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Between Europe and the Atlantic. Portugal as Semi-Periphery

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An overview of the history of Portuguese expansion and imperialism shows that Portugal tended to define itself simultaneously as the centre of a colonial empire and a periphery of Europe: in the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, as a semi-periphery.¹ Portugal's ambiguous position was, early in its history, inscribed in frequent references to the country's geographical location. In his first chronicle of the expansion (1449-1450) Gomes Eanes de Zurara states: «here on one side the sea hems us in and on the other we face the wall of the Kingdom of Castile».² The notion of a siege implied by this definition was developed by Luís de Camões, the national poet, writing in the sixteenth century. In his epic *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusiads*), Camões elevates a confining geographical condition into the identity of an expanding homeland. He describes the «Lusitanian Kingdom» as a borderland «where the land ends and the sea begins».³ The fact that Portugal shares a border with the hitherto unexplored ocean means that a large part of its history has taken place outside European circuits. In *The Lusiads*, Portugal is the «head of Europe», which may be defined more widely as the head of the world given the poem's Eurocentric parameters. This founding discourse of national identity is elaborated from its inception as a journey that unites origin that is, the West – with the unknown world of the East. To cite Camões' poem:

We Portuguese are from the West,
We come in search of the lands of the East.⁴

¹ B. de S. SANTOS, *O Estado, as relações salariais e o bem-estar social na semiperiferia: o caso português*, in Id (Ed.) *Portugal: Um Retrato Singular*, Porto, 1993, p. 20.

² All translations from the original Portuguese are my own. «ca da ua parte nos cerca o mar de outra havemos muro no reino de Castela», G. E. de ZURARA, *Cronica da Tomada de Ceuta*, Mem Martins 1992, p. 52. See also L. F. F. R. THOMAZ and J. S. ALVES, *Da Cruzada ao Quinto Império*, in F. BETHENCOURT and D. RAMADA CURTO (Eds.), *A Memória da Nação*, Lisboa, 1991, pp.81-164.

³ L. CAMÕES, *Os Lusíadas*, Lisboa, 1992, III, 20.

⁴ *Ib.* I, 50.

A further foundational notion contributes to Portugal's sense of identity: its pioneering role as a mediator between worlds. This turns its frontiers into arbiters of communication and thus of control over the worlds on either side. Such a notion is driven by a doubly centrist image of Portugal: in relation to Europe, Portugal was the discoverer of new worlds, spreading news of their existence throughout the European nations; in relation to a variety of Others, Portugal was the representative of Europe. Thus Portugal is perceived as a Janus-figure facing both Europe and the Atlantic.

However, besides celebrating Portugal as centre of the world, *The Lusíads* also depicts Portugal's 'fragilities' in its attempt to retain its central position. This explains why the poet, who starts his epic by beseeching the ancient Muse to stop chanting because «another higher valour is rising up»,⁵ ends it on a melancholic note, referring to the «dark and vile sadness»⁶ into which his homeland has plunged. Through its artistic elegance, the subtle, ambiguous discourse embodied in *The Lusíads* provides a complex image of the Lusitanian Kingdom. This image swings between celebration of the nation as the vanguard of Europe and consideration of the threats that would cause its decline, turning it into a backwater of Europe as foretold in the epic.

Lusotropicalism: Romance at the Semi-Periphery

The Lusíads is an epic about a small nation on the western edge of Europe which traversed the open seas in search of universal status. The poet's perspective is infused with a notion of universality mediated through romantic love. It is out of love that Tethys opens up the seas and the 'gates to the East' to Vasco da Gama, the heroic Portuguese navigator celebrated in the epic. Nymphs repeatedly save the Portuguese sailors from the dangers of the unknown, from strong winds and from the boundless ocean. Finally, it is through romance that the Portuguese celebrate their empire on the famous Island of Love (Island of Venus) in the epic's ninth canto. The island represents the warriors' reward and regeneration through love. Following Helder Macedo's analysis, for Camões love is an existential process and the ultimate goal of human endeavour⁷. Camões was one of the first European poets to weep for the death of a lover from the East, his Chinese Dinamene, with her 'meek and pious gaze', whose virtues (gentleness, gravitas, modesty,

⁵ *Ib.* I, 3..

⁶ *Ib.* X, 145..

⁷ H. MACEDO, *Love as Knowledge: The Lyric Poetry of Camões*, «Portuguese Studies», 14, 1998, p. 51.

goodness, and serenity) were those traditionally associated with the European model of the *donna angelicata*. In addition to oriental beauty, Camões celebrates «blackness of love» for the slave Bárbara, «so sweet that the snow vows to exchange its colour for hers», whose revitalizing serenity, shy smile and gentle sweetness are described in terms very similar to those used by the poet to describe his “heavenly” Circe.⁸ Macedo notes that to have sexual relations with native women is one of the perks of empire, but what is unusual is the way the poet dignifies the racial aspect of his dark mistress who «seems strange but not barbarous».⁹ As Macedo observes,

The onomatopoeic non-word “barbara” is derived from the Greek term used to mimic the subhuman non-intelligibility of languages spoken by other peoples and is a form of denial of their different human identity. By using it as the beloved’s name in a poem celebrating her blackness, Camões transforms it into an affirmation of identity for his strange, but certainly not barbarous servant-mistress.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the same poet who elevates love for the Other, recognizing it as an independent identity, writes to a friend in a letter from Goa about the lack of beauty and dignified courting among local women, begging for white European women to come from Portugal:

So what about the women of the country? Apart from being the colour of brown bread, just suppose you try Petrarchan or Boscanesque gallantries on them: they answer you in language as coarse as vetch, which tastes bitter to the palate of one’s understanding and dampens one’s ardour, be it the most fervent in the world. Just imagine, sir, the feelings of a stomach accustomed to resisting the false charms of the adorned little face of a Lisbon lady, being confronted now with this loveless salted meat. (...).¹¹

This double standard manifest in Camões’s love for the Other parallels the double positioning that marks Portugal’s long colonial presence in the world. The duplicity, or at least ambiguity, inherent in Portugal’s relationship with the Other and in Portuguese colonialism itself has undoubtedly marked Portuguese imperialism, just as, in a different context, it allows the

⁸ *Ib.*, p. 60.

⁹ To quote the *Lamentations for a slave called Bárbara*, L. CAMÕES, *Endechas a Bárbara Escrava*, – *Lírica*, Lisboa, 1980, pp. 82 and 85.

¹⁰ MACEDO, *Love as Knowledge: The Lyric Poetry of Camões*, p. 61.

¹¹ Quoted in C. WILLIS, *The Correspondance of Camões*, «Portuguese Studies», 11, 1995, p. 61.

nation to be classified as semi-peripheral, even in today's changed context. Boaventura de Sousa Santos follows the earlier historian Charles Boxer in classifying Portuguese colonialism as a semi-peripheral colonialism, a colonialism enacted by a country that was imperially deficient.¹² For Sousa Santos, Portugal failed to colonize effectively and at the same time induced an excessive degree of colonization, since its colonies were subjected to a double colonization: by Portugal itself and, through Portugal, by the more powerful European players on which Portugal was often dependent. This accounts for the distinct nature of Portuguese colonialism.

Sousa Santos's interpretation is premised on a hierarchy of models of colonization, with the British model, from the nineteenth century onwards, being normative. While British imperialism maintained a precarious balance between colonialism and capitalism, Portuguese imperialism was marked by a precarious imbalance between excessive colonialism and insufficient capitalism.¹³ This helps to explain the self-representation of the Portuguese colonizer as positioned somewhere between colonized and colonizer; to use Sousa Santos's metaphor, between Prospero and Caliban. In Portugal's African empire, established at the end of the nineteenth century, the need for the Portuguese to view themselves as colonizers was directly proportionate to their proximity to the colonized. From very early on, this situation created alternative models of colonial society, based on the mixed-race relationships resulting from the fact that the colonizing group was overwhelmingly male and poor, and from the fact that men who had relations with native women would often take the mulatto offspring of these liaisons into their homes, so that they could be brought up to be 'civilized'. Such children were called «mulattoes of the colonial house» normally begotten by a male colonizer before or during his marriage to a white woman. Many so-called 'old colonials' in Portuguese Africa were ostracized by their peers because they took up with native women and brought up mulatto children. With a few exceptions, such as the famous case of Ana Olímpia from Luanda who became the subject of an interracial love story at the end of the nineteenth century¹⁴, most

¹² B. de S. SANTOS, *Entre Próspero e Caliban: colonialismo, pós-colonialismo e inter-identidade*, in M. I. RAMALHO, A. SOUSA RIBEIRO (Eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar – Ratzes, Percursos e Discursos da Identidade*, Porto, Afrontamento, 2001, p. 26.

¹³ B. de S. SANTOS, *Entre Próspero e Caliban*, cit. p. 26.

¹⁴ Ana Olímpia Vaz de Caminha was a late nineteenth century Angolan woman of the Creole bourgeoisie of Luanda, Angola. She was born a slave and became one of the country's richest women, by marrying a slave trader. She is the main female character in the novel *Nação Crioula (Creole)* by the angolan writer Jose Eduardo Agualusa.

mulattoes were born as a result of rape or similar abuses in which the power relationship was fundamentally unequal.

To use the anthropologist Christian Geffray's term to sum up this kind of Portuguese colonial love, it was an «amour dans la servitude»,¹⁵ a perfect instance of the precarious positioning of the Portuguese somewhere between Prospero and Caliban. The socio-political, scientific and literary discourses of the twentieth century barely analyse these interracial relationships as such, preferring to focus on their product, the mulatto. The result is that the relative value of the mulatto oscillates wildly, depending on the interplay between changing geographical and historical factors within the Portuguese Empire. This situation is reflected in the co-existence of two types of discourse in the Portuguese interracial collective imaginary: one almost epically glorious and the other ruinous.

In 1892, as Portugal began to adopt an European colonial model in Africa, the Portuguese explorer and scientist Henrique Carvalho wrote in his book *Expedição Portuguesa ao Muatiãnvua – Meteorologia, Climatologia e Colonização (A Portuguese Expedition to Muatianvua: Meteorology, Climatology and Colonisation)*:

As you undoubtedly know, two evident principles distinguish colonizing nations as they function in the Tropics: the first replaces the native with a white individual as a means of transforming the territory they occupy, and the result is the extinction of the black race; the second takes advantage of the native as a natural component of the task hand, preparing through him the acclimatization of the white race so that eventually the bloods of the two races mix, for the resulting benefit of humanity.¹⁶

Henrique de Carvalho summarizes the two epistemological positions of his era: the first, politically popular and based on 'the survival of the fittest', imposed racism as the cornerstone of colonization; the second, in his view on a sounder footing, was based on a vibrant hybridity, which he saw as the most promising evolutionary path for humanity. Far from the pre-lusotropical colonialism expressed by Henrique Carvalho, who foresaw a fusion of the races that would be to the benefit of all humanity, at around the same time (1873) António Ennes, a high-ranking colonial official, sought to

¹⁵ C. GEFFRAY, *Le lusotropicalisme comme discours de l'amour dans la servitude*, «Lusotopie», "Ideologies Coloniales et Identites Nationales dans les Mondes Lusophones", Paris, Karthala, 1997, pp. 361-372.

¹⁶ H. A. D. DE CARVALHO, *Expedição Portuguesa ao Muatiãnvua 1884-1888 – Meteorologia-Climatologia-Colonização*, Lisboa, 1892, p. 2.

blame black women for what he saw as the degeneration of the human race, referring to the mothers of mulattoes as follows:

Africa has charged the black woman with wreaking vengeance on Europeans, and the vile black woman – for all black women are vile – has subdued the proud conquerors of the Dark Continent, reducing them to the sensuality of monkeys, the ferocious jealousy of tigers, the inhumane brutality of slave-traders, the delirium of alcoholism, all the brutalizing effects of inferior races.¹⁷

In the 1930s, Germano Correia, a Goan doctor and scientist, and author of numerous books on Portuguese colonization, shared this racist vision. Cristiana Bastos enjoins us to read his work in order to revisit the ghosts of racism present in the history of Portuguese colonization, in relation to the identity of Luso-descendants in India. Germano Correia endowed this racial group, born of mixed Indian-Portuguese parentage, to which he himself belonged, with an immaculate pedigree based on physical anthropology and anthropometry, and the concepts of blood purity, genealogy, class, and whiteness of skin – thus denying their indigenous component.¹⁸ At around the same time, Mendes Correia, a driving force behind physical anthropology in Portugal, began his address to the First National Congress on Colonial Anthropology in Oporto (1934) – entitled *Mulattoes in the Portuguese Colonies* – by citing passages from the novel *Ana a Kaluanga (Ana the Kalunga)*, by Hipólito Raposo, in which the mulatto is referred to as «an unexpected being in the grand design of the world, an unhappy experience of the Portuguese».¹⁹ In thirties in a nation that had emerged from the same empire – Brazil – Gilberto Freyre developed radically different theories on the adaptation to the Tropics of the Portuguese and the results of this contact. In the words of the author, this 'new civilization', generated in the 'contact zone', is the luso-tropical. What Germano Correia, in Portuguese India, tried to ignore, and what Mendes Correia criticized as proof of colonial failure – the mulatto – was elevated by Gilberto Freyre in Brazil as proof of the superiority of Portuguese colonialism. According to Freyre, the Portuguese were a

¹⁷ António Ennes, 1946: 192, quoted in SANTOS, *Entre Próspero e Caliban: colonialismo, pós-colonialismo e inter-identidade*, p. 67.

¹⁸ C. BASTOS, *Um lusotropicalismo às avessas: colonialismo científico, aclimação e pureza racial em Germano Correia*, in M. CALAFATE RIBEIRO e A. P. FERREIRA (org.), *Fantasmata e Fantasias no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo*, Porto, Campo das Letras, 2003, pp. 230-231.

¹⁹ Quoted by C. BASTOS, *Um lusotropicalismo às avessas*, p. 244.

people caught between Europe and Africa with a unique aptitude for living in harmony with peoples from the Tropics and for playing a mediating role:

The Portuguese man is great for the following magnificent peculiarity: he belongs to a lusotropical people. Every time he has tried to be a European in the Tropics, like the English, Belgians, and French, a white lord among tropical peoples of colour, he has been reduced to a ridiculous caricature of those imperial nations. Imperial nations which are today in rapid disintegration.

For there are no longer people of colour who are inclined to be a forever defenceless reserve of labour, almost an animal in the service of white exploiters.²⁰

What had been viewed as a weak point in Portuguese colonialism – from the nineteenth century European (and particularly British) imperialist perspective, which saw Portugal as a country which had failed to modernize, just as it had failed in its colonial mission – was, in Freyre's model, elevated to an original status that legitimized a new world order: the lusotropical order.²¹ The new concept that he introduced was an ennoblement of interracial sexual relationships, using the traditional framework of the sugar-plantation system as his reference point. This was the system in which he had been born, and which he studied in landmark publications such as *Casa Grande & Senzala* [*Slaves & Masters*] (1933), which analyses the patriarchal rural society of the sugar plantations that resulted from the slave trade. There, slaves and masters, blacks and whites, lived together, round the hearth, and it was this environment that produced the mulattoes that comprised the dominant element in Brazil's racial make-up. As rightly pointed out by several of the

²⁰ G. FREYRE, *Aventura e Rotina: Sugestões de uma Viagem à Procura das Constantes Portuguesas de Carácter e Ação*, Lisboa /s.d./, p. 10. See also on the same page: «This is the aspect of Portuguese greatness that particularly attracts me: they are almost an entire nation of precursors to the French Rimbauds, or the British Lawrences of Arabia, or the American Lafcadios, or even the German Humboldts, in their realization of a vocation that has in its sights the destiny of an entire transnational civilization: the lusotropical civilization of which Brazil is a part. Through my contact with the Portuguese Orient and with Lusophone Africa, with some of the main Portuguese islands in the Atlantic, with the Algarve which is almost Africa, with the Alentejo which is half-Moorish, with a Portugal that from Trás-os-Montes to Minho, not to mention the Beiras, dreams of the tropics, of the sun and the heat, and disenchanting Moorish girls through women of colour, I was able to confirm a reality that I had only guessed at years ago, and predicted in some studies and contemplations».

²¹ See C. BASTOS, *Tristes Trópicos e Alegres Luso-Tropicalismos: das notas de viagem em Lévi-Strauss e Gilberto Freyre*, «Análise Social» XXXIII (2-3), 1998, pp. 415-432; C. BASTOS, *Um lusotropicalismo às avessas*; C. CASTELO, *O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo – o Lusotropicalismo e a Ideologia Colonial Portuguesa (1933-1961)*, Porto 1998.

authors who have prefaced his works,²² Freyre looks at the sugar plantations from the '*Casa Grande*' – that is, from the master's perspective – and not from the '*Senzala*' – the slaves' point of view.

On the other hand, it is important to stress that Freyre was trained in cultural anthropology of the time, and was in fact reacting to a social anthropology from the North (particularly from the US where he studied) that considered the southern hemisphere, and particularly his Brazil, as a «little world of no importance».²³ At the same time, he was reacting to some of the foundational narratives of the Brazilian nation which associated mulattoes with racial degeneration, and viewed their 'bleaching' as the only possible redemption.²⁴ As Cristiana Bastos shows, in Brazil scientific racism was interpreted in a *sui generis* fashion to argue that it was possible to diminish the supposedly harmful effects of mixing the races by promoting marriage between whites and mulattoes; for that reason, immigration from Europe was encouraged.²⁵

Freyre rejects this notion, preferring instead to see Brazil's mixed racial make-up as its strength. According to Freyre, «the product of that hybridity was no longer deemed to be the fruit of an original sin and condemned to marginality. Rather, it became the happy result of a fertile and creative hubris, destined to spawn an entirely new civilization».²⁶ For good or ill, Brazil is probably the most racially mixed country in the world, and Luanda the most hybrid city in Africa. This may explain how this geographical region, united by the Atlantic and an experience of Portuguese colonization, has given birth to the dangerous, if reassuring, concept of a 'cordial colonialism' which stands at the heart of the theory of lusotropicalism. This theory views

²² Cf. G. FREYRE, *Casa Grande y Senzala: formación de la familia brasileña bajo el régimen de la economía patriarcal*, prólogo y cronología by Darcy Ribeiro, Caracas, Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1977; and G. FREYRE, *Casa-grande e senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime de economia patriarcal*, presented by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, 50a ed., Publicação São Paulo, Global Editora e Distribuidora, 2005.

²³ C. BASTOS, *Tristes Trópicos e Alegres Luso-Tropicalismos*, p. 427.

²⁴ See *Os Sertões*, by Euclides da CUNHA, namely the chapter *Um Parêntese Irritante* and *O Mulato*, by Aluísio de AZEVEDO. On luso-tropicalism see: *Lusotopie*, "Ideologies Coloniales et Identités Nationales dans les Mondes Lusophones", Paris, Karthala, 1997; CASTELO, *O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo*; BASTOS, *Tristes Trópicos e Alegres Luso-Tropicalismos*, pp. 415-432; Y. LÉONARD, *O Império Colonial Salazarista*, in F. BETHENCOURT e K. CHAUDHURI (Eds.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, pp. 10-30 and Y. LÉONARD, *Salazarisme et lusotropicalisme, histoire d'une appropriation*, *Lusotopie*, 1997, pp. 211-226; M. V. DE ALMEIDA, *Um Mar da Cor da Terra – Raça, Cultura e Política da Identidade*, Oeiras, Celta, 2001.

²⁵ C. BASTOS, *Um lusotropicalismo às avessas*, p. 249.

²⁶ C. BASTOS, *Um lusotropicalismo às avessas*, p. 250.

miscegenation as an absence of racism, when in practice, it was a different kind of racism.²⁷

The *Estado Novo* (New State), which took power in Portugal after the military coup of 1926 and was headed by Salazar since 1932 until his death in 1968,²⁸ was based on nationalist policies, grounded in the concepts of national unity and empire. The cornerstone of the intended national resurrection was a return to the original values of the Portuguese imperial adventure. These shored up, within an imperial ideology, the notions of the ecumenical Christian vocation of the Portuguese and of an unconditional unity between the metropolis and its colonies. Salazar's foreign policy was based on the conviction that Europe only «conspired against Portugal». During his long rule, Europe marginalized Portugal and Portugal, in turn, marginalized itself from Europe. The resulting isolation, grounded in an uncompromising belief in the territorial integrity of Portugal and its colonies, was ideologically rooted. It assumed that the uniqueness of Portuguese identity could be fulfilled only from within the history that had helped to shape that identity.²⁹ After the Second World War, following the emergence of the Asian and African liberation movements, the status of Portugal's colonial territories was called into question in international institutions such as the United Nations. The Constitutional Revision of 1951, provoked by this foreign but also by some internal pressure, changed the surface appearance of Portuguese imperialism. Thus, a «history of five centuries of colonization of which we should be proud» was – overnight – rewritten as «five centuries of relations between different cultures and peoples», to quote an important Salazar cabinet minister, Caeiro da Matta.³⁰ A colonial society became 'pluriracial'. The nation which had been imperial suddenly became 'pluricontinental', and the colonies were renamed «overseas provinces» – a term that had, in fact, been used in the past. Portugal's special civilizing mission became the equally special mission of «integration in the Tropics». The adaptation of the theories and discourse of Freyre was swift and so was their ensuing promotion via the me-

²⁷ As the British historian Charles Boxer pointed out in the 60's in his book *Race Relations in Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415-1825*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963, and recently Boaventura de Sousa Santos shows in *Entre Próspero e Caliban: colonialismo, pós-colonialismo e inter-identidade*, p. 41.

²⁸ Salazar died in 1970 and his successor, Marcello Caetano, failed to live up to early expectations of reform and was overthrown by the military coup of 25 April 1974.

²⁹ J. MATTOSO (dir.), *História de Portugal – O Estado Novo (1926-1974)*, ed. Fernando Rosas, VII, Lisboa, Editorial Estampa, 1994, p. 297.

³⁰ Quoted in C. CASTELO, 1996, p. 191. José Caeiro da Matta was a diplomat and a minister in Salazar's regime ministers: Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1933 to 1935 and from 1947-1950 and Minister for Education from 1944 to 1947. In 1960 he was the director of the Commemorations of Henry, the Navigator, and in charge of all publications regarding the event.

dia, providing a philosophy to support and lend credibility to the 'changes' of 1951. Freyre's work made it possible to continue to claim that Portuguese colonization was unique, while at the same time making it appear scientific and modern.

The element which allows for the adaptation of the Brazilian discourse of lusotropicalism by Portuguese discourse under Salazar is the messianic tone that proclaims the 'new order' through which Portugal could be reborn.³¹ At the time, Europe was engaged in the decolonization process and caught between the economic hegemony of the United States and the 'communist threat' of the USSR. In foreign policy, lusotropicalism, appropriated by the Estado Novo, would first be used to defend the concept of an 'Iberian bastion'³² suspicious of a democratic Europe. It would subsequently be used to articulate a defence of the whole of Europe, whose survival was threatened by the emergence, at the end of the Second World War, of the two super-powers. It claimed that the future of Europe and of Western Christian civilization could only be guaranteed through the creation of a Euro-African space. Portugal, the pluricontinental nation and creator of multiracial societies – Brazil being Freyre's paradigm – was once again at the centre of the world. It signalled the creation of a 'Euro-Africa', and skirted round the problem of decolonization.

The long-lasting Salazar regime coopted Freyre's lusotropicalism as a 'magic formula'³³ in response to increasing international criticism of its continued support for colonialism in the late 1950s and 1960s. In fact, there was more to this image of racial harmony, based on inequality, than Salazar's mainstream racism. Appropriating Freyre's lusotropicalism for political expediency, when in 1961 armed resistance movements rose against the Portuguese in Angola. Salazar ordered the immediate, brutal crushing of the liberation movements without even a hint of an inclination to negotiate. So began a thirteen-year war fought on three fronts, as Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau quickly followed Angola's example. However, according to the regime, Portugal was not at war but merely exerting its sovereignty since Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau were integral parts of Portugal. Concomitant with the regime's view of 'cordial colonialism' this was also a 'cordial war'

The discourse of lusotropicalism, which continues in some quarters to

³¹ See C. CASTELO, *O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo*, 1998, p. 37.

³² See A. J. TELO, *O fim do ciclo africano do império*, in *Portugal na Transição do Milénio- Colóquio Internacional*, Lisboa, 1998, p. 335.

³³ A. C. GOMES, *Aspectos da ideologia na época das descolonizações*, «Vértice», 13, Abril, 1989, p. 70.

this day, never really signposted a cultural end to the Portuguese Empire. However, literary texts steeped in the experience of this colonial war did herald an end, even if they were generated by the ideological intolerance of a regime that supported and relied on war. Of course, official discourse was cloaked in a lusotropicalism that converted the war into a sovereign mission, and for which mutilation or death was a heroic gesture in defence of the homeland. But the experience of war undid that officially sanctioned fiction, and initiated a textual and literal journey home to Portugal. Indeed, the military coup of 25 April 1974 was a simultaneous liberation for Portugal and its colonies, directly attributable to the military's experience of war in Africa. The 'romantic' result of those thirteen years of war, which had taken nearly one million Portuguese to Africa, is registered on the skin of the many mulattoes distributed throughout Portugal as well as the former colonies, as well as in the many literary works that are usually classed as «literature of the colonial wars».

Europe and the Shadow of Former Empire

The literature of the colonial wars which appeared after 25 April 1974 is a literature of return and not of departure, of loss and not discovery, of emptying rather than replenishment, of guilt and remorse instead of exaltation and heroics. The image of Portugal emerging from this literature is one of Portugal disintegrating, bite by bite, in Africa. This explains the obsessive recourse by some poets and prose writers to issues of personal identity and the rediscovery of the Portuguese subject, against a backdrop of violent physical, psychological and social rupture inflicted on all sides: Portuguese and African. Contrary to the time of Camões' *Bárbara*, the inability to consummate relationships between African women and Portuguese men is the dominant note in the literature of this period. Likewise, an intransitivity that echoes the zeitgeist into which the characters were born and the war that separated them haunts the diversity of literary relationships.

After 25 April 1974, Portugal changed from a «colonizing nation to a country that created new nations».³⁴ This transformation provided the necessary foundation to redeem Portugal's young democracy as, in Portugal, post-colonialism is intimately linked to post-Salazarism, the birth of the demo-

³⁴ E. LOURENÇO, *Da ficção do Império ao império da ficção*, «Diário de Notícias – Suplemento 10 Anos de Democracia», 24 Abril, 1984, p. 26.

cratic process and Portugal's European dimension. Unlike the nineteenth century, when the Portuguese exorcized the loss of one empire (Brazil) by recourse to another (Africa), the key image of the 25 April movement was the end of Portugal as an imperial nation. This new image of the nation quickly found expression in the first post-Revolution works on the colonial wars where we can read «For me, Portugal is over»; «Guinea has disappeared. It has been wiped off the map»; «Mozambique is finished»; «Angola has ceased to exist».³⁵

Portugal's entry into the European Economic Community, in 1986, may initially have been viewed as the volteface necessary for rapid relief from imperial traumas; it neutralized the vague dream of reconnecting with that emotive, cultural geography linking Portugal to the image of its former empire. It was also the political mechanism through which Portugal could quickly pass into the European, postcolonial era. Lourenço has noted that it was not merely a case of the Portuguese going into Europe. Europe had also arrived in Portugal. The famous slogan of the time – «Europe With Us» – highlights this subtlety. By changing the direction of the search, which for centuries had originated in the periphery and been towards the centre, the Portuguese were able to sit comfortably at the table of European nations. As Sousa Santos emphasizes, the slogan contained the promise that Portugal could «construct a democratic and stable society, a society like those in Western Europe».³⁶ Europe nurtured Portugal's fledgling democracy, ensuring that it followed the Western model. Concomitantly, Portugal projected a European identity, which it reconciled with its nostalgia for the empire. Manuel Alegre sums up well Portugal's position as a country with no empire and on the geographical, cultural and economic periphery of Europe. That position could be sublimated by emphasizing the nation's different relationship to Europe, a difference seen as a value based on a unique imperial experience:

We have something to take to Europe too, our own historical experience, and the great richness we have – our culture and our extraordinarily special relationship with other peoples and other continents – and we are going to take to Europe a conceptualization that is open to the world, that respects others, rather than being eurocentric, along with the capacity to understand the differences of others. At the end of the day,

³⁵ A. ABELAIRA, *Sem Tecto, Entre Ruínas*, Lisboa, Sá da Costa, 1979, p. 199; A. OLIVEIRA, *Até Hoje (Memória de Cão)*, Lisboa, Ulmeiro and Author, 1986, p. 73; A. L. ANTUNES, *Fado Alexandrino*, Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 1989, p. 19; ROCHA DE SOUSA, *Angola 61 – uma crónica de guerra ou a visibilidade da última deriva*, Lisboa, Contexto, 1999, p. 498.

³⁶ B. de S. SANTOS, 1996, p. 49 and 58.

that is the special singularity of our identity and of our culture; that is the contribution that we must take to Europe.³⁷

If this sublimation were to be realized, would other dreams remain suspended between the image of that distant empire and Europe? After Portugal's integration into Europe, in the late 1990s the concept of lusophonia, manifested in the Community of Officially Portuguese-speaking countries and in Portuguese official discourse, became the founding myth for this particular 'post-lusotropical'³⁸ European democracy. Literature, architecture, art, European cultural programmes established in Portugal, exhibitions (such as Expo98 in Lisbon), the names of new developments and shopping malls, all register the memory of the Portuguese seaward drift and of the contacts it led to, as the hallmark of Portugal in Europe.³⁹ This is 'lusotropically' embodied in the «particular aptitude of the Portuguese to contact with the tropical peoples», as evidenced in the exemplary legal text which instituted the school inter-exchange programme 'Between Cultures' ('Entre Culturas') promoted by the Ministry of Education and financed by the European Community.⁴⁰

Portugal's peripheral geographic position led it, in the sixteenth century, to be the first European empire. This frontier geography had been poetically elevated to an identity in Camões's famous verses, which put the Lusitanian kingdom at the head of Europe, in what was the first European modernity, one with a markedly Iberian flavour. Its peripheral position in Europe from the 1950s to the 1970s allowed it to be the last European empire. The colonial wars, to which this peripheral condition led Portugal and its empire, sought to defend the fiction that Portugal was a centre. However at the same time «Africa becomes a mirror in which the unspoken and undisguised face

³⁷ Alegre interviewed by Brito Vintém, *Sou um filho da língua de Camões*, «Notícias do Interior», July 1991, p. 16.

³⁸ The expression is from Miguel Vale de Almeida, *Um Mar da Cor da Terra – Raça, Cultura e Política da Identidade*, Oeiras, Celta, 2001.

³⁹ For a long historical perception of this question see F. BETHENCOURT, *A Memória da Expansão*, in F. BETHENCOURT, K. CHAUDHURI (Eds.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, V, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1999, pp. 442-481.

⁴⁰ The quotation continues: «Portuguese culture, characterised by a deliberate universalism and by the multiple civilizational encounters which allowed the welcoming of the diverse, the understanding of the Other and the universal embrace of the particular, is an open and miscigenated culture, enriched by the wandering of a people set in a search of its whole dimensionality beyond its borders (...) Having achieved a fascinating pilgrimage of centuries, Portugal returns to the folds of the european continent and integrates itself in its original cultural space, contributing with its worldliness to the construction of an open, ecumenical Europe». Despacho Normativo n. 63/91, Ministry of Education, (Interculturas Programme).

of Portugal is reflected».⁴¹ Therefore the war would also undo the fiction and initiate the journey home to Portugal and to Europe.

Taking up a suggestion advanced by Eduardo Lourenço, one can wonder whether, for the Portuguese of today, lusophonia might not be the new Portuguese “Rose-coloured map” where all the real empires of the past continue in Portuguese dreams, shining as both fantasy and phantom in Portuguese souls.⁴² Bárbara, the historic image of a conquered Africa and of Portuguese love for the continent, continues to raise its head among us in the space between the fantasy and phantom of an empire under whose shadow the Portuguese still live. But in fact, and as Isabel Castro Henriques argues, «without the remotest recourse to lusotropicalism», the consequences of the colonial enterprise can never expunge the demands of prolonged cohabitation, something which alters the past, while sketching out the future.⁴³ A politically, socially, economically and culturally European future, but historically and culturally anchored in the South Atlantic, as metaphorically encapsulated by José Saramago in *Jangada de Pedra (The Stone Raft)*, which imagines Portugal and Spain splitting off the European landmass and drifting towards the South Atlantic.

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⁴¹ D. ROBERTSON, *The Vision of Colony and Metropolis in Portuguese Colonial Wars Literature*, in D. BEVAN (Ed. by), *Literature and War*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 1990, p. 156.

⁴² E. LOURENÇO, *A Nau de Ícaro seguido de Imagem e Miragem da Lusofonia*, Lisboa, Gradiva, 1999, p. 177.

⁴³ I. C. HENRIQUES, *A sociedade colonial em África. Ideologias, hierarquias, quotidianos*, in F. BETHENCOURT, K. CHAUDHURI (Eds.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, V, p. 274.

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