The Cinematographic Representation of the City of Porto (as seen by the author in six films)

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Resumo: Partindo de uma abordagem antropológica à cultura material, este artigo considera a produção fílmica e o consumo como parte de sistemas de representação e analisa seis filmes portugueses do séc.XX e respectivas representações da cidade do Porto. Colocando a ênfase naquilo que é filmado e como é filmado, destacam-se os temas principais encontrados nessas produções da imagem da cidade e discute-se o papel do filme na construção de uma memória colectiva.

Palavras-chaves: Filme, Porto, identidade social, narrativa, sistemas de representação, produções culturais.

Resumen: A partir de una aproximación antropológica a la cultura material, este artículo considera la producción de películas y el consumo como parte de sistemas de representación y analiza la imagen de la ciudad de Porto según seis películas portuguesas del siglo XX. Mirando qué se ha grabado y cómo se ha grabado se destacan los temas principales encontrados en essas producciones de la imagen de la ciudad y se discute el papel de la película en la construcción de una memoria colectiva.

Palabras clave: Película, Porto, identidad social, narrativa, sistemas de representación, producciones culturales.

Abstract: Departing from a material cultural studies anthropology, the paper takes film production and consumption as part of representational systems, analysing the city image of Porto as represented in six Portuguese films of the 20th century. Looking at what is filmed and how it is filmed, it highlights the main themes found in this city image production and discusses the role of film in the construction of a collective memory.

Keywords: Film, Porto, social identity, narrative, representational systems, cultural productions.

Résumé: A travers l'analyse de six films portugais du XX^o siècle qui s'attachent à la ville de Porto, et en s'appuyant sur une approche anthropologique de la culture matérielle, cet article considère la production filmique et sa réception comme une partie des systèmes de représentation. En mettant l'accent sur

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le choix des éléments filmés et sur la manière de les filmer, on interroge les principaux sujets retenus dans ces images de la ville et on discute le rôle du film dans la construction d'une mémoire collective.

Mots-clés: Film, Porto, identité sociale, narration, systèmes de représentation, productions culturels.

Most nomads claim to 'own' their migration path ..., but in practice they only lay claim to seasonal grazing rights. Time and space are thus dissolved around each other: a month and a stretch of road are synonymous.

Bruce Chatwin, The Songlines

I shall, magnanimous Kublai, uselessly try to describe to you the high-bastion city of Zaira. I could tell you how many steps the streets have, what shape do the porticos' arches have, how many blades of zinc cover the roofs; but I know that it would be the same as not telling you anything. It is not of this that the city is made of, but of the relationship between the measures of its space and the events from its past.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*¹

The City as Lived Space

Athough the name of a city may remain constant, its physical and emotional structure constantly evolves. In a city's materiality lie buried its memories, a vehicle for the past to be carried forward to the lived present and the desired future.

This paper is part of a wider ethnographic work² that dealt with the issues of social identity and belonging in relation to a specific materiality: the city of Porto. According to Tilley, material culture studies aim to

¹Unless otherwise stated, all the translations are the author's.

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explore in a systematic manner the linkage between the constitution of social reality and material-culture production and use (Tilley, 1990: vii). However, the generality of materiality must be complemented by a strategy that looks to the specificity of material domains and the way form itself is employed to become the fabric of cultural worlds (Miller, 1998:6). In the research undertaken this stance is seen as objectified in the concept of a 'sense of place' taken as a *cultural process* (activities, practices and imaginations) through which places are rendered meaningful and multidimensional, i.e., the complex ways in which places anchor lives in social formations (Feld and Basso, 1996: 7).

An ethnography is always a narrative of a lived world. Through examining discursive and nondiscursive modes of expression through which everyday and poetically heightened senses of place are locally articulated, the research aimed at understanding how place connects with social imagination and practice, to memory and desire, to dwelling and movement. The narratives studied were constituted by cultural works (literary, filmic and professional historians' productions) and by experiences of lived place, translated by biographical narratives (local inhabitants') and by photographs (local inhabitants' and tourism related subjects'). All these assume the quality of materiality not only because they have a material objectification, but also because they were taken as 'text' (Ricouer, 1976; 1978; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) and as such are critically analysed in order to examine how they rhetorically construct an unquestioned city image; and as with all narratives of lived worlds, issues of representation and voice are an integral part of the text's construction and interpretation (Clifford and Marcus, 1986).

As with all other forms of art, film does not document: it transfigures. Film diversifies viewpoints while it emancipates the human gaze from the limits of its embodiment, constituting an orthopaedic mobility that multiplies our forms of perception.³ The film's quality of immediacy – a result of the optical illusion created by the mechanical and chemical processes involved – together with its popularity in today's highly imagemediated late-modernity, constitutes it as a privileged materiality for the production of a social memory. The films analysed (table 1) appeared in two contexts with very different audiences: the *Popular Portuguese*

³ Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) clearly states such project for film as an art form.

Flicks festival, part of the St John's city festivities program in year 2000; and the *Odyssey of Images* Film Festival, part of Porto-European Capital of Culture 2001 program. This paper will only present the analysis of the first group of films.⁴

Table 1: Films analysed

The choice of the films to be analysed relates to the specific period during which the research took place, which coincided with a moment in the city's life in which the specificity of Porto was strongly highlighted and actively constructed by different social groups related to the city. During this period occurred both the 1998 national referendum on regional autonomy and the city's role as European Capital of Culture in 2001. It is not unreasonable to argue for a relationship between these two events and the efforts to demarcate the city's character.

Once Upon a Time in Porto...

The narrative in all the films is linear. A story is told from beginning to end without any complications, any 'detours'. Time progresses in a linear, chronological fashion, as do the story lines. In most of the fiction films [Aniki-Bóbó (1942), The Seamstress from Sé (1958), The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960), Jaime (1999)] one finds a generically similar configuration: 1) introduction to the setting; 2) presentation of the characters; 3) emergence of the conflict/drama; 4) conflict/drama's consequences; 5) final resolution of the conflict/drama through a redeeming event (conveying some moral/cautionary tale).⁵

⁴It should be noted that the films which formed part of the 2000 city festivities were shown in open air venues - such as squares, gardens, etc - while the Porto 2001 Film Festival, with its strong emphasis on documentary films, was screened in one of the city council film theatres. From this we have also two very differentiated viewing/consumption/audience contexts for each of the two group of films.

⁵ This is certainly the case for the fictional films from the first half of the twentieth century [Aniki-Bóbó (1942), The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)]. Jaime (1999) does not supply us with the final element here listed. It should also be noted that the earlier films fall within a period considered as the most active in terms of the Estado Novo ideological activity (Torgal 2000, p. 72), producing of a series of Comedy films (Comédias à Portuguesa) that functioned as a machine

Table 1
* Films commissioned by Porto 2001 – European Capital of Culture

FILM		YEAR	DIRECTOR
Douro, Faina Fluvial	short	1931	Manoel Oliveira
Douro, River Toil			
Aniki-Bóbó	Feature	1942	Manoel Oliveira
Aniki-Bóbó	length		
O Pintor e a Cidade	short	1956	Manoel Oliveira
The Painter and the			
City			
A Costureirinha da Sé	Feature	1958	Manuel Guimarães
The Seamstress from	length		
Sé			
O Passarinho da Ri-	Feature	1960	Augusto Fraga
beira	length		
The Little Bird from			
Ribeira			
Jaime	Feature	1999	A-P Vasconcelos
Jaime	length		
Corpo e meio*	short	2001	Sandro Aguilar
In Between;			
Canção Distante*	short	2001	Pedro Serrazina
Distant Song			
Acordar*	short	2001	T Guedes & F Serra
Waking up			
As Sereias*	short	2001	Paulo Rocha
The Mermaids			

Contrary to the representations produced by novelists and chroniclers that were also analysed,⁶ the time of the films is the present, i. e., that of the time of filming. This is the case for all of the films considered, either fiction [*Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958), *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960) and *Jaime* (1999)] or documentary [*Douro, River Toil* (1931) and *The Painter and the City* (1956)], be it short or feature-length. And the time that elapses in the films is always short: from a day [*Douro, River Toil* (1931)] up to a few weeks, perhaps months [*Jaime* (1999)].

Although the setting of the action is always urban, in the early examples [Aniki-Bóbó (1942), The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)] the urban environment depicted is one in which traditional values rule. In this urban world take place the daily minor dramas of mostly working class lives, reproducing the myth of a 'wholesome rural': the 'village' in the city is objectified in these films in the neighbourhood with its small-scale social networks of family and neighbours. The stories are tales of working class urban folk, of small circumscribed worlds in which 'good people live happily', a world similar to the one depicted in Pacheco's chronicles (Santos 2005). It is a world in which even if there are misunderstandings, fights or grievances, everything

of well-humored dreams for consumption by low/middle class urban dwellers of the time (Torgal, 2000,p. 194).

⁶ Agustina Bessa-Luís, (1957), *A Muralha*, Lisboa: Guimarães Editora; Agustina Bessa-Luís, (1996), *Memórias Laurentinas*, Lisboa: Guimarães Editora; Mário Cláudio, (1990), *A Quinta das Virtudes*, Lisboa: Quetzal Editores. Mário Cláudio, (2000), *A Cidade no Bolso*, Porto: Campo das Letras; Júlio Dinis, (1993), *Uma Família Inglesa – Cenas da vida do Porto*, [1868], Porto: Porto Editora; António Rebordão Navarro, (1995), *A Parábola do Passeio Alegre*, Porto: Campo das Letras; António Rebordão Navarro, (1996), *A Praça de Liége*, Porto: Bertrand Editora; António Rebordão Navarro, (1998), *Amêndoas, Doces, Venenos*, Porto: Campo das Letras; Helder Pacheco, (1997), *Intimidades Portuenses*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento; Helder Pacheco, (2001), *Porto: Lugares Dentro de Nós*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento. See Paula J da Mota Santos, *Porto's Historic Centre and the Materiality of Belonging*, London: PhD thesis in Anthropology, University College London – UK, 2005.

⁷ The rural quality of the urban world of old Porto depicted in these films is made explicit in *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960) where the main character's mother travels up the river to her village.

⁸ Helder Pacheco, (1997), *Intimidades Portuenses*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento; (2001), *Porto: Lugares Dentro de Nós*, Porto: Edições Afrontamento.

⁹ These are always sources of humour, and never tense and anxiety-laden moments.

always turns out well (Torgal, 2000: 24). The ruling social morality is one of honest poverty, class conciliation, patriotic values, the punishment of immorality and the rewarding of virtue.¹⁰

In most of the films Porto is portrayed as a place of intimacy since the plots of most of the films centres on a family unit. 11 In Aniki-Bóbó (1942), The Seamstress from Sé (1958), The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) and Jaime (1999) the family is one of the main *loci* of the plot's vicissitudes, with the other being labour. Life is divided between these two locales home and work - with an occasional focus on leisure. However, the film that most distinctively portrays Porto as a *locus* of labour is *Douro*, *River* Toil (1931). Conceived as a city symphony it centres it gaze on the old part by portraying the riverside quay activity when it was a bustling centre of commercial activity. As Costa states, 'All the enormous strength of Douro, River Toil lies in that reality collected live, with no disguises, [a reality] in which the modern poetry of iron and steel, (...) the joy and the misery of man - companion of the beast in the struggle for daily bread are all given to us in a truly grandiose fashion through a working day on the banks of the Douro' (Costa, 1978: 66). Of the films under analysis, only in Douro, River Toil (1931) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) are domestic and labour spaces geographically coincident since the old Porto by the river portrayed in these two films is both living and working space.12

¹⁰ According to Luís Torgal this indirect or contextual *Estado Novo*-promoted ideology is firmly established in Portuguese cinema, namely in the 1930s and 1940s, and is found well into the 1950s (Torgal, 2000, p. 71).

¹¹ Oliveira's 1942 *Aniki-Bóbó* it is not the family as such that is portrayed, but the world of a group of children. The family context is lateral to the action, but it is nevertheless assumed (and occasionally filmed, as in Carlinhos and Teresinha's homes), since these children are not street-kids. They have homes and families, though the camera concentrates its gaze on the time these children spend outside the home (school and street), when they are more masters of their own time and actions. Also Vasconcelos' 1999 film *Jaime*, although also centres its gaze on small middle class urban dwellers, it doesn't present urban folks in such a happy context: if in the early films the main theme is of a 'good-over-evil' tussle, with a romantic interest complementing the main line of the scripts, the main themes in *Jaime* are child labour and dysfunctional families.

¹² In *The Little Bird from Ribeira* this is so at least for two of the main characters, the working class Micas and Madalena. The location of the homes of the wealthier characters is not made explicit.

In the other films, *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) and *Jaime* (1999), these social spaces are polarized, with old Porto being depicted mainly as the locus for family and residential sociabilities, so that in order to work the characters move out of the old part. In these two films, while the loci of residential sociabilities are the narrow traditional houses of old Porto where people frequently stand in the doorway or at the window, vantage-points from which neighbourhood life can not only be observed but also participated in, 13 the locus of working life is outside this urban set. 14 To the streets of small and individualised houses decorated with well-maintained flower-pots the camera opposes the modern bustling city with its wide avenues, soaring multi-storey buildings (where windows and balconies lie empty and anonymous in their repeated architectural similarity) and the civic centre's gardened public spaces embellished by statues that look down indifferently on passing pedestrians. This dichotomy is clear in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) in which the main female character lives her life between her home (in old Porto) and her work on a dressmaker's atelier in a modern block of flats. The camera focuses only on her arrivals and departures from both locales: we know that she has moved from one place to the other and we see how spatially different in urban terms the two are, but we are never shown the actual displacement from one to the other. We are never told whether the two places are close or distant from one another (does she walk to work? Does she have to take public transport?), and are left ignorant of what city lies between the two.

This form of presentation creates a dichotomy, a polarization of spaces (home/domesticity *vs* work/labour) that is accentuated by the visual information conveyed in the film on the urban characteristics of the two settings. The streets and house in old Porto in the former and the modernist high-rise building part of modern Porto in the latter. This dichotomy can be perceived in architectural/urban terms and also in material culture terms. A clear case is *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960) that shows us the interior of old Porto homes as 'traditional' (simply decorated and

 $^{^{13}}$ See for instance the sewing of the Seamstress Pageant' dress by the leading female character in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) on the balcony of her home and the use of windows in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942).

¹⁴ Exceptions are some self-employed characters such as the barber in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) or the shop owner in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942).

with popular 'themes': flower curtains, ironing board, small dining table, canary's cage, etc) mirroring the 'traditional' Porto of its inhabitants (the 'wholesome rural'), while the interior of the circles where the wealthier or 'modern' characters evolve (the liner's cabins and bar; the hotel room and lounge) mirrors the metropolitan modernity of the 1960s (furniture with modernist lines, big paintings on the walls, bright colours, etc).

The clothes worn by the characters also contribute to this dichotomy. The 'local' characters, specially the female, are always depicted wearing traditional clothing, evoking a rural world: knee-length voluminous skirts, plain or flowery buttoned up shirts and headscarves. Remarkable in its use of clothing as marker of different places/social worlds is *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960), namely a scene in which the two girls from the old part visit the wealthy father of one of them in a downtown hotel. Their 'rural' headscarves and long black shawls over their shoulders contrast starkly with the male characters' slick suits and ties and with the modernist interior of the hotel lounge. Later, as the plot progresses and shifts beyond the old part, and the girls get closer to the father in question, they are depicted wearing up-to date modern dresses, coats, high heel shoes and handbags.

Which Porto? – The cartography of the city filmed

In all of the films the city filmed is old Porto. Although we glimpse other areas of metropolitan Porto, or we hear occasional references by the characters to other specific areas of the city, the Porto on which the camera concentrates is mainly old Porto. This area is usually the place where the main characters live, and because the storylines are always centred in a family unit, the old part therefore assumes a fundamental role in the narrative. But how is Porto filmed? A common feature to most of the films is the special care taken in the framing of some scenes in a way that a *vista* is achieved, either before or after the camera's focusing on the characters' action. ¹⁵ The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)

¹⁵ The 'pictorial motifs' most frequently aestheticized in the films are the river, the old part of Porto by the Ribeira area and *D Luís* iron bridge. All of these are also main themes in contemporary illustrated postcards (Santos, 2005).

opens with a sequence of aerial views of Porto. Our eyes are led through the city, seeing it in a way that we rarely do: from the sky. From time to time the camera focuses on particular landmarks (Clérigos tower, D Luís bridge, the old part, the city hall building, etc.), allowing the viewer to identify what might other wise be an unrecognisable city. The film begins then with a wide view of Porto to later move to its heart, the very core of this metropolitan centre: the last section filmed from above is of the river bank area of Ribeira in the old part. Next we find ourselves in Ribeira but at ground level, looking up from across the river to the metallic arch of the D Luís bridge. Then the camera moves down and along the bridge to finally settle on a group of barges docked along the bank, from which a line of young women is unloading coal onto a truck. It will be in this world, in this little corner of Porto that the action will unfold.

The aesthetic care taken in the depicting of the city is clearest in *The* Seamstress from Sé (1958). Throughout the film we are entertained by 'illustrated postcards' of the city: the monumental façade of the cathedral, the S Francisco church, the river and its bridge, etc. The young laundresses' journey in the truck is a remarkable example of a sequence that has no other purpose than as a pretext for displaying several 'iconic' Porto landmarks. Batalha and D João I Squares, the civic centre, Clérigos street and its baroque tower, these are all spaces through which the truck travels, loaded with cheerful girls sitting on huge bundles of washing, waving to endlessly moving pedestrians. The ride has really no strict relation to the plot and one might wonder why it is there. The interesting aspect of this sequence is the way the camera frames the streets through which the joyful truck drives: either at the beginning or the end of a particular city-setting the camera moves to a general plan in which we witness the grandeur and aesthetic quality of that particular Porto place.

In *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942) the protagonists are a group of primary school children who live, study and play in old Porto. If in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) and *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960) two 'Portos' are displayed (with different architectural/urban spaces, different speed of movement – by car *vs.* on foot – different people and moralities), in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942) we rarely glimpse any part of Porto other than its old part. And does Oliveira film old Porto in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942)? Most of

¹⁶ Unrecognisable due to the rarity of such a view point for the normal human eye.

the scenes are filmed in wide-open spaces by the riverbank using long shots. ¹⁷ However, what is interesting is that these shots are almost all filmed on the Gaia, the south side of the Douro and not on Porto's side, the north side. The camera therefore sets the action on Gaia but against the background of old Porto – the scenic and trademark picturesque hill slopes of the old part form the backdrop to the action: we are in Gaia, but we only see Porto, thus we are in Porto.

Apart from this scenic concern - that is also found in a few scenes in Jaime (1999) -, the old Porto filmed in Aniki-Bóbó (1942) is of calm streets without motorized traffic, a feature shared with The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960). The streets are rarely driven through and mostly walked through. This space is one of quietness in which loud city noises are absent. It is a place of nostalgia where there is room for street singers and musicians. Not only does the quietness of old Porto streets allow for this form of making a living, it also allows for the easy pace that makes it possible for people to gather around a group of street musicians and pause in their daily routines to listen to the songs [Aniki-Bóbó (1942); The Seamstress from Sé (1958)]. 18 The same way as with regard to the novels and chronicles analysed (Santos, 2005), the Porto depicted, which is mainly old Porto, is a place of intimacy. This intimacy of old Porto's public spaces is also clearly stated through the frequent images of women and children at windows, not only looking down from their domestic roost at what is taking place out/down in the street, but also partaking in it by interacting with the actors and the drama unravelling in the street.

Very rarely in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), does the camera enter the streets of old Porto, a feature shared with *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960). Oliveira's camera gazes mostly at well-lit open-air spaces, with a visual wideness reaching out to the river and /or to large sections of open sky. To the luminosity of the set ¹⁹ is added, in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), summer

¹⁷ A feature shared with *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960).

¹⁸ To note that one of the characters in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) seems to have two occupations: as a truck driver and as a street singer/musician. However we only find him playing the accordion and singing in old Porto streets; whenever we find him in 'modern' Porto is as the truck driver.

¹⁹ All films depict a consistently sunny Porto, except in the final scene of *Jaime* (1999).

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warmth, shown not only by the characters clothing, 20 but especially by the children's swims in the river. The narrow streets of old Porto are only shown from the outside looking in: the characters either enter or exit from these urban units whose interiors fade into darkness. The interior of old Porto streets is an unknown space; if depicted it is from a higher vantage point, as for instance from the windows of the characters' houses. The only time when this interior is clearly pictured is precisely in one of the most tension-laden moments. Carlinhos, the main character, has already committed the unthinkable: he has stolen the doll and his conscience is heavy. It is night time. The narrow streets are dimly lit and the walls are painted with long shadows. The children are going to play 'cops and robbers'. Eduardo, the leader of the group, lines the others up against the wall in order to select those that shall play the 'cops' and those that shall play the 'robbers'. As Eduardo goes through the nursery ryme Aniki-Bóbó, Carlinhos ends up being a robber. 'I don't want to be a robber!' he shouts. As the game goes on, the children stampede through the narrow cobbled streets. Carlinhos runs, trying to escape both the 'cops' and his conscience. The camera frequently uses tilted shots to depict a dark, labyrinthine space fill with terror and fear through which the children run vertiginously, pursued by their long shadows cast on the walls: this is a dark inner place that mirrors the character's state of $mind.^{21}$

In Jaime (1999), the narrow streets of old Porto are also not frequently depicted. The family does live in old Porto, but only twice are we allowed to see the wider setting of the characters' home. This is at Codeçal steps, actually one of the widest streets in old Porto, and perhaps one of the most picturesque, located not to far from a more modern part of the city. The same way as for Oliveira, for Vasconcelos the inner space of old Porto is a place of darkness, both literally and metaphorically. The only time in Jaime (1999) when the camera does clearly picture the inner streets of old Porto is when the main character, Jaime, a fourteen year

²⁰ Shorts and shirts for the boys, and a light summer dress for the girl.

²¹ The other only time when an inner space of old Porto streets is pictured in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), is when the children gather, again at night time, to talk about Eduardo's accident. The talk is about death and related fears. The cinematographic technique (tilted shots and long shadows) used by Oliveira in these scenes, as well as in the inner Barredo scenes in *Douro*, *River Toil* (1931), is seen by some authors as closely related to Expressionist aesthetics (Andrade, 2001, p. 47).

old kid, is asking a bar worker, a young adult male with bleached hair, black trousers and T-shirt, if he cannot get him some sort of job, like helping with the washing up in the bar or something. The dialogue/action is set in a broad section of an inner street in Barredo. The walls have graffiti and the paint on the wooden doors is flaking. The young male tells him 'no way'. The boss would not risk having an underage kid working for him. As he gets his arm around Jaime's shoulders, he suggests him that if in fact he needs some money, he 'should do the mother fucking film he told him about. Besides they don't really care about the age thing and pay really well.' Jaime tells him to fuck off as he runs up the steep Barredo steps.

If in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), and *Jaime* (1999), the inner streets of old Porto are the set of, if not real, at least potential doom, the old Porto streets in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958) are a place of wholesome normality. Essentially only one street is depicted, that on which the main characters live: two families in the same house – one occupying the ground floor and the other living on the floor above. This film is intent on picturing a specific type of Porto. From the opening scenes while the theme song is heard, we are shown a sequence of shots, of different *vistas*, tantamount to perfectly framed 'city illustrated postcards'. The river, the iron bridge, the rooftops, the Grilos' church façade, the Ribeira street market, etc... we find it all there. 'That is Porto!', a perception underlined by the song's lyrics. The representation of a traditional and picturesque Porto²⁴ is so strong in this film's visual narrative that the real connection between the spaces being filmed is frequently obliterated and created anew. A viewer knowledgeable of Porto's geography and attentive to

²² It must be noted that the street used for the film set is really not an inner street as such. It is a street located on the 'periphery' of the core of Sé's quarter (*Bairro da Sé*). It has houses only on one side, the other being constituted by the slope on the top of which is the Cathedral ($S\acute{e}$).

²³ The images parallel the song lyrics, whose refrain goes 'That colourful little corner [seen] from my window, that sweet little corner from where I cast my sight gazing over my Porto's rooftops. I can see the river, the mountain, the bridge, our land/home; I can see Sé, our altar'.

²⁴ This intent is also clearly noticeable in the filming of two street markets: the one in Ribeira by the riverbank and the one in Escura Street. The latter is filmed close up, and so depicts a bustling, frantic space; most of the shots centre on vendors and their produce (eggs, live poultry), giving an image of a rural market.

the spatial routes depicted in the film would be surprised to find spatial discontinuities, i. e., geographical impossibilities depicted in it.²⁵

As already stated, the Porto depicted in the films here analysed is mainly old Porto with occasional and marginal references to other areas, but even these sometimes are only audio references and not visual ones. The Seamstress from Sé (1958) includes an audio reference to a drive to Foz, footage part of a FC Porto match at the Antas stadium, and a scene set in the grounds of Palácio Cristal. Although The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) broadens its spatial scope to the Leixões harbour and Porto's airport, these are detours required by the plot in order for the characters to catch a transatlantic liner and a plane, and their connection to Porto, the city, is never made visually clear. The city filmed is still essentially the old part. In The Seamstress from Sé (1958) two spaces that not from the old part are shown frequently: the civic centre and the outside of the modern building that houses the seamstress's atelier. Both places are related to the characters' work.

According to Seixas (1999: 142), Porto reached its demographic peak in the 1950s. The 1960s witness both the beginning of a decrease in Porto's demographics and the increase of its metropolitan area. It should be noted that three of the feature length films date from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. However, in all of them it is Seixas' 'traditional' city that is portrayed, with the majority of what actually constituted Porto at the time excluded from the world (re) presented by the filmmakers. This 'forgetting' (Forty and Küchler, 2001) by film production and imagery of an already metropolitan agglomeration, as Porto was in the 1950s and 1960s, is an important element in the production of a specific Porto's image and character then and today: one that is evoked as 'tra-

²⁵ This is the case when two of the main male characters are driving into the Infante Square. The sequence starts with the car moving from the west side (Alfândega Nova Street) towards the Infante area. In the next shot sequence, the car is entering the Ribeira tunnel making, not a western but a eastern approach to the Infante area. Since the camera views the city through the car's windscreen, the purpose seems to be the production of an aesthetic effect of awe as the screen moves from complete darkness to a ever widening vista of the old houses and the square at the end of the tunnel crossing.

²⁶ This particular film brings in another theme in this Porto depiction: its role as a exit point to Portuguese migrants to Brazil. One of the main characters is one such migrant returning to Portugal after having succeeded in making a fortune in Brazil.

ditional', almost pre-modern and objectified in the city's old part working class world.²⁷

What Porto? – The social world of the city filmed

With the exception of The Painter and the City (1956), which centres its gaze on the work of the painter António Cruz, 28 all the films under analysis have Porto's working class inhabitants as main characters. This is not to say that upper-middle or upper class characters are absent from the universes depicted, but that they are never central to the narrative [although some of these characters play important roles in the narrative's outcome, as in The Seamstress from Sé (1958), The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) and Jaime (1999)]. This is the complete opposite to what takes place in the novels analysed (Santos 2005). In the early films [Aniki-Bóbó (1942), The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)], the focus on this social world results from the contemporary context of Portuguese film production, in which the worlds depicted in film tended to mirror the world of their viewers: the urban working or low middle classes (Torgal, 2000: 196). The protagonists of these films – small-shop owners and employees, domestic servants, self-employed professionals, civil servants - are also the cinema-going audience. Other social groups of the urban world of the time - industrial proletariat, criminals or beggars - are not depicted in these early films (Torgal, 2000: 198/199).²⁹

²⁷ The only film that in a way broadens the gaze over the realities part of the Porto it films, thus filming a wider topography of the city, is *Jaime* (1999). Nevertheless, it also participates in the re-production of a Porto image based on a specific pictorial representation and in a specific social world as will be discussed below.

²⁸But can artistic production be labelled 'work'?...

²⁹ There is a criminal in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958), but he is never depicted as such: he is a burglar who presents himself as a upper class character and disappears after the robbery. Also, Barata, one of the characters in *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960), dedicates his time to the selling of smuggled goods, but he is always presented in a cheerful manner, as a small time crook who tries to make ends meet through is ingenious ability to deceive the police.

The only film with a broader social spectrum is *Jaime* (1999). Jaime, the main character, is a child from a low-middle class background. The parents are separated. His father is unemployed, his mother works as a supermarket cashier and Jaime tries to earn some money by working nights at whatever is available. He is hoping to be able to buy a motorbike for his father in order to substitute the one that was stolen. By solving this Jaime hopes to solve his father unemployment situation and ultimately, his parents' separation.³⁰ Every day his mother leaves the two small daughters with a 'dry nurse'- a woman who, as the film immediately shows, carries out abortions in a backroom, freeing working class women from yet another burden. The world portrayed in Jaime (1999) is one in which the characters seem to be on the borders of human self-esteem, where a step to one side might bring moral and/or physical degradation.³¹ The children have to fence for themselves in adult worlds whose misery and need for survival forces them to have adult lives, working after school hours - or even skipping school altogether-, having to fend for themselves in a brutal world in which their illegal situation leaves them at the mercy of unscrupulous employers and often violent adult co-workers. The Porto here depicted does go beyond the old part. The supermarket in which Jaime's mother works is in a shopping mall in the upper west area of the city and the sequences filmed when Jaime goes to meet her there display a modern, metropolitan Porto: heavy traffic and shop windows brightly illuminated with colourful neon with recognisable brand names. The supermarket itself is also a symbol of modern consumer society with rows of disciplined products and staff in uniform. Jaime's various work places are also part of a metropolitan Porto: the industrial bakers, the golf course and the construction site. The sequences filmed in the latter are set in the eastern outskirts of Porto showing the skyline of a metropolitan city in the background. This and the sheer scale of the construction site, clearly show that the action is set in a metropolitan centre.

³⁰ A script line that can be seen as reminiscent of De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (1948).

³¹ This perspective is corroborated by the illegal abortion practitioner and her weakened clients, the suggestion to enter in a porn film, the drug addict, the suicide of the unemployed father, and obviously the child-labour situation, one that will lead to the death of one of the teenagers.

But how are the social worlds depicted in these films? As already stated these worlds always centre on the family. In Jaime (1999) the family background is clearly fraught with difficulties, and even both The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) refer to an awkward family situation. The main character in *The Seamstress* from Sé (1958) lives with who we assume are her parents. But we are later made aware that this is not the case since she addresses them as Padrinho (godfather) and Madrinha (godmother). In fact, she was left as a baby on their doorstep, and the couple took her in and brought her up as their own. A shadow hangs over the complete happiness of the young woman, since she doesn't know who her father was, and thus has no name (surname). 32 A similar shadow due to illegitimacy is also cast over the main character in The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960), whose strong willed mother was left to fend for herself with a child in her arms by a 'no good man'. Nevertheless these difficulties are not complete barriers to both films' characters' moral stature. The element of social disgrace was not brought about by their moral wrongdoings but by the wrongdoings of others (who funnilly enough are all male), and therefore their moral stature and value as role-models are not only untouched but actually strengthened. Within an adverse context these young women are able to construct a respectable life path.

If in the early examples [The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)] the family is a place of happiness (if not always harmonious), the same cannot be said of Jaime (1999). This difference can also be noticed in the portrayal of the materiality of the characters' homes interiors. In Aniki-Bóbó (1942), The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) the interiors filmed are harmonious: neatly divided spaces clearly segregating domestic functions. The living room is an example of domesticity with the centrality of the dining table around which the family gathers around for the meals. Jaime's house doesn't depict such a 'harmoniously segregated' domestic space. Apart from the mother's bedroom, the sombre open space that makes up the rest of the home is one in which the distribution of

³²Since the female character was not officially an orphan, but an abandoned child (and thus most probably the fruit of an illegitimate relation), the couple who took her in could not adopt her and give her their surname: Portuguese law required the consent of the biological parents for adoption of abandoned children.

the furniture creates divisions: a kitchen, sleeping areas, etc. This cluttered space proportions feelings of warmth but also of tension as when the main character hears his mother having sexual intercourse with her partner, and when the latter sieves through Jaime's belongings to find and steal his hard-earned money. The way the family is portrayed in these films constructs an old Porto that can be seen as a place of transgression of dominant sexual moral rules, or to what is assumed to be so: illegitimacy [The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)], living-in abusive lover [Jaime (1999)], abortion [Jaime (1999)], the suggestion of sexual/emotional [The Seamstress from Sé (1958), The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) and Jaime (1999)], and financial exploitation [Jaime (1999)] of both the female and children characters – the protagonists – by a dominant male/adult-Other.

Interesting to note is the strategy the films use to construct a 'local authenticity' value. Apart from a 'visual' strategy, by which several wellknown Porto places are filmed or frame the action, there is an 'audio' strategy. In the early films the main characters usually have no Porto accent - except the children featured in Aniki-Bóbó (1942), who were actually Porto children and not child-actors. The strategy implies the use of local people as extras, who were given a few lines. These lines are spoken by working class people who had very strong Porto accents and so lend a trace of authenticity, of 'local colour', to the film.³⁴ In *Jaime* (1999), the Porto accent is made present in the main character and his schoolmate, both local children who got their first acting experience in the film, but absent in Jaime's mother, father and other supporting characters, who are professional actors. A further 'local colour' strategy is the frequent use of swear words by the two children and some of the other characters, a strategy which is also found in The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960). The clear presence of

³³This same closeness in space can be read in the scene depicting Jaime's mate's bedroom where bunk beds signal a heavily shared bedroom where a brother shooting drugs seems to go almost unnoticed. This 'present day feel' to the scene is also given by the playing of *Tetris* by one of the characters and the mention of his *Nike* trainers. The bedroom walls are lined with FC Porto, *Dragon Ball* and sports car posters.

³⁴ See scenes during the 'Cop and Robbers' game in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), the local female vendor and the posting of the wallpaper notice in *The Seamstress from Sé* (1958), the women in the fight-on-the-square scene in *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960) and the restaurant owner/manager in *Distant Song* (2001).

the Porto accent and of swear words in the discourses uttered by the people from the old part, is the cinematographic objectification of characteristics nationally taken as stereotypical of true Portoans. Very distinctive in this construction of a forthright and unabashed Porto inhabitant is Micas in The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960). She is a strong-willed woman who brought up her child alone, described as 'a thirty devils woman!' by male characters, and who is able to face the unjust male dominated world on an equal footing. Truly representative of this forceful spirit of Porto's people as embodied by the working class Micas is the quarrel scene set in the Ribeira sq between her and her wealthier landlord. With a speech full of slang and punctuated by a boisterous body language, she responds to an unjust statement by the landlord about her daughter's and her own moral fibre, commenting with humour and innuendo on the landlord's sister behaviour. The ever-increasing local working-class crowd enjoys the humour, roaring with laughter at innuendo after innuendo. Finally the landlord responds angrily with an insult; Micas grabs hold of her clog and the dispute of wits is set to become physical. A policeman arrives, but Micas also defies him, and ends up taken to the local station amidst a boisterous crowd. The camera then moves to a tilted distant shot of the characters (whose vicissitudes we had been following at ground level) slowly moving into a long shot of the crowded square below where the scene has degenerated into a generalised pitch battle.

Old Porto as the resilient subaltern

Of the films here under analysis *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960) and *Jaime* (1999), display as a trace characteristic of the Porto inhabitant the forcefulness of character, translated into the frequent use of swear words and the ability to make ends meet in adverse conditions and lead a rightful life, even if this achieved through unorthodox means. Barata and Micas in *The Little Bird from Ribeira* (1960), the children in *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942) and the young teenagers in *Jaime* (1999) are representative of this valued ingenuity and ability to out-think, out-manoeuvre and outsmart the official and legal constraints set by the dominant system. This portrayal is close to Certau's time/space-bound differentiation between 'strategies' and 'tactics' (Certeau, 1984: 29/42).

However, the representation of old Porto's social world in these films goes beyond Certeau's approach in as much as it holds a moral judgement. If the social world depicted can be said to be one of a powerful subaltern, who is resilient and able to develop and deploy resistance and survival strategies, it does so while holding an unblemished moral stature, not so much in spite of, but because of its circumstances.

The gendering of the subaltern in this cinematographic representation should also be noted. If the subaltern-Other is cartographically located in old Porto (which is a poor area, a working-class area of the city) it is also mainly objectified through the female-body and the child-body. The heroes of these filmed worlds, who eventually overcome the difficulties encountered throughout the action, are always either female [The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960)], or children [Aniki-Bóbó (1942) and Jaime (1999)], two body-identities that are a frequent objectification of the subaltern condition by dominant groups, mostly visible in and known from colonial and post-colonial representational (con)texts (Mascia-Lees and Black 2000:85-89). Also, by objectifying the subaltern-Other through the female and the child body, hegemonic systems of representation produce a discourse of infantilisation of difference, thus symbolically depriving the Other of the attributes of responsibility (Hall, 1997b: 262) while reinforcing the hegemonic subject's control over it. It is therefore possible to argue that the filmic embodiment of the subaltern-Other analysed here reinforces this same status as attributed to old Porto by the writers' systematic depiction of this place as the locale of mainly working-class lives, along with the values and the lifestyles attributed to this group by the dominant bourgeois culture while gaining something that was lacking in the novels: a centrality that stems from old Porto being the area where the action takes place (while in the novels this area of the city is peripheral to the action).

The bourgeois world portrayed by both writers and novelists (Santos, 2005) is probably related to the writers' own social background. However, the centring of 'heroic' working class lives by the cinematographic gaze – whose directors are also from a middle class and sometimes even bourgeois background – requires a more complex explanation. Both the medium and the respective audiences are relevant to this difference between the representational forms of novels and films (differently gendered and shifting in focus from bourgeois to working class). The

production costs for a film are much higher than for a book, thus making films a complex process of negotiation that is closely related to estimated box office success. The Seamstress from Sé (1958) and The Little Bird from Ribeira (1960) not only portray a 'Porto spirit' in a more stereotypical manner but are also the closest to the ideological function of the 1930s and 1940s comedy films, a fact that might help to explain the focus on small urban working class worlds. Oliveira's Aniki-Bóbó (1942), – which was not well received by the Portuguese critics of the time: it was felt to display a 'poverty' image of Portugal - was made after the unexpected success of Douro, River Toil (1931) and rode on the opportunities opened by it, while Jaime (1999) is the work of a reputed director who is usually able to combine proficient filmmaking with box office success. Since both Oliveira and Vasconcelos are more complex directors than Guimarães or Fraga, a complete understanding of the significance of the latter two films would require a fuller consideration of their directors' career (in particular that of Oliveira, who developed a close relationship with the novelist Bessa-Luís and her bourgeois worlds in some of his later films). However this paper does not aim at such a depth of analysis of film production, which would be a research topic in its own right. With regard to the filmic cultural representation of Porto, it is argued that the filmic representational system shares in a pattern in the way old Porto is culturally produced in other domains as the space/time of the subaltern-Other. Nevertheless, in relation to the differences to be found with the other representational media, it is tentatively argued that to the former are most certainly related the specificities of film as a medium, namely in terms of production and audience demands and targeting.

Systems of Cultural Representation and Film

Culture is about shared meanings, and language (in its broadest sense) is the privileged medium through which we make sense of things, the medium through which meaning is produced and exchanged. Culture is not a set of things: it is a set of practices because cultural meanings are not 'in the head'; cultural meanings organize and regulate social practices and thus have practical consequences. Through cultural practices, the participants in a culture give meaning to people, objects and events

(Hall, 1997a). The analysis here presented of the films should not be read within a 'ways of seeing' theory or approach such as the cultural reception theories that were initiated in the 70s and 80s – such as Berger (1972) and Rosen (1986) – to then be criticised in the 90s – in works such as for instance Mayne (1993) and Clover (1992). As already stated in the beginning of this paper, the analysis presented here is part of a wider study that dealt with issues of place and belonging through the generality of materiality complemented by a strategy that looked at the specificity of material domains and the way form itself was employed to become the fabric of cultural worlds (Miller, 1998).

Social identity is here taken in the sense of 'identification', a concept that evokes the processual open-ended and continuously negotiated character of social identity. To this processual character of social identity relates the concept of 'narrative' as used by Heidegger (1977) and also by Ricouer (1976; 1978). The usefulness of the latter concept stems also from its 'performativity'. The notion of performativity was introduced and developed by Judith Butler in her work on sex and gender (1990,1993,1997), in which gendered identity was understood as performative, i.e. as having no ontological status apart from the various citational processes that constitute its reality. Performances become more meaningful and more authoritative as they are repeated "[P]erformativity ... is not a singular act, for it is always reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status...it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (Butler, 1993:12). This analysis shows the sense of place of old Porto and its ascribed social identity as a narrative constructed through performance, the latter possible to encompass a wide range of realities from the production and consumption of cultural productions on old Porto - namely film – , to lived practices of the place and the way the latter is narrated both discoursively and iconographically by specific social groups (Santos 2005).

The quality of film as representational system is unquestionable, but these films here in analysis are particularly interesting in as much as Porto appears rarely with such centrality within Portuguese cinemato-

³⁵For a review of reception theory impact in anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking, see Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture – Explorations of Film & Anthropology*, Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2000, p. 181-193.

graphic production.³⁶ This infrequent presence in film productions and the popularity of the films under consideration, allied to their frequent exhibition within Porto-related film events, makes them a particularly powerful vehicle for the construction of present day Porto through their value as objectification of the city's memory.³⁷ Carruthers in her book on Medieval memory states the following: "Merely running one's eyes over the written pages is not reading at all, for the writing must be transferred into memory, from graphemes on parchment or papyrus or paper to images written in one's brain by emotion and sense." (Carruthers, 1992: 10) Emotion and sense is precisely what art aims at producing in its audience, and film does so in a terribly clear manner, as even the early accounts of viewers' reaction to the moving train images exhibited by the Lumiére brothers in their cinemas (Barnow 1993: 8) so clearly shows. And where a form of cultural production is valued for its social functions, as film is on today's western society, those works provide the source of a group's memory. To the construction of a public memory one must relate authority and authorship and composition, the latter being the activity that links the first two. Again, according to Carruthers, "The memory bits culled from works read or digested [or from life as filmed] are ruminated into a composition - that is basically what an 'author' does with 'authorities'." (Carruthers, 1992: 189). According to Featherstone (1995) all social groups have agents that act as producers of culture, constituting important forces in the construction of a sense of a distinctive, orthodox, collective self. The cultural production of a 'true tripeiro', 38 of the

³⁶For an extensive analysis of the role of Porto in Portuguese cinematographic production see Sérgio Andrade, *O Porto na História do Cinema*, Porto: Porto Editora/Porto Capital Europeia-2001, 2001.

 $^{^{37}}$ In this looped context one might wonder of how much of A-P Vasconcelos' film *Jaime* is not a rendering of homage to Oliveira's *Aniki-Bóbo*: both located in old Porto, both with a young boy as main character - Jaime and Carlinhos; both boys struggling with and overcoming their own faults, and particularly, both main characters have a best friend who acts as a funny counterpoint to their more sombre personality: Ulisses in *Jaime* and Batatinhas in *Aniki-Bóbó* – and both Ulisses and Batatinhas use a head cover (a cap in Ulisses and a beret in Batatinhas) and both struggle with oversized foot wear...

³⁸ The name given to Porto inhabitants, meaning 'tripe people'. This naming of Porto's inhabitants results from a specific episode in the history of Porto: during the Portuguese maritime expeditions of the fifteenth century the town supplied the ships heading to the African coast with all the food it had, leaving Porto's inhabitants with

true spirit of the city of Porto, can be traced through the work of a variety of cultural producers, past and present, ranging from painters to architects, poets and novelists, professional historians and journalists, photographers, musicians and, as showed in this paper, filmmakers.

Approaching film as a cultural production that participates of wider systems of social representation renders obsolete the traditional division between film-fiction and film-documentary and this is why this analysis encompasses both genres. Film-fiction and film-documentary are both gazes over a reality and a result of the filmmaker's options and possibilities. As a social scientist who also films, my concern is never of objectivity as such, but of finding the right way (the rhetoric of the image) to portray the social world the way I perceive it to be. Photography, it is said, it is not an unified practice, but a medium utterly diverse in its functions (Evans and Hall, 1999: 2). The same can be said of film. In western thought 'seeing' has always been closely associated with 'knowing' (Arendt cit in Urry, 1999: 36), a stance that bears both on photography and on film. The approach followed here in the analysis of the films presented considers that the significations of social or class values in systems of visual representation do not merely derive reflectively from the real, being instead but one aspect of a specific politics of representation and knowledge.

"The entire significance of the idea of a politics of representation is that it refuses to regard cultural practices as merely reflective of, and subservient to, other political struggles taking place in the non-textual. The politics of representation are much occupied with questions of alignment and identification, with points of view, and perspectives." (Watney, 1986: 187)

Thus, representation is a practice here taken as closely linked to both identity and knowledge, being an essential part of the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged through the use of materialities that stand for or represent things. The films analysed produce a specific sense of the city of Porto, one that identifies this city as a working city (the main characters are always working class - exception for The Painter and the City (1956) -; it is a city where we find traditional values and lives (it is the working class world of the old part that is

nothing else to eat but the intestines of the animals that supplied the salted beef for those ships. Tripe is a typical dish of Porto.

centralized in the cinematographic narratives; the old part by the river banks is also most clearly the central motif of António Cruz' watercolours depicted in The Painter and the City; this old part working class world is frequently cinematographically represented as 'the rural in the city' and rarely portrayed as a social class within a wide metropolitan centre that resides in other parts of the city, such as for instance, social housing estates); it is also a city where there resides an unbasheful and heroic subaltern (the main characters are always embodied by a subaltern identity: not only working class, but also either female or children; the main characters have also an heroic quality in the way that they are able to overcome the life-difficulties that fate throws at them being frequently unafraid of answering back to higher authority (the police, the landlord, the shopkeeper, etc) when they feel righteousness is on their side. These same features can be identified for instance in the historians' discourse (Santos, 2004) which is one of the main sources for both the popular educated discourse on the city.³⁹ In the cinematographic representation of Porto, the materiality of the old part in as much as an urban area, as a topos and as a social fabric, as a lived world, acts as the synecdoche of the city, one that finds its epitome in the so frequently evoked city's motto: Antiga, Mui Nobre, Leal e Sempre Invicta (Old, very noble, loyal and never defeated), or 'a invicta' for short, thus bringing to the light and to the camera eye values such as freedom, work, and righteousness. However, as in all narratives, it does so by leaving in the shade and thus out of camera, many other sides to the city that speak of guite diverse worlds from the ones portrayed so far by the cinematic eye.

³⁹For a full analysis of the historians' discourse on the city see Paula Mota Santos (2004), "A cidade do Porto e o ser-se 'tripeiro' como produção cultural", in Anthony Barker,(ed), *The Power and Persistence of Stereotyping*, Aveiro: Dept. de Línguas e Culturas, 2000, p. 127-141.

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