

The ambiguity of ‘portugalidade’

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*My miserable country!...
And yet there's sun in every corner
and there is no Sea as beautiful elsewhere.
Nor is there heaven merrier than ours,
nor birds, nor water...*

Sebastião da Gama

Summary

‘Portugalidade’ exists or is mere rhetoric to emphasize the possible quality of what is Portuguese? The attempt to mystify the doings of the Portuguese, including the “Epopéia dos Descobrimentos”, which took as one of the pillars of the “Estado Novo”, means that ‘portugalidade’ is dated in the 50 or 60 decades of the XXth century. This is a building process that runs over the identity of the Portuguese, even it does not mirror their idiosyncracies.

Keywords: ‘Portugalidade’; Construction; Advertising; Estado Novo; Grotesque

The construction of the ‘portugalidade’ seems to be well dated and the term is associated to the rivalry between Portuguese culture and Spanish hegemony and to Antonio Sardinha, the main doctrinaire reference of the “Integralismo Lusitano”. This attempt to emphasize the brand of Portugal has deepened the hatred against the Spaniards, a phenomenon that may also have arisen from the fact that both countries border each other, and to a time in the 16 th century, from 1580 to 1640, where there was the dominion of the Spanish King, named Filipe. Hence, among others, popular sayings, such as, “From Spain, you can expect neither good winds nor good marriages”.

However, the emphasis of an alleged ‘portugalidade’ is made during the Estado Novo period (1926-1974), following a clear strategy by the Office of National Propaganda and starring António Ferro, whose ideology was expressed in the 'authenticity' of the Lusitanian identity and who put into practice a policy based on a web made of sebastianism, spiritualism, nationalism, among other rationales that led to

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the exaltation of being Portuguese. The aim was clear: to build the political discourse in a very particular rhetoric, extolling the 'national values' and rejecting outright any settings that could contaminate all this logic, based on an ideology that was taught and disseminated since the early years of school, accompanied by a similar strategy on the part of civil society institutions, all subordinated to the ideology of the regime.

It is no coincidence that this whole dynamic that leads to a fusion between the concepts of nationalism and patriotism, different things, but that, during the Estado Novo, seemed to be united as a consequence of the then current idea: "Everything for the Nation, nothing against the Nation". This is contrary to the logic that is defended by João Medina (2009: 304), when he notes that "the issue of patriotism only makes sense [in] the prospect of living in an enlightened citizenship, performing, open to the world, generous". Nevertheless, he notes, it is important that there coexists a "broad vision of portugueseness/portugalidade" since it helps the Portuguese out of "an attitude of dull sadness' that has widespread" (*idem*: 305).

To all of this, it is not surprising that the feeling of the 'portugalidade' has a shape of 'contemplative past', reflected in a clear form of nostalgia, and is therefore understandable that in times such as the "Estado Novo", the 'glorious facts ', the 'heroism ', have been privileged leaving the failures in the penumbra (Saraiva, 1981). As for the touted 'easy going manners' of the Portuguese and their alleged "goodness", Eduardo Lourenço says this is a falsehood "in his mythology" (Cruz, 2010: 50).

In fact, the "Estado Novo" led this strategy to the limits, using the set, even more vehemently, with initiatives such as the Great Exhibition of the Portuguese World. Hence the attempt to spread the word Portugal is steeped in 50s-60s of the 20th century, in full hangover of the former this initiative, based on the regime's propaganda. But, that idea did not work, because in the meantime, the regime would fall, and what was associated with a solid whole ideology was rejected and but what followed depended on a dynamic of rejection and repulsion of the earlier charges. Even if - as was the case of the 'portugalidade' - the construction has not taken into account the idiosyncrasies of the Portuguese people, despite attempts to consolidate it.

Since the founding of Portuguese nationality the myths walk alongside the history, emerging to open new creations from some of those, for example, the myth of D. Sebastião, with all the ensuing dangers, especially when the fiction is confused with reality. In the early times of the twentieth century Manuel Laranjeira (2009: S/P) stressed that "one of the most typical aspects of Portuguese life and one of its more

destructive evils is the prodigious messianic fertility” ... The ‘portugalidade’ however, never became a myth - perhaps due to the fact that, as Eduardo Lourenço argues (1954), “the existence of the mythical” precedes “empirical existence”, which seems to have happened in this case... And, although the expression 'portugalidade' is not listed in dictionaries of reference, this is a common word in speaking, although its meaning is obviously misguided.

What is certain is that the term is used in particular by the politics more conservative, as can be concluded through consultation of the “Diaries of the Assembly of the Republic” (Portuguese Parliament) that have been published since democracy, which concludes that Members of the CDS/PP are the ones who use the expression more often. Apart from these, the ones who used the word more were the deputy-writers, Manuel Alegre and Natália Correia. From the search performed using the keyword ‘portugalidade’, resulted in 69 records relating to 63 “Diaries of the Assembly of the Republic” (during 34 years), noting that over the years the word has been less used. From 1998 to 2010, the word was mentioned only 13 times. The expression is used, in most cases, when the subject is about the emigration, the Portuguese language and culture and the 'diaspora'; and Lusofony, or when votes of sympathy are approved, as were the cases of António Quadros, Agostinho da Silva Miguel Torga or José Saramago.

A curious fact was held in 2001, with the CDS/PP. With the purpose of launching a “New Dictionary of Contemporary Portuguese Language” (Academy of Sciences of Lisbon), its deputies presented a draft resolution proposing to the maintenance of a permanent working group of defense and updating of the Portuguese language. In that regard, it was stated that the work would constitute “one of the most important acts of the defense of ‘portugalidade’ in recent years and it culminates a clear gap in the defense of our language”. The irony is that in this same dictionary the word ‘portugalidade’ does not exist. ...

The term ‘portugalidade’ is therefore ambiguous and serves a multitude of uses, including advertising, from tourism to Football ... And even today, as if it were a trace, its use is connoted with nationalism, thus relegating patriotism to a secondary plane.

And yet, according to Torres Moreira, one of the pillars of our specificity as a nation and as a separate cultural entity “is the result of historical Portuguese capacity, by a process of symbiosis, of (re) constructing an example of openness that we bequeath to the world” (Moreira, S/D: S/P), so this will be the mainstay of our response to the

challenges that globalization poses: “The Portuguese cultural identity, as an area of autonomy and diversity, is the product of a degree of globalization that has formed an identity as a multicontinental country something different, admittedly, from the one that is manifested today” (*idem, ibidem*).

José Mattoso (1985: 13) argues that Portugal has its own characteristics, stemming from its own national process, so that the movements and ideologies that insist on putting it back towards to Europe or towards Europe, “risk-to destroy the balance or synthesis that is one of the characteristics of 'portugalidade'”. Already Eduardo Lourenço (2009: 180) notes that “the encounter with others is the true meeting with ourselves”... The path of the ‘portugalidade’, while flag of the 'Nation', was never walked over, since it never existed.

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