

Construction of Identity in Portuguese Contemporary Narrative

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The IBM advertisement of an individual stranded in the jungle who is able to reach out to the world through the magic of a lab top computer exemplifies admirably the present postmodern condition. We seem to be living in a world of rootless identities and histories, of virtual reality, of mobility, of globalization of the economy and culture where even the image of the jungle as site for movements across borders and between cultures doesn't seem paradoxical or illogical. On the contrary, it is quite logical and coherent. This image of the jungle may be likened to the image of a rural village as an airline transit lounge, which appears in an autobiographical tale by Amitav Ghosh entitled "The Imam and the Indian."

One's location becomes irrelevant in postmodernity: there is always a window that connects us to the world. All you need to do is click in the window and you will be able to reach out and touch someone, and/or come into contact with other spaces. Open the window and the world is at your fingertips. Keep it closed and the new transnational cultural forms and structures based on expanding markets, communications technologies, global capitalism and consumerism will displace you and will uproot you anyway because traffic across borders simply cannot be controlled. Whether you desire it or not, interfacing is the name of the game today.

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Humanity currently inhabits a world that is dominated by a phenomenon known as the digitalization of culture, a phenomenon closely associated with the new market culture of Coca-Cola and MacDonald's or what David Morley and Kevin Robins call the "cocacolonization" of the world. Coca-Cola and MacDonald's are everywhere. "[W]e inhabit a 'global village', an increasingly homogeneous world where people and nations linked by powerful networks of communication are engaged in an incessant process of cultural, political, and economic exchange" (Barkan 2). We are all part of the digital, Coca-Cola and the MacDonald's global cultural economy. There exists a great fit between these icons of post-modernity and the articulation of a consumer culture, a by-product of market economies and policies that have knitted the world together in a grand and imagined community.

How to theorize identity, how to map the histories of people who are in transit even if they do not leave their isolated villages, how to articulate local cultures in a world whose societies are hybrid inter-systems because they are constantly intersecting with each other becomes extremely complex and problematic. However, this flow of information, this interfacing between cultures is not a recent phenomenon. Cultures have always been permeable and so has the notion of identity. As Edward Said so succinctly puts it, in *Culture and Imperialism*, "[c]ulture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is an universal norm" (217). A sure sign of the permeability of culture is that even the Berlin Wall, a powerful symbol of the control of traffic between East and West which turned the Eastern bloc into a sealed frontier at the height of the Cold War, has finally come down. With the disappearance of the Wall, a representation of the denial of the interdependency of cultural terrains, one can infer and/or speculate that safe and uncontaminated social and cultural zones no longer have a reason for being. The world has become a big village, a site of intercultural intersections that is constantly traversed and reformulated and where the erection of borders are not any longer justified or possible. When the jungle and also a small rural village are viewed as transit zones between cultures or in-between spaces, that is, sites for crossings and interaction, to preach that culture and identity are centered in a circumscribed site is simply heresy.

Although Portugal has had many encounters with many other cultures throughout its history and therefore should be perceived

as a transit zone between cultures, a site for cultural interaction, many times the country has ignored and discounted frequently this overlapping experience. It is as if the interdependence of cultural terrains, Portugal and its former colonies, as a site where the nation and its colonies co-existed and battled each other was irrelevant to the construction of the nation. The nation did incorporate the narrative of expansion and conquest into its cultural productions, but usually the focus was on what Portugal contributed to the rest of the world rather than upon the intersecting routes resulting from the encounters with other cultures. Only rarely was the focus on the ways that those encounters and interactions contributed to the construction of the cultural landscape and how Portuguese identity has changed as a result of those contacts. Fascist discourse was famous for claiming that identity and culture were centered in a circumscribed site, Portugal, and that it was this from site that history was made, that the world was created. Only this site possessed the knowledge to structure those chaotic masses that it encountered, be they the indigenous people with their supposedly strange customs and cultures or the topography. Civilizing was the mission of the Portuguese. Portugal was the absolute beginning; it was the essence of humanity.

The year 1974 marks a turning point in terms of Portuguese cultural productions. The country is decoupled from its overseas territories and the idea that Portugal was the center from which history is made loses its validity. 1974 is, indeed, a watershed year as far as the discourses of nation and identity are concerned. The period associated with the Salazar/Caetano regimes had created its sanctioned and official narratives and histories that over time had acquired a theological status; they were the nation's scriptures. Portugal had its founding heroes, cherished ideas and values, and patriotic idealizations. It believed that its manifest destiny was to civilize the world and that its actions were always exemplary and they would serve as a guide to humanity. The fascist period had idealized and romanticized its past and its heroes. It constantly stressed that past and present inform each other, each implies the other. It was not above distorting its history, especially of the discoveries, to present a more positive image of the country and its past and, therefore, its present, since past and present were intertwined. The main objective of these rigid and authoritative readings of the past by fascist discourse was to produce a stable, coherent and unitary identity and a sense of patriotism and nationalism in the country. The rhetoric of national cultural purpose during the fascist period had as its ultimate goal the salvation of

Western civilization: Portugal saw itself as the last fortress against the encroachment of communism and other forces hostile to the basic tenets of the Judeo-Christian discourse. To retreat in the face of the advancing bands of barbarians would impoverish every human being and eventually lead to the demise of humanity. A passage from *Tocata para Dois Clarins*, by Mário Cláudio illustrates well my previous words:

E celebra-se o passado, porque da força dele é que resulta a força do hoje e do amanhã, no respeito desses homens valentes, que desbravaram os mares, e cujo magnífico exemplo haverá de ficar, escrito a letras de ouro, em pergaminhos que o Tempo não apaga. No peito de cada criança, a flor do devotamento a seus antepassados deverá ser implantada, para que, com ela, maravilhosamente cresça, produzindo os frutos que os vindouros haverão de receber, como legado precioso, a que, pelos séculos dos séculos, se manterão leais. Na névoa das eras que decorreram, avultará a sombra desses ilustres varões, alçando-se imensos, como sentinelas dos valores inacessíveis, a apontar o caminho próximo, na mesma determinação com que, na sua época, realizaram a tarefa que Deus pensou e os chefes lhes confiaram. (40)

The intermingling in this quote between the three pillars of fascism, God, the motherland and the family, is quite obvious. In reality, the three pillars are the focus of the passage. Another focus is the moral superiority that is conferred upon Portuguese discourse. In more ways than one, that quality always underlined the right of the Portuguese to direct the rest of humanity.

No less exemplary of the ideology of fascism are the words spoken by Salazar on the occasion of the celebration of the eighth centenary of the foundation of Portugal: "Cada um deu, na modestia ou grandeza dos seus préstimos, tudo quanto pôde, e por esse tudo lhe somos gratos. Do fundo, porém, dos nossos corações, não podem deixar de erguer-se, ao comemorarem-se oito séculos de História, hinos de louvor aos homens mais que todos ilustres, que os encheram com os seus feitos" (*Discursos* 258-259). It is definitely a celebration of the past for nationalistic and patriotic purposes. The words of Salazar, in *Declaration on Overseas Policy*, follow a similar vein. They celebrate Portuguese nationalism as well as justify a colonial empire based on a civilizing mission that is at the center of the colonial enterprise:

as a Nation, we are the trustees of a sacred heritage; we consider that it is our duty, and to the interest of the West, to safeguard it, and we sacrifice ourselves by fulfilling that duty in which many

do not believe even though they benefit from it. In spite of this we too will be recompensed: the great generations of soldiers, administrators, missionaries, settlers of whom we are proud were precisely the product of our occupation, pacification, and civilizing influence overseas, and they brought to Portugal notable enrichment in moral values which have welled forth from their unequalled strivings and sufferings. (35)

Unfortunately or fortunately, fascist discourse, one of the two basic pillars of Portuguese society for almost 50 years (the other was the theological discourse of the Catholic Church), lost its reason for being with the 1974 Revolution. The image of a national Portuguese space supported by a dream of greatness, the illusion of an invincible country destined to lead humanity on the road to salvation and chosen to civilize humanity was shaken to the ground by the events surrounding the 25th of April. The spirit of the nation, in its fascist incarnation, was badly shaken by the Revolution of the Carnations. The definition of a nation that seemingly united people around a shared great past and a desire to perpetuate the values of that heritage in the present is shattered simply because that definition was based on false premises and overused symbolic constructions that did not take into account the new emerging realities. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos claims, in *Pela Mão de Alice*, Portugal was imagined during the fascist period through the prism of a mythical excess of interpretation that totally distorted Portuguese history in order to hold into a noble and idealized version of the nation (62). According to the mentioned critic, this erroneous interpretation of history has made its presence felt in official historical discourses since the XVII century.

A partir do século XVII, Portugal entrou num longo período histórico dominado pela repressão ideológica, a estagnação científica e o obscurantismo cultural, um período que teve a sua primeira (e longa) manifestação na Inquisição e a última (assim esperamos) nos quase cinquenta anos de censura salazarista. A violação recorrente das liberdades cívicas e a atitude hostil à razão crítica fez com que acabasse por dominar a crítica da razão geradora dos mitos e esquecimentos com que os portugueses teceram o seus desencontros com a história. O desconhecimento de Portugal é, antes de mais, um auto-desconhecimento. (54)

Indeed, the radically nationalistic and imperialistic discourse of the fascist period all of a sudden seemed so outdated in the face of the new reality and what follows the 25th of April: the decolonizing process, the loss of the overseas possessions, the many po-

litical crises, the struggle to redefine and re-imagine Portugal by the many cultural productions, a greater integration of Portugal in the European Economic Community and the subsequent distancing of the country from its former colonies, and a loss of independence by Portugal because of its semi-peripheral stature in relation to a dominant European economic and cultural center. In a period of a little over four decades, the Portuguese had gone from a discourse of potency, in the early period of fascism, to a discourse of impotency as they realized that the nationalistic rhetoric could not save the Portuguese from themselves and the nightmarish dissolution of the colonial empire. The "other" of the empire finally had the courage to strike back: it affirmed its independence vis-à-vis the colonizing power and tried to deny the colonizer a voice in the construction of its history. The Revolution, a by-product of the demise of the empire to a great extent, brought with it a sense of liberation and a new discourse of potency because the Portuguese were finally free to re-invent anew Portugal. Ironically, this affirmation of a new Portuguese identity came as a result of a loss: loss of territory and loss of cultural and political influence, especially in the African arena. Eduardo Lourenço properly calls this loss an amputation of the Portuguese imperial space (11). This discourse was followed by another one that castrated the justly born national narrative. The Portuguese who felt that they could assert their identity and the uniqueness of their own history, notwithstanding the loss of the Empire, all of a sudden began to lose control over their national space as European imagery and symbolism profusely invaded the country. However, not all Portuguese felt this sense of castration or of amputation because of the changing political and cultural landscape, first with the loss of the imperial space and second with the invasion of the European economic and financial empire which also impacted negatively the construction of a new Portuguese identity. As Eduardo Lourenço claims, in *Nós e a Europa ou as Duas Razões*, Portugal has always lived a mythic euphoria which derives from the symbolic and messianic role carried out by the Portuguese during the Age of the Discoveries when the country transforms western history in world history.

É essa existência imaginária, com o seu lado já delirante expresso nos *Lusíadas*, que mais do que tudo nos explica que o Portugal moderno e em particular o do pós 25 de Abril tenha vivido a sua mais que modesta existência e mesmo a sua factual mutilação, sem traumatismo histórico e cultural notórios. O que nós somos, por ter sido, não nos parece poder ser *dissolvido* ou realmente

ameaçado por perigo algum *vindo do exterior*, improvável federação hispânica ou provável, no futuro, confederação europeia. Em qualquer entidade transnacional que nos pensemos, figuraremos sempre com uma *identidade*, que é menos a da nossa vida e capacidade colectiva própria, do que essa de actor histórico privilegiado da aventura mundial europeia. (11)

Lourenço's view regarding Portugal's place in the world stage and which tends to minimize the turmoil that follows the 1974 Revolution of the Carnations is not shared by a great number of Portuguese intellectuals. They do not share either his optimistic view that the changing political, economic and cultural landscape has not affected the way the Portuguese view themselves or construct a new identity as Portugal emerges from five centuries of colonialism and becomes more integrated into the European political and economic space. Contrary to Lourenço, they stress that the Portuguese, since the revolution, have gone from an exhilarating and euphoric state because of their ability to write their history and culture in a new way to a pessimistic and despairing state of mind brought about by the fact that Portuguese history and culture is not being written in their way. It is being written for them by others in the European center. It is in this context that *A Jangada de Pedra* must be understood. Not only had the Portuguese cultural space been reduced because of the disintegration of the empire, but also the newly conceived cultural terrain was being absorbed by outside forces that, in a sense, were intent in aborting or decontextualizing it before it had its birth. Since how we formulate or represent the past shapes our understanding and views of the present, José Saramago, in his narrative, also alters the present so that in the future people will also have more than one view of the past, thus allowing for the possibility of different readings of history. The narrative of the Iberian Peninsula floating through the Atlantic in search of its cultural moorings is really a celebration of a mobilizing and liberating Iberian imagery whose objective is to map and chart new territories and, in the process, construct a Portuguese identity and also an Iberian identity. Thus, the story may be viewed as an allegorical and symbolic search for identity, a search for a space that the Iberian Peninsula can identify with and where it can anchor itself without feeling a sense of displacement, and also a distancing from the European center, especially from German economic and cultural influence.

Saramago may deny that his objective, as he has done in several occasions, was not to write a narrative that is anti-European because, as he claims, Portugal is culturally tied to Europe. Nev-

ertheless, *Jangada* must be read as an anti-European text since the author's main intention is to create an alternative cultural discourse in which the Iberians can move without feeling that they are confined and relegated to a secondary cultural, ontological and epistemological status. By distancing itself from the European center, the newly created Iberian cultural space may be allowed to have its birth. Given that there are many images of sex, pregnancy and birth in the narrative it is safe to assume that this was the intention of the author all along, notwithstanding his words to the contrary. Another way of looking at Saramago's narrative is to interpret it as a kind of rhetorical strategy whose ideological purpose was to combat the European integrative discourse put forward by the forces aligned with Cavaco e Silva, a former Prime Minister of Portugal. Cavaco e Silva was a strong supporter of closer political, economic and cultural ties with the European center. I believe that it would be correct to state that Saramago wrote his narrative because he wanted to make a strong statement about what he felt was the exclusion and the demotion of the Iberian cultural discourse from the new European context. Since Cavaco e Silva felt otherwise, his words stressed the parallels and the unison between Portuguese and European discourses. Unlike Saramago he did not believe that authority/domination and subordination characterized the relationship between Europe and Portugal. Cavaco e Silva was always very careful in his choice of words as far as the relationships between Portugal and Europe was concerned: he stressed mutual interests, coordination, cooperation, equality, similar values, interdependency, etc.

The Portuguese nation has always inhabited throughout its history in the bipolar or dichotomous space to which I alluded above: euphoria and pessimism. When it senses that it has lost control of its destiny it usually will conjure images and symbols that accentuate the Titanic nature of its history in order to save the country from the abyss and to re-establish its relevance and importance, but which inhibits the country's creativity and capacity for self-analysis and self-reflection. I used the word usually on purpose: the post-revolutionary period did not, in my opinion, use the re-discovery of a glorious and edifying past to write its history and imagine Portugal. However, there was still a Titanic presence and influence in the discourse of the Revolution. In spite of the fact that Portugal after the revolution was essentially reduced to its European dimensions, the country could not or would not repudiate or deny its Titanic ghosts. I am not going to theorize here about the messianic ghosts that crop up every time that Portugal wishes

to overcome a crisis. I am not stating that there was an intentional resurrection of the figure of D. Sebastião with all his symbolism by the Carnations Revolution, but certainly his presence and his castrating influence can be felt in many cultural productions that narrated the revolution. A case in point is *O Dia dos Prodígios* by Lídia Jorge. One of the main goals of the Portuguese Revolution and its leaders was to promote democratic ideals throughout the country and to create a more just and equitable society. Ironically, the message of the 25th of April revolution is misinterpreted by the novel's cast of characters. The Revolution is seen by them as salvation and the possibility of interpreting strange phenomena that are occurring in Vilamaninhos, a small village lost and forgotten in the mountainous regions of Algarve. The inhabitants may not be aware of D. Sebastião but they have incorporated other ghosts into their discourse, like the flying snake that disappeared, and if they can read their signs correctly they may be able to escape from their world of silence and subjugation. However, they can not comprehend the soldiers and their message of liberty, truth, democracy and justice. The words spoken by the soldiers are really foreign to the experience of these outcasts from Portuguese society. The savior has not arrived and a new world is not about to begin. The way they perceive and interpret the signs of the Revolution is not substantially different from the way that, for example, during the early period of fascism many people interpreted the new nationalistic and patriotic discourse. In both instances, the discourses represented salvation, economic and social betterment, and a vision of a better world to come so long as you accepted in principle their ideology. Two passages, the first from Lídia Jorge's *O Dia dos Prodígios* and the second from José Saramago's *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, illustrate convincingly the similarities in the responses of the country to two different political situations.

Na verdade, a pleno meio da estrada avançava um carro singular, porque vinha pejado de soldados garbosos e épicos... Agora o espectáculo já era tão real e tão bonito que todos. Esquecidos desses primeiros segundos de pasmo e confusão. Sentiram estar suspenso o toque, o canto e a audição desde há muito. Para só ouvirem e verem aquilo que chegava em cima dum carro aberto e blindado. Todos tinham a certeza que desde o tempo dos reis nunca mais se vira igual. Ah maravilha. Então o carro parou em frente do grupo, e fez-se um momento de silêncio tão solene que as pessoas pensaram ir morrer. Mas um soldado. Particularmente bem feito, tendo sem dúvida nascido numa terra diferente. Começou a falar de cima do carro, agora parado no largo. Dizia coi-

sas. Que tinha feito uma re vo lu ção, e que era preciso animar os espíritos. Porque tudo. Tudo. E abria os braços do salvador. Tudo iria ser modificado. Falava tão bem que todos se encontravam encantados no timbre daquela voz. E as maneiras másculas, sendo contudo delicadas, como se não sentisse o soldado o peso do corpo. (181)

The women, in the presence of the soldiers, felt that “não poderiam reprimir por mais tempo os sentimentos espontâneos, e porque o espectáculo era o mais arrebatador das suas vidas, puseram-se a gritar todas as palavras de entusiasmo que souberam” (181). Similarities abound between the quotes above and a reference to the eight anniversary of Salazar’s political ascendancy in Portugal that appears in José Saramago’s *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*. “Professor António de Oliveira Salazar’s entrance into public life eight years ago, it seems like yesterday, how time flies, to save his country and ours from the abyss, to restore its fortunes, to provide a new political doctrine, to instill faith, enthusiasm, and confidence in the future, as the newspaper says” (256). Salazar’s reign, according to certain clerical authorities, has so transformed the country that Portugal has become Christ or Christ has become Portugal. The transformation brought about by the fascist dictatorship has been so radical that it leads Fernando Pessoa to claim in an ironic tone, in *O Ano da Morte*, that “we are well ahead of Germany, here is the Church itself that establishes our divinity, we could even do without this God-sent Salazar since we are Christ Himself.” (241)

Fascism was based on a misreading of the past. It constantly associated the newly imagined Estado Novo to a period of great accomplishments, the Age of Discoveries, but it forgot to incorporate the essential philosophical and ideological underpinnings of that past in its new vision of the country. An analytical and skeptic attitude was an integral part of the ideology of the Age of Discoveries, and it played a great role in the accomplishments of the period.¹ However, doubt, skepticism and self-analysis were absent from the discursive processes of fascism. Rather, the period characterized itself by its continual affirmation of the greatness of Portuguese History (the Age of Discoveries was the showcase for that affirmation) and by its blind acceptance of the Portuguese civilizing mission in the world. This acceptance was a by-product of how fascism viewed the country’s historical accomplishments

¹ I am indebted to Professor Helder Macedo for his comments on the Renaissance which contributed to firming my views on the interrelationship between that period of Portuguese history and Salazar’s Estado Novo.

and how it constructed itself at that moment. The ways by which Portugal and its revolutionary leaders imagined the country in the aftermath of the Revolution of the Carnations lead also to many misreadings and failures. The encounter between the soldiers and the inhabitants of Vilamaninhos in *O Dia dos Prodígios* is a case in point. The cast of characters from Vilamaninhos feels deceived by the soldiers’ message and the euphoria present, at the arrival of the soldiers, turns into despair and pessimism. History does not change; reality is the same as ever. The people of Vilamaninhos once again remain imprisoned within their isolated space waiting for new signs that can reveal to them how to escape their oppressive situation.

The period of euphoria brought about by a re-imagining of Portugal, regardless of whether it comes about through the nationalistic idealizations of fascism or the revolutionary zeal of the 25th of April, is usually followed by a period of introspection and self-analysis. During this period, the Titanic nature and/or the idealizations of the country and of its official discourses come into question and the smallness of the nation is accentuated. Pessimism and despair usually pervade the later discourses because as they unmask the nationalistic basis for and the false premises of the Titanic discourses, often times, they cannot narrate alternatives to overcome the idealized visions of the country. As the nation senses that it is not in control of its destiny images of despair and of a feeling of smallness pervade its historical and literary discourses. Titanic Portugal constantly runs into icebergs. Even the drifting away of the Iberian Peninsula from Europe in the form of a raft, a drifting which the author of *A Jangada de Pedra*, José Saramago feels is necessary in order for the Peninsula to assert its cultural and historical independence in the face of the encroachment by the European colossus, is bound to fail. The European center is really the iceberg in relation to the raft or, better yet, the periphery: the Iberian Peninsula. Portugal no longer possesses the sextant or the compass to navigate the treacherous waters of the Atlantic because these are controlled by newer and more advanced communication technologies, more sophisticated forms of market economies and the consumerism emanating from the European center. As João de Melo states, in *O Homem Suspenso*, “[a] Europa chegou aqui, entrou, perdeu-se da vista e do coração de quem já antes a amava: correu a fechar-se e a trair-nos, trancada a sete chaves no aquário rosado do Centro Cultural de Belém. Ela dar-nos-á uma nova bússola, o sextante, as naus e o silêncio da renúncia, da traição, do consentimento” (25-26).

Today the Portuguese inhabit a world that is increasingly characterized by the intersection and the interaction of transnational media technologies (movies, music, television, internet), by a continuous circulation of people, immigrants, information, goods and commodities, and culture across borders, and by the globalization of market economies. They live "neither here nor there, but always in between and in transit" (Bongie 24) and, consequently, they will feel more and more displaced from their Portuguese heritage and uniqueness. This is what happens with the nameless main character of *O Homem Suspenso*, a man who experiences dis-possession and displacement and is therefore unable to navigate through the map and the history of a nation in transit. What he encounters constantly is the foundational absence of Portugal, the basis for the construction of his self.

Since the Portuguese no longer inhabit a circumscribed space where they can control traffic across its borders, assumptions and conceptions of rootedness and dwelling, notions of identity, claims to a coherent and homogeneous identity and articulations of an imagined community called Portugal have to be redefined and rethought. As James Clifford so succinctly puts it, in *Routes*, "[o]ne cannot avoid the global reach of Western institutions allied with capitalist markets and the projects of national elites" (8-9). Neither can Portugal escape this relentless assault by transnational capital, global technologies and mass communications. It is not viable any longer to talk about the uniqueness of Portugal or to refer to its culture as a self-enclosed and bounded phenomenon. When one tries to define the nation-state or articulate Portuguese identity one must take into account the new transnational flows and cultural forms that produce hybrid identities. Thus, a contemporary discursive construction of "Portugueseness" has to be based on a de-centered notion and definition of Portuguese identity because the construction has to reflect the new transnational paradigm. A nation with a hybrid identity is the image of Portugal that is conveyed in Lídia Jorge's *O Cais das Merendas*. Ellen Sapega claims, in "No Longer Alone and Proud," that in the novel

explicit recourse is made to an image of Portugal as a nation that is no longer able to believe in or depend on an image of itself as 'unique' among European nations. When Jorge, in the title of the novel, ironically substitutes Portugal's traditional image as a *jardim à beira mar plantado* with that of a seaside picnic zone, she alludes to the new cultural forces of internationalization that have come to characterize Portuguese national experience. (183)

The texts that have been discussed here have a self-awareness that the articulation of identity takes place within contact zones: conceptions of identity always emerge within complex maps and histories. Some of the texts examined already focus on emerging historical processes of displacement brought about by transnational cultural experiences that render the making and remaking of identities more problematic. Moreover, all of them are conscious that the space of identity is never ontologically given; it must be discursively mapped, it has to be occupied by people, and people must travel through and around it in order to create it. Only through the charting of the space does it become constitutive of identity. Evidently, the mapping is a never ending enterprise since postmodern globalism is constantly creating new routes which require a continuous (re)making of identities to take into account the new contact zones.

The texts dealing with fascism, *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* and *Tocata para Dois Clarins*, describe how the use and abuse of myths and memories about the homeland and also how the incorporation of Portugal's past by the Estado Novo played a crucial role in determining the historical present and constructing identities. The objective of the Salazarists was to create a bounded and internally coherent nation-state which would, in turn, produce unproblematic and unified subjects. However, this reconfiguration of the Portuguese cultural and historical territory to form an idealized dwelling and political entity is unmasked in the two texts above. Space is viewed in *O Ano* and *Tocata* as the provenance for the self-expression and the self-creation of a fascist nation-state and identity and not as a territory that is mappable and explorable by the majority of Portuguese. The fascists constructed a space for their affirmation and replenishment at the expense and erasure of an authentic Portuguese self. The fascists, by constructing a space that reflected their own self-representations, were able to control and to contain the majority of Portuguese within a restricted dwelling place that they did not build. This enclosure denied them other modes of identity constitution and did not allow them to generate new perspectives and new ways of inhabiting and constructing Portugal and their selves. For almost fifty years most Portuguese were forced to inhabit a fiction, a fiction with its roots in the past, unable to write their own history. Michel de Certeau's words that "the past is the fiction of the present" (10) characterize appropriately this particular period of Portuguese history.

Although fascism tried to show that it was possible to construct an unified and unproblematic identity through the appro-

priation of the historical past and its myths and images it failed miserably as the events surrounding the Revolution of the Carnations so clearly indicate. The conception of a unified and unproblematic Portuguese identity was simply a myth that the revolution unmasked. However, the end of fascism, a system based on absolutist and nationalistic paradigms, was not a panacea as far as the articulation of a Portuguese identity and the reconfiguration and (re)definition of Portugal were concerned. No sooner had the Portuguese dealt a blow to the fiction of fascism that they had to deal with the transnational paradigm. Not only had they to (re)invent anew Portugal through the creation of new images, metaphors and symbols but they also had to (re)invent a nation in its relationship with a world that is increasingly interconnected by means of modern technologies of communication and transport and by the globalization of capital. Portuguese writers and thinkers responded in many different ways and forms to the challenges posed by the end of fascism and the internationalization of culture and capital. In the 80's and 90's it would be impossible to articulate an uncontaminated and safe Portuguese space where traffic did not cross its borders. Thus, the challenge for writers and thinkers alike is how to discursively construct Portuguese identity, that is, a new self constituted relationally as it comes into contact with the new intersecting routes² of postmodernism.

For Eduardo Lourenço, the challenge is really non-existent. Portugal, in his opinion, does not have problems with its identity or identification. He claims that "o nosso grau de segurança ontológica, enquanto povo, é dos mais elevados" (12) and that the "existência imaginária" (11) of the Portuguese, a by-product of their symbolic and messianic role in turning Western history into World history, inoculates the Portuguese from any historical traumas. In a sense, Lourenço is promoting an image of Portugal as a "jardim da Europa à beira-mar plantado" and of a nation with a noble and glorious past. His theoretical texts are in many ways similar to those literary texts that reinforce the mythic and symbolic qualities of the nation through the historical expression of a past full of glory and traditions that mold a unique Portuguese individual, one whose past is the "mais consistente e obsessiva referência do seu presente, podendo substituir-se-lhe nos mo-

² James Clifford in his *Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century*, one of defining books of cultural studies, examines what he considers is the characterizing nexus of cultures in transit, the root and route nexus. The new global cultural economy forces all individuals to straddle two competing forces: on one side a desire to feel part of a stable and coherent community (roots) and on the other a need to deal with the interconnectedness of cultures (routes).

mentos de maior dúvida sobre si ou constituindo até o horizonte mítico do seu futuro" (10). Therefore, the loss of the Portuguese colonies, the greater integration of Portugal into the European Economic Community and the explosion of global economies and the flow of capital, culture and technologies across borders do not present the Portuguese with a major challenge. These events do not affect, in Lourenço's words, how the Portuguese perceive themselves and who they are. They do not lead the Portuguese to question their ability to locate themselves in a specific space or to reflect about other possible ontological and epistemological approaches to the definition of Portuguese national and individual identity. The established and normative bases of collective and individual identity do not seem to enter into crisis even with the turmoil of the past twenty-five years. Portuguese identity will not be shaped or molded by the new realities because the Portuguese self is based on an "existência imaginária" that provides that self with "segurança ontológica" (12). Thus, it can not be threatened by any form of cultural invasion or by the power and influence of transnational media or global capital. Even the entrance of Portugal in the European Community from Lourenço's perspective is of little consequence to the nation and he considers its impact minor. It will not affect the Portuguese way of being in the world.

É com a nossa parte de *realidade imaginária*, com a nossa memória hoje rica apesar de tudo do que de positivo sobrevive na realidade do antigo império, que mais certos *por dentro conosco mesmos*, paradoxalmente menos complexados, nós enfrentamos o que se costuma chamar o *Desafio Europeu*, e que, no fundo deles mesmos, os Portugueses não vivem nem como desafio, nem como ameaça. Somos superlativamente europeus porque já o éramos quando a Europa se definia na História do mundo como continente mediano. (22-23)

Lourenço's self-confidence that Portuguese individual and collective identity is safely anchored in a specific space characterized by coherence and by continuity is not necessarily shared by all Portuguese thinkers and writers. As the nation faces the emerging political, economic, and political geography of transcultural exchange with its social and cultural upheavals and transformations, new identities and new subjectivities, the so-called postmodern fragmentation, some of these thinkers and writers have become more and more concerned about its plight and the cultural refashioning that it is undergoing. This concern is evident in such texts as Saramago's *A Jangada de Pedra*, Lídia Jorge's *O Cais das Merendas*, and especially in João de Melo's *O Homem Sus-*

penso. A reaction against what are perceived as transnational threatening forms of cultural imperialism produced by global image industries was to be expected.

Of the three texts mentioned above, only *A Jangada de Pedra* has played an important discursive role in trying to reverse and put a stop to the encroachment of the European center and in insisting upon the continuity of a Portuguese self-identity as well as an Iberian self-identity. The novel, an allegorical and/or metaphorical search for identity, may be read as a longing for an Iberian-African and Iberian-American unity, wholeness and integrity. Saramago's main objective is to engender closer bonds between the Iberian cultural space and the lands of its former "Others", the American and African nations. Both the Portuguese and the Spaniard felt separated from these territories because new powerful European forms of spatial reconfiguration and referentiality with strong assimilationist tendencies had, in essence, cut off the Iberian cultural space from its former colonies. As the Iberians experience a metaphysical loss of home as their symbolic boundaries are invaded by a faceless Europeanism, the Iberian Peninsula subverts and transgresses the European center through a fissure at the Pyrenees that allows the Peninsula to float through the Atlantic in search of ontological security and certainty. The peninsula-raft nexus is really a search for a home; it is a voyage to restore meaning and rootedness to the homeless Iberians. It is a voyage in search of shared values, traditions and memories, and of cultural bonds. In today's accelerated pace of transformations and the hybridization of culture, *A Jangada* expresses what Michael Rustin argues "is an increasingly felt need for 'some expressive relationship to the past' and for attachment to particular territorial locations as 'nodes of association and continuity, bounding cultures and communities'. There is a desire to be 'at home' in the new and disorientating global space" (Morley and Robins 87).⁷ Is the celebration of pan-Iberianism/Africanism/Americanism in *A Jangada* romantic? Is the voyage of the Peninsula-raft a search for utopia? Is the voyage escapist? Is the confinement of the Iberians within the boundaries of an island, formerly a peninsula, the assertion of a stable and unitary Iberian self that resists the unstable and fragmentary conditions of postmodernity? Do the boundaries of an island/raft enable the construction of an authentic and autonomous Iberian self? The answer to all questions has to be affirmative.

⁷ I am quoting from *Spaces of Identity* written by David Morley and Kevin Robins.

A Jangada certainly may be characterized as a story about the (re)institution of a unique and distinctive political and cultural community at a time that it feels dispossessed and detached from its authentic spatial moorings. It is, indeed, a story that both reasserts and buttresses an Iberian cultural identity within specified boundaries at a moment that this identity feels threatened and overpowered by the fluidity and the permeability of global cultural forms which undermine older certainties and foundations of identity. It is not so much that Saramago, in *A Jangada*, is opposed to the transcultural exchange that is taking place between the Iberian Peninsula and the European center. It is rather that he wishes that there would be a greater symbiosis and closeness between the Iberian space and the African and American sphere since the Iberians have greater affinities with that sphere and can recognize themselves in it. In reality, the text may be also considered a recapturing through memory of something the Portuguese were but no longer are; it promotes a sense of continuity and a connection with the past.

If in *A Jangada* there is still a memory of a past, even though that past was based on cross-cultural relations that were certainly not egalitarian, in *O Cais das Merendas* the Portuguese have lost their collective and individual memory. In reality, the text is a discourse on the rejection and the forgetfulness of the Portuguese cultural past (Machado 251). The novel's cast of characters is simply assimilated by foreign cultural norms and values. They have given up their identity, they have denied who they are and they do not have any longer a sense of their true cultural selves. The Portuguese have begun to lose their language, and to shed their habits, traditions and customs. Eventually they become deterritorialized or delocalized. As they lose their Portuguese selves and their collective memory they begin to appropriate and imitate foreign models because they consider them superior and more dignified and civilized. With the passage of time, it may be said that they no longer inhabit the traditional space of Portugal, the so-called "jardim da Europa à beira mar plantado". Their new dwelling or home, having lost their memory, is a seaside picnic quay or area where the serving and the drinking of afternoon tea has become the new metaphor for the Portuguese self. In the words of Laura F. Bulger, "[o] que está a desaparecer, as tradições locais, os hábitos linguísticos, não é uma consequência de uma amnésia colectiva, como sugerem alguns críticos, mas de um esforço colectivo para não recordar o passado, não só porque a recordação é dolorosa mas também porque constitui um obstáculo à imitação dos estran-

geirismos, das maneiras civilizadas que tanto admiram" (55). If it is amnesia or a desire not to recollect the past is really insignificant. What really matters, in *O Cais das Merendas*, is the fact that the Portuguese are totally alienated from themselves and from their culture. No being at home in their own home seems to be their destiny. There are exiles even while at home, and they do not have the capacity to reflect on their condition because they supposedly chose freely to dispossess themselves of their "Portugueseness" since they considered it inferior to "foreignness". In a sense, they have become estranged from the very traditions to which they belong. If there is any sign of discontent, in their part, it is related to their inability to mime perfectly what is foreign or their incapacity to transform themselves completely into the "Other", the foreigner. They can only reflect on their transformation as they try to become the "Other". *O Cais das Merendas* reveals that Portuguese culture and identity inhabit a state of homelessness even in their own home. Worse yet, there is no memory and/or recollection of a past that would enable the retrieval of a unique and fixed Portuguese culture and identity. Without this memory, any construction of a rooted, bounded and unitary identity is a delusion, a mirage.

O Cais narrates the experience of displacement and dislocation even if the main characters are anchored in Algarve, an experience that, once again, is repeated in João de Melo's *O Homem Suspenso*. Contrary to the characters of Jorge's novel, the nameless protagonist of Melo's text does not suffer from memory loss or wishes to mime foreign cultural models. Nevertheless, he is just as estranged from his space as the Portuguese characters of *O Cais*. However, and differently from them, the man without a name is keenly aware of his cultural deterritorialization and of his proscribed condition in his own homeland. As he wanders through the streets of Lisbon, his native village and other areas of Portugal in search of an authentic self and of the traditional cultural boundaries of Portugal, he comes to the full realization that his home and his self-identity have been lost forever. As this happens, the impossibility of recovering his losses, one senses his increasing ontological insecurity and despair. What he is and what those traditional and symbolic contours of his home are only exist in his memory map. But most likely he will be even deprived of his memory bank just like he has been deprived of a proper name. He will simply be condemned to live in a world of surfaces where the notion of self-identity becomes totally diluted.

The world that the protagonist inhabits, in the novel, has shifted from a world with stable and continuous reference points

to one of "dissolving boundaries and disrupted continuities" (Morley and Robins 122). In no way can he find himself in a world of cultural and political fragmentation where "monuments are no longer strictly national because

[d]issipou-se neles o sentido histórico da minha [the protagonist] individualidade portuguesa". (27) [p]erdi o mapa e o território em que aprendi a acreditar: o amor o casamento o trabalho o meu país, o destino de um mundo a quem bem se pode dar o nome de pátria, digo, de exílio no meu sentimento de família (49) and "pertence apenas a um lugar chamado sítio nenhum, já nem a mim mesmo julgo eu agora pertencer. (66)

The nameless man is in the presence of an alien reality since his prior preferred spaces for the construction of the self are disfigured dwellings and strange hostile places. Most definitely his contact with the global/European cultural economy has been extremely traumatic. In *O Homem Suspenso*, the protagonist has been forever separated from the founding symbols of his being. He has to come to grips with the loss of a native and original identity, but his marginal and alienated condition make it impossible for him to do so. Not even the appearance of Europe in the horizon imposing itself upon the historical reasons of Portugal can restore any type of self, an identity, European in this case. Europe, in his opinion, is "agnóstica abismada com a sua própria existência ontológica," (60) and is barely an idea in the making. It is, just like Portugal, a space that dispossesses, pursues and encircles the man without a name because it too has transformed itself into something that it was not before. It has lost its cultural boundaries, its reference points. The culture of Europe, as well as the global culture, has turned into a "playfully eclectic and 'depthless' pastiche, attuned to the 'pastiche personality' of the affectually attenuated, decentred ego inhabiting 'an electronic, global world'" (Smith 214). In this context, "culture appears as an entirely new technical construction, what Lyotard calls 'a self-sufficient electronic circuit', at once timeless, placeless and memory-less, contradicting all our ideals of culture which embody the distinctive historical roots, myths and memories, and the specific lifestyles, of ethnic communities and nations" (Smith 214).

The permeability and the fluidity of borders in today's emerging transnational world permit rapid and unceasing political, economic and cultural exchanges. However, the breakdown of concepts of fixed, continuous and bounded collective and individual identities and national boundaries because of the globalization

process with its many intersecting routes produces anxiety, ontological insecurity and a sense of homelessness. The Portuguese writers and thinkers alluded to in this article have dealt with the new world order in a variety of ways expressing their ideas about the phenomenon of globalization, trying to find solutions or simply finding no solution. When they create fictional spaces where characters are unable to live in the between border of postmodernity the result is usually traumatic and despairing. The authors, in their texts, are well aware that events in the last twenty-five years or so have made it impossible to define things as they were. Thus, concepts of national and individual identity have to be rethought and novel discursive forms have to be invented as writers (re)imagine the new realities of a world "implicated in a complex interplay of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation" (Morley and Robins 75). Saramago, in *A Jangada*, addresses this complex interplay by subverting the hegemony of global power through the separation of the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of Europe. The Peninsula/raft functions, in the novel, not as sign of a debilitating isolation but rather as a metaphor for the construction of a new Iberian history and culture. Lídia Jorge and João de Melo, in their texts, also focus on the interplay but neither *O Cais das Merendas* nor *O Homem Suspenso* deals effectively with the problematic of reterritorialization. In the former text, the characters transcend established national boundaries but they lose their self-identity in the process: they just mine foreign models. They become non-entities. In the latter text, the man without a name as he suffers the negative impact of the double space of transnationalism cannot or will not focus on the possibility of recomposing or redefining individual or national boundaries to take into account the new global-national-local interface.

The interdependency of world economies and the construction of intersecting global cultural networks are increasing at a rapid pace. Consequently, Portuguese writers and thinkers, in their texts, will need to negotiate with the unceasing process of transformation that is occurring in today's world and they must deal with a collective and individual identity that no longer seems dependent on roots but upon transnational routes, the migratory routes described in *Border Dialogues* (Iain Chambers 7). The transnational world that we all inhabit will force us, in the words of Salman Rushdie, to "straddle two cultures" (19). Portuguese writers, as the texts examined indicate, are very much aware that they must

straddle many cultures as they deal with the representation of the new complex realities. More important still, as David Morley and Kevin Robins suggest, is that they and the rest of us "live and work with this disjuncture and ambivalence. Identity must live out this tension. Our feet must learn to walk on both banks of the river at the same time" (104). All Portuguese cultural productions, now, need to emphasize and value even more the route/root dichotomy responsible for the greater hybridization that is taking place in the new global cultural economy. However, dealing with the issue should not present major difficulties since Portugal, from its very beginnings, has been a site of a relational way of life because in the physical space of the nation there has always been an intermixing and a coming together of cultures.

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