern her presence for she is almost invisible.

The photograph is strongly emblematic because, once again, the image is a stage for this dynamics between the public and reserved areas of national representation: the real Portuguese seller that we cannot clearly distinguish due to the excess of external information of the glossy publications. In a similar way, and returning to the question of identity, maybe it is also hard to distinguish the real contours of Portugal (or any other country, city or group) and of the Portuguese behind, and despite, all their circulating images. What comes forward in this photograph is mainly a representational problem – a representational problem that ineluctably underlies all the difficult attempts of making any identity visible, present and, most importantly, believable. We are then left with the images. And with the imagination.

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