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Exit Ghost
Reading Lusotropicalism as Fetish (with Adorno)

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Enter Ghost

Marcellus: Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again.

Barnardo: In the same figure like the King that's dead.

Marcellus (to Horatio): Thou art a scholar, Speak to it, Horatio.

William Shakespeare
The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

LUSOTROPICALISM IS DEAD. One could say it always was dead, as it always claimed to speak for a past that never was. And yet it still lives on. Like a malevolent specter it keeps returning to haunt Portugal and, even if indirectly, all those belonging to, or involved with, the Portuguese-speaking world. As such, there is no point in simply decrying it or pretending that it is a problem that has been solved. Likewise, its particularities notwithstanding, it cannot be seen in isolation. Rather, it must be seen as falling in line with other ideological forms of explaining and defending systemic practices of oppression based on ethnic, racial, gender and class issues that are constitutive of imperialism and colonialism. If anything varies it is just the specific emphasis that might be given at different times and places to those variables. Also, even as all imperialism and colonialism ultimately erect a wall of difference from which they subsequently feed, lusotropicalism tends to draw more on the racial key even as it, seemingly paradoxically, would deny it. Perhaps, if there is a defining element to lusotropicalism that can help explain its perennial resurgence, would be this apparent paradox at its base: the pernicious notion that the Portuguese – and by extension those cultures and peoples with which they entered in contact and tried to dominate during the long period of Portugal's expansionary enterprise – are naturally inclined for miscegenation. Needless to say, this applies foremost to a Portuguese perspective on lusotropicalism, which is not necessarily shared, and might be contested, from the varying perspectives of others.



Lusotropicalism, as a specific ideology, is usually, and properly, referenced back to the work of Gilberto Freyre. Starting with *Casa Grande & Senzala*, first published in 1933, then further developed conceptually by him in subsequent works, picked by the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal in the late fifties, and used to justify the supposed benevolence of the Portuguese as colonizers.¹ This has all been analysed long ago and in much detail by many studies from varying perspectives and with different disciplinary approaches. There is no gain in rehashing all that. Of the many commentators a few can be singled out for the clarity with which they have approached the question: Miguel Vale de Almeida has repeatedly exposed the history and mechanisms of lusotropicalism in, for instance, his book *An Earth-Coloured Sea: 'Race', Culture and the Politics of Identity in the Post-Colonial Portuguese-Speaking World* and in briefer papers such as "Portugal's Colonial Complex: From Colonial Lusotropicalism to Postcolonial Lusophony".² One of the most extensive and varied sources remains the 1997 issue of *Lusotopie on Lusotropicalisme. Idéologies coloniales et identités nationales dans les mondes lusophones*. Of special interest for my argument is the essay by Michel Cahen on "Des caravelles pour le futur? Discours politique et idéologie dans l' 'institutionnalisation' de la Communauté des pays de langue portugaise" as Cahen probes into the continuities that allow sometimes for the slide between lusotropicalism and lusophony and this is instrumental for understanding how lusotropicalism keeps re-emerging.³ The most incisive analysis of lusotropicalism's systemic investment on racial and gender oppressive structures has been proffered by Ana Paula Ferreira on several occasions, with special notice for two articles:

¹Gilberto Freyre, *Casa Grande & Senzala, Fundação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal*(São Paulo: Global Editora, 2003 [1933]). In English as *The Masters and the Slaves, A Study in the Development of Brazilian Culture*, translated by Samuel Putnam (New York: Knopf, 1946).

²Miguel Vale de Almeida, *An Earth-Coloured Sea, 'Race', Culture and the Politics of Identity in the Post-Colonial Portuguese-Speaking World* (Oxford & New York: Berghahn Books, 2004) and Miguel Vale de Almeida, "Portugal's Colonial Complex: From Colonial Lusotropicalism to Postcolonial Lusophony"; paper for the Queen's Postcolonial Research Forum, Queen's University, Belfast, 28 April 2008; available at <http://miguelvaledalmeida.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/portugals-colonial-complex.pdf>, accessed on 13 June 2018.

³Michel Cahen, "Des caravelles por le futur? Discours politique et idéologie dans l' 'institutionnalisation' de la Communauté des pays de langue portugaise"; in *Lusotopie* 3 (1997): 391-433, dossier on "Lusotropicalisme. Idéologies coloniales et identités nationales dans les mondes lusophones".

“Contesting Miscegenation and ‘Lusotropicalism’: Women and the Portuguese Colonial Order” and “Lusotropicalist Entanglements: Colonial Racisms in the Postcolonial Metropolis”⁴

Especially the latter essay is very close to my own goals at the moment and I will refer to it later on. Ana Paula Ferreira does not hesitate to identify racism at the centre of lusotropicalism and, perhaps more consistently than other critics, she carefully considers the critique of racism in the discourses of social science studies and public sphere intervention as well as literary representations. In agreement with her I would like to emphasize that there is no point in yet another accusatory jeremiad on Portuguese racism as if it too was not very much like other racisms throughout Europe. Indeed, that is not the point at all. Rather, my interest lies more in analysing the ghostly features of lusotropicalism, tracing its imbrication in structures of power and desire that render it, seemingly, attractive to succeeding generations, while masking the insidious effect of its false claims at equality. The main aim of the essay is to critique lusotropicalism as a version, singular as it may be, of wider currents that attempt to mask and gloss over the operations of racism and their confluence with capital and patriarchy.

I will draw on a number of thinkers and critics from Paul Gilroy to Étienne Balibar and Jacques Derrida and use concrete examples from some contemporary novels by António Lobo Antunes and Lídia Jorge to articulate how processes of exclusion continue insidiously and fully operative today still. If one is to properly resist the appeal of such a machine for perverted desire as put forth by lusotropical dreams, Theodor Adorno's notion of the ‘circle of bourgeois nostalgia’ can usefully provide an insight as to how lusotropicalist structures perform. Rather than delude ourselves with the notion of either, finally, killing off lusotropicalism, or, worst still, invoking it in futile attempts at banishing it, this essay simply hopes to provide some grounds for cultural resistance.

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⁴Ana Paula Ferreira, “Contesting Miscegenation and ‘Lusotropicalism’: Women and the Portuguese Colonial Order”, in Elena Brugioni, Joana Passos, Andreia Sarabando & Marie-Manuelle-Silva, eds., *Itinerâncias, Percursos e Representações da Pós-Colonialidade* (Braga: Edições Húmus, 2012), 101-120; and Ana Paula Ferreira, “Lusotropicalist Entanglements: Colonial racisms in the Postcolonial Metropolis,” in Hilary Owen & Anna M. Klobucka, eds., *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony* (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 49-68.

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Thinking lusotropicalism

In one of the entries in *Minima Moralia* Adorno refers to what he calls “the circle of bourgeois nostalgia for naivety” and this might be helpful to understand how lusotropicalism operates.⁵ For Adorno this would characterize the way in which the bourgeoisie with its ready access to, and enjoyment of, material plenitude, would nonetheless hanker after, and envy, those bereft of it. On the face of it this also seems to be a puzzling paradox yet, much in the same way as lusotropicalism it can be seen as a process of indirectly appeasing a sense of guilt felt but never expressed, by the oppressors towards the oppressed. It is not my intention at all to either think that the complexities of lusotropicalism can be whiskered away like this, nor to reduce social and political problems of such magnitude to emotional, or rather psychological, reactions. Nonetheless I think that the concept is useful for enabling a first approach to the problem that avoids a facile finger pointing, while remaining unsentimental.

On a previous occasion I have had recourse to the same Adornian notion in order to reflect on one of the most acclaimed contemporary Portuguese films, Miguel Gomes’ *Tabu*, from 2012. Without in any way wanting to rehash my argument here, I find it useful to bring it up as it can help to clarify the way in which lusotropicalism operates. In my discussion of the film I had suggested that it engages in a highly complex manner with what I saw as post-imperial nostalgia and concluded:

Tabu attempts to simply present post-imperial nostalgia as a fact. (...) Precisely because of its supposed neutrality, and even due to its ironic posturing as if it were nothing more than a game, *Tabu* risks foreclosing the possibility of a confrontation with the ghosts of the imperial and colonial past.⁶

Lusotropicalism both is and is not like post-imperial nostalgia. For, although it too imagines something that never was from which it derives its legitimacy, be it imperial grandeur or the absence of racism, it does so divergently. That is, even though both depend on belief and delusion, they are not the same. Although Portuguese post-imperial nostalgia might be said to

⁵Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia, Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2003 [1951]). In English as *Minima Moralia, Reflections from Damaged Life*, Translated by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974).

⁶Paulo de Medeiros, “Post-Imperial Nostalgia and Miguel Gomes’ *Tabu*”, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 18 (2) (2016): 203-216, 215.

serve as a means of imagining Portugal alongside other European nations such as England as central and imperial rather than as semi-peripheral and itself subject to a relationship of dependency to those other, hegemonic, powers, it does not project itself into the future. Its function is more like a panacea for the present malaise and the clear economic frailty of Portugal in its renewed role as a minor European state. Lusotropicalism, however, not only imagines Portugal as opposed, and superior, to other European powers, but it projects itself into the future. Whereas post-imperial nostalgia still sees a clear difference between a reduced, poor, and nasty present and what it imagines was the grandeur of the past, lusotropicalism entertains the notion of a temporal continuum, in which the Portuguese and their descendants always were happy free-spirits untainted by racism. It is the belief in such a continuum that allows it to also imagine the future differently than post-imperial nostalgia, because if there never was a rupture to Portuguese greatness there is no need to pine for its having vanished; nor to think it might not be everlasting. To be clear, in practice such a distinction is much less evident as the two notions go together since both are ideological constructs whose basic function is to “deal” with the problems of the present by both denial and inversion. Hence my suggestion to view lusotropicalism as a form of fetish.

The “races” of lusotropicalism

“Nãõ somos senhores somos pretos” (“We are not gentlemen we are blacks”) is only one of the stunning sentences in António Lobo Antunes’s novel, *O Meu Nome é Legião*.⁷ Uttered by a member of a youth gang in answer to the question of a man as to what they wanted, just before they murdered him, that sentence is not by far the harshest in a book that takes the reader in a voyage through desolation and horror. It is a complex sentence of course, as it is not just a simple answer to a perfunctory question as much as it is an affirmation of identity, a negative identity, that does not hide the violence at its origin, that of colonialism and slavery, even as it announces the violence that will follow. Even if “pretos” might not hit one quite as strongly pejorative as “niggers”, given the context it is; and “senhores” of course does not only mean gentlemen, but “masters” as well. Race, violence, and representa-

⁷António Lobo Antunes, *O Meu Nome é Legião* [My Name Is Legion] (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2007), 22.

tion are diversely complex concepts, and yet also intertwined in the sense that the first one depends absolutely on the other two. That is, race, as a concept, even after any claims to its being anything else have been scientifically laid to rest long ago, or perhaps precisely because of that, does not survive except as a representation, a representation that is both violent in itself and provokes actual violence beyond the merely symbolic. Unlike other societies where a discourse on race can be seen as constitutive of their own national identity from the start, race appears to have been more a silenced subject than an actual point of discussion in Portugal. In spite of efforts by academics, journalists and others, and the obvious problems related to questions that one may cautiously designate as racial, public discussion on the subject of race seems to always have to go back, if not completely to the start, at least very close. It is as if on this question a sort of blanket amnesia would recur over and over again.

Indeed, if since the revolution of 1974, and even more so after admission to the European Economic Community in 1986, Portugal has been busy reorienting itself from being a decrepit empire into becoming a fully integrated member of the European Union, it should be obvious how crucial notions of race would be for such a process. Having supposedly abandoned the Estado Novo propaganda of the multi-continental and multi-racial nation whose teleological destiny was Africa, Portugal inevitably must confront its condition as a post-imperial polity. To do so, I would argue, a confrontation with the issues raised by racial differentiation would be as necessary as it is unavoidable. And yet nothing could be further from reality.

One incident, as well as a documentary, the two situated as it were on the extreme poles as far as mediatic representations of racism and violence are concerned, can be invoked as examples. I refer to the infamous “Dragnet (*Arrastão*)” of 10 June 2005, when supposedly, as the media gloatingly reported, a “wave” of up to five hundred young black boys would have swept through one of the Lisbon beaches stealing and otherwise hitting on beachgoers. This was immediately denied by the police still on the same day and by now there have been studies made of it that conclusively demonstrate beyond any doubt how it was orchestrated by the media in search of something sensational to report on, how, indeed, the black youths were running from what they believed was violence directed at them and not the other

way around.⁸ However, the image that has persisted in popular consciousness is precisely that of a black threat, corresponding more or less to latent fears with the “Portuguese” population concerning the young “African” migrants, and completely ignoring not only the reality of the event but the simple fact that those “African” migrants are indeed for the most part poor Portuguese, whose weak social position is aggravated by their color. The staging of that event on 10 June, Portugal’s national day, and which, not so long ago was designated as the Day of the Race, before coming to be known by other associations such as that of Camões, the national epic poet, cannot be seen as mere coincidence, as its symbolic charge far supersedes the pragmatic circumstances that make a summer holiday a natural day for crowds at the beach.

The documentary I have in mind, *Os Lisboetas*, directed by Sérgio Tréfaut and produced in 2004, received wide critical acclaim.⁹ It can be seen as the opposite of the mediatic staging of racial conflicts in two ways: first of all because it attempts to depict fragments of the lives of the new migrants to Portugal in ways that not only emphasize their humanity but also raise the consciousness of other citizens towards the new comers, showing a true multicultural diversity in Lisbon. And secondly because, by concentrating precisely on new migrants, from Eastern Europe, Asia and Brazil, the documentary almost practically elides the African element altogether, except for some brief scenes over a congregation of Nigerian migrants whose leader expounds on their feelings of betrayal and exploitation by the host society and one key brief moment in which an Angolan nurse takes care of a Russian former pilot’s infected foot. That scene in particular is highly significant as the nurse unwittingly confuses Portugal with Angola when she asks her patient how long he has been residing in Angola, only to immediately correct

⁸Media coverage was huge. A synopsis that can be easily accessed was published in the daily *Público* on 19 July, 2005 as “PSP nega “arrastão” na praia de Carcavelos”, <https://www.publico.pt/2005/07/19/sociedade/noticia/psp-nega-arrastao-na-praia-de-carcavelos-1228588>. Miguel Vale de Almeida made an incisive analysis of the event in “After the ‘Big Sweep’: Colonial Narratives and Second Class Citizens in Contemporary Portugal”, a lecture delivered at the Conference on “Re/Siting the ‘Luso’ and the ‘Tropical’: Theories and Practices of Portuguese Postcolonialism”, University of Manchester, 15-17 March, 2007, http://miguel-valedealmeida.net/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/mvda_afterthebigsweep.pdf, accessed on 14 June 2018.

⁹Sérgio Truffaut, *Os Lisboetas* (Lisbon: Atalanta Filmes, 2004).

herself. But that is an unpredictable slip, the unexpectedness of which only serves to reveal in more glaringly light just how the documentary avoids – on purpose I would suggest – references to migrants from the former colonies. If in its value, its call for an understanding and acceptance of difference, the documentary succeeds and can be seen as an important counterpart to the media exploitation of racialized incidents, the strategy of separating new migrants from older ones, could be questioned for its silencing of the latter and a consequent blurring of the issue of race relations, as difference is couched in less confrontational terms such as language and even variant versions of Christianity. No single work can cover everything obviously, but the avoidance of a reflection on violence, or its symbolic displacement to images such as the opening shots in an abattoir that get cancelled as it were by the concluding scenes of the birth of a new citizen to migrant parents, leave out and continue the silencing of a key aspect of contemporary Portuguese society. That is, even though the documentary does show Lisbon as a decidedly postcolonial city, it does so more as if it merely echoed the diversity inherent in any other European capital and not in terms of its specific post-imperial condition. A decisive advantage of such a strategy is the refusal to entertain any notions of an assumed Portuguese exceptionality; its counterpart is the obfuscation of the very historical specificity, without whose consideration no solution is possible.

Postcolonial theory, except in the most general terms, is not the most helpful when attempting to consider Portugal's specific issues relating to race even if in other respects it can indeed foster valid analysis.¹⁰ This has much to do with the fact that most postcolonial studies were originally carried out having in mind British colonial history as hegemonic. Also, notions such as hybridity, for instance, which certainly would be important when analyzing the Portuguese situation, often tend to be developed in a celebrat-

¹⁰A starting place for problematizing the application of postcolonial theory to a Portuguese context is the often cited essay by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 39 (2) (2002): 9-43. However, since its first publication (in Portuguese) in 2001, not only have a number of studies been published that address Lusophone literatures from a postcolonial perspective but some of the unresolved issues in that essay have also been problematized, especially by Ana Paula Ferreira, "Specificity without Exceptionalism: Towards a Critical Lusophone Postcoloniality", in Paulo de Medeiros, ed., *Postcolonial Theory and Lusophone Literatures* (Utrecht: Utrecht Portuguese Studies Center, 2007), 21-40.

ory tone. Such a strategy— even if justifiable in many ways – tends to obscure the radical violence involved in many cases of miscegenation when viewed in historical terms; it also ignores the specific circumstances of Portugal, where notions of hybridity were invoked precisely as a form of dominance and not of resistance to colonial power. The lusotropicalist notions advanced by Gilberto Freyre and eagerly adopted by the Salazar regime can be viewed as a key exponent of such an ideological construct. The sharpest critique of this that I am aware of has been proposed by Ana Paula Ferreira:

Turning away from the characteristic short memory informing metropolitan postcolonial nostalgia, the following brings to light how women were interpellated by and in turn responded to the greatest challenge of Portuguese colonialism, namely convincing young families to settle in and develop the African colonies. Miscegenation becomes in this context one of the most ostensible indicators of the Portuguese colonial deficit, something that remains unchanged despite the circulation of what are known as ‘Lusotropicalist’ arguments by Salazar’s fascist-colonialist regime in the post-World War II context.¹¹

So, even though theoretically understood, Portuguese society can and should be analyzed from a postcolonial perspective, both because colonialism is always a two-way process and because Portugal’s own dependence on other European powers at least since the eighteenth-century created quasi-colonial situations, especially in relation to England, such an approach cannot blindly reproduce what has been done in very different historical contexts. Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ seminal application of Immanuel Wallerstein’s notion of world systems to classify Portugal as a semi-peripheral nation has been crucial for any attempt to reflect either on the politico-sociological conditions of the nation or its cultural production, but it too has its limitations and if one is to try to imagine the possibilities for Portugal as a post-imperial polity one needs to try other perspectives. Even though in some ways that role as intermediary between central powers and the periphery is still being carried out by Portugal, its integration in the European Community and the challenges posed by post Cold-War politics have significantly altered the picture. In the scramble to regain its European identity that characterized the last two decades of the twentieth-century, and in some ways still continues, Portugal has indeed become a post-imperial

¹¹Ferreira, “Contesting Miscegenation”, 102.

polity. But this has not been assumed at all and by that I do not mean just that nostalgia for the supposed grandeur of imperial times persists, or that attempts at neo-colonial forms of exploitation have been developed, but rather that the basic understanding of the profound changes undergone by the Portuguese polity remain masked. Both the relative lack of discourse, public, intellectual, official, on the end of empire as well as the carrying over of old power structures into the new situation – something which arguably could be seen as a kind of vicious circle, the lack of discourse facilitating the preservation of the power structures and the power structures inhibiting the possibilities for discourse – create a form of blindness that is harmful in the present and also completely damaging in terms of future options.

Perhaps some find comforting to live the illusion that nothing has really changed, that from one day to another in 1974 Portugal just stopped bothering with having colonies and that was good because it allowed the country to focus on other things like having more mobile phones, lulled by the fact that the sun still shines and that social imbalances seem to remain exactly what they always were. But the social imbalances are not the same as the factor of race has come to play as salient a role as that of class.¹² This is not to say that it was absent before, but it certainly was not as marked as after the hasty process of decolonization and the consequent influx of Africans into Portugal and, in the last fifteen years, the compounded migration of other workers from Brazil, Eastern Europe, and Asia. One could choose to see the changed situation in an optic of multiculturalism but to do so would be to merely continue pretending that race is not a factor and to forget that the notion of multiculturalism, in the societies where it has been mostly applied in North America or even in England, often has come itself to represent not much more than a euphemism for ethnic clashes anyway.¹³

A first premise then, is that the question of race cannot be neglected when analyzing Portuguese society and that such an inflection is crucial for

¹²One novel where the complexity of the relations between race and class are played out in a fierce critique of contemporary Portuguese society is Lúcia Jorge's, *O Vento Assobiando nas Gruas* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2002). Again, Ana Paula Ferreira's detailed analysis of that novel in "Lusotropicalist Entanglements" is extremely lucid.

¹³The most important work in this area, to my mind, is Paul Gilroy's especially in *After Empire: Multiculture or Postcolonial Melancholia?* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004).



understanding issues of national identity. A second premise would be that Portugal, as a European post-imperial polity, **couldnot** be understood without taking into consideration its imperial past and especially its relation with Africa.¹⁴ A third premise to be explored is that conscience of such a condition, outside of small intellectual circles, tends to be absent, forgotten, denied or misconstrued in the absence of any proper reflection in the public sphere. Indeed, where such a conscience appears most evident, and where, I would like to argue, the question of race is also approached in a consistent manner, is primarily within the realm of the arts, with special emphasis on literature which, even if not quite a popular artifact, by its spread may be said to be the closest to a public sphere. If such a statement may seem exaggerated or even naïve in its holding on to a claim for the impact of elite cultural forms in a society more and more dominated by mindless consumerism, immediate gratification and disposable images, it might be helpful to draw a comparison with reflection on the colonial war, a subject to which it is of course also related. For a long time after 1974 the subject of the colonial war can be seen as an unspoken taboo, silenced as if forgotten, with few exceptions, the most notable of which came precisely from novelists and other writers. The fact that more than three decades since decolonization all kinds of books have started appearing on the subject of the colonial war should not blind us to the fact that in the long years up to now, the work of trying to process the trauma of the war was left for the most part to a handful of novelists.¹⁵

¹⁴From the many studies that could be mentioned, I would like to restrict myself only to citing the monumental five volume Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri, eds., **História da Expansão Portuguesa** (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998-1999). See also the one volume Francisco Bethencourt & Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, *The Colours of the Empire, Racialized Representations during Portuguese Colonialism* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013).

¹⁵Among critical works to point out the special relevance of literary works in a processing of the trauma of the colonial wars, some of the most relevant are: Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Ana Paula Ferreira, eds., **Fantasmata e Fantasias Imperiais no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo** (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003) and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos, Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-colonialismo* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2004). Subsequently, one of the most significant synthetic essays that expands reflection to the near present is Isabel Ferreira Gould, "Decanting the Past: Africa, Colonialism, and the New Portuguese Novel", *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45 (1) (2008): 182-197.

*Impure Ghosts (freely after Derrida)*¹⁶

From current social theorists Paul Gilroy has led in systematically attempting to think the question of race in terms of contemporary society and in terms of a possibility for a European polity that would neither ignore the questions raised by colonialism and migration nor would simply continue past practices that have proved bankrupt. He is not alone of course, and one could invoke a variety of divergent thinkers such as Étienne Balibar or Jacques Derrida,¹⁷ as having recognized the urgency to rethink Europe as a socio-political and cultural entity that no longer conforms to the idealizations forged in the past about a common Hellenistic tradition, a shared religious and ethic basis provided by Christianity, or even a common civilizational goal brought about by the scientific revolution and a faith in a teleological view of History. All, in fact, have called for a conceptualization of Europe that, without negating the past, would look towards the future and search to establish a new identity that would allow for the demographic and cultural changes that have taken place, instead of simply reiterating the past and shutting the door on migrants, the ones more easily identified with the inevitable process of change. Watered down versions of such a debate can be easily recognized in governmental debates and newspaper discussions all across the various European countries although usually, at least in the case of Portugal, but not only, the issue of race tends to be elided or dislocated.

¹⁶I am here alluding to a chapter in Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), titled: "In the Name of the Revolution, the Double Barricade (Impure "impure impure history of ghosts")": Obviously I am both adapting and changing Derrida's initial usage since that chapter is concerned rather with a very different ghost, that of Karl Marx. But these comments, at the beginning of the chapter could have been used in my analysis almost without a change: "One must, magically, chase away a specter, exorcise the possible return of a power held to be baleful in itself and whose demonic threat **continuesto** haunt the century. [...] Vigilance, therefore: the cadaver is perhaps not as dead, as simply dead as the conjuration tries to delude us into believing" (pp. 96-97). The one article by Derrida, however, that would be more appropriate for a discussion of contemporary racism would be his "Racism's Last Word", translated by Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1) (1985): 290-299.



¹⁷Here, from various publications, I have in mind especially the following work of both authors: Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading, Reflections on Today's Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992); Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?, Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and, more recently, *Europe, crise et fin?* (Lormont: Le Bord de l'eau, 2016).

Just as an example I could refer to the savage shooting down of Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian migrant worker in London in 2005, and the way the entire mediatic and legalistic circus that arose focused solely on the question of the threat of fundamentalist Islamic terror, without reflecting
 5 on the issues of race that underlie the alleged mistake by the officers who suspected him of being a terrorist based on his appearance and “Mongolian eyes”, and subsequently shot him seven times in the face while holding him down on the floor. Several news sources commented on the fact that one reason to move against Jean Charles de Menezes was based on his appear-
 10 ance and alleged “Mongolia eyes”.¹⁸ The special circumstances of the case, following on the London bombings of 7 July 2005, and given the extreme force with which Jean Charles de Menezes was killed – seven shots to the face, one to the shoulder, three others that missed – and the oddity of all the events leading to his tragic death, mean that media coverage has been extensive
 15 and at times conflicting information has been given. The *Guardian* on 16 November 2005 reported that:

The Brazilian man killed by police who mistook him for a terrorist was left “un-
 20 recognisable” after being shot eight times by officers using “dum-dum” style bullets that are banned from use in warfare.

The *Guardian* understands from senior police sources that the thinking was that use of the bullets would minimise the chance of people in the immediate area of a shooting being injured by the bullets exiting from a suspected suicide bomber. Hollow point bullets are more likely to disintegrate in the body of the shot per-
 25 son, but they also inflict more damage.

A senior source told the *Guardian* that Jean Charles de Menezes was “unrecognisable” after the shooting because of the severity of the injuries the hollow tip bullets inflicted.¹⁹

In 2008, after intense pressure, a formal inquest was held. However, the
 30 jury was prevented from considering a verdict of unlawful killing and as a consequence could only conclude with an open verdict. As Sandra Laville reports in *The Guardian*: “Banned by the coroner, Sir Michael Wright, from re-

¹⁸See in this connection the article published by *The Independent* on 21 August 2005 under the headline “Doubt over shoot-to-kill policy”.

¹⁹Vikram Dodd, “Police Use Dum-Dum Bullets on Brazilian Shot at Tube Station,” *The Guardian* (16 November 2005), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/nov/16/july7.menezes>, accessed on 23 June, 2018.

turning a verdict of unlawful killing, the five men and five women decided on an open verdict – the most critical that was available to them.”²⁰

By drawing on the names of Balibar, Derrida, and Gilroy – and others could have been added of course – my hope is to draw attention to the fact that the need to rethink Europe along post-imperial lines is not an isolated

5  **one.** Even at the risk of **oversimplification, forcefully** embracing its European identity after 1974 and almost completely turn its back on Africa (even if in part coerced by other European nations fearful of a ‘red’ and ‘third-worldist’ threat being implanted in Europe), Portugal in a sense reinvented itself

10 away from the morass of a decrepit empire; but at the cost of finding itself hurrying to fall into the same ideological slumber of central Europe. It could be that options were limited, and certainly with hindsight everything might appear more clear than what it really was, the real need to transform Portuguese society cannot be denied and the relative gains made, even if less

15 than possible, should not be ignored even if after three or four decades it may seem that change has been more apparent than **structural.** At the same time, Portugal would apparently cease to be the sick man of Europe, and its very real economic problems should have provided an impetus rather than a deterrent, to rethink itself again in a way that would recognize both its im-

20 perial past and accept its post-imperial present.

On this score too reality has been very different. Not only has Portugal never really engaged with its imperial past (beyond wanting still to continue claiming a sort of positive, pioneering, identity) but its economic difficulties, compounded under the EU’s misguided neo-liberal politics of austerity, have

25 caused it to almost fall back (in tandem with other southern states and Ireland) into a bottomless pit of sovereign debt. Even if at the moment one could say that Portugal is defying all odds and proving its resilience, the human cost has been immense. Daniel Finn in a long and well informed editorial essay in the *New Left Review*, states his wonder at the fact that the un-

30 likely coalition of the various forces of the Left in Portugal has actually succeeded: “Dismissed by hostile critics as a rickety *geringonça* (‘contrap-tion’), the alliance between the Socialists and Portugal’s radical left has con-

 ²⁰Sandra Laville, “Jean Charles de Menezes Inquest Records Open Verdict,” *The Guardian* (12 December 2008), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/dec/12/de-menezes-verdict>, accessed on 14 June 2018.

founded predictions that it would collapse in a matter of months”.²¹ Yet the very title of his article, “Luso-Anomalies” should give us reason to pause. Finn is properly hopeful and concludes on an optimistic note: “Lisbon gave its name to the EU’s agenda of neoliberal reform, and to the repackaged constitution voted down by the French and the Dutch; today, the city may offer signposts towards a different future for Europe”.²²

Derrida, in *The Other Heading* not only exposes a number of fallacies inherent in a certain way of conceptualizing Europe as a spiritual entity by a close analysis of Paul Valéry’s “Notes sur la grandeur et décadence de l’Europe” (1927), in itself a valuing of culture in terms of social and political thought, but he calls for a rediscovery or reinvention of the very notion of Europe, in a move that both invokes Europe’s age of discoveries as well as fundamentally changes its meaning:

We are younger than ever, we Europeans, since a certain Europe does not yet exist. Has it ever existed? And yet we are like these young people who get up, at dawn, already old and tired. We are already exhausted. [...] From what state of exhaustion must these young old-Europeans who we are set out again, re-em-bark? Must they re-begin? Or must they *depart* from Europe, separate themselves from an old Europe? Or else depart again, set out toward a Europe that does not yet exist?”²³

Far from being merely rhetorical, those questions are at the base of the injunction to redefine Europe in ways that both preserve its heritage and renew it, that is, to stop memorializing the supposed grandeur of the past without abandoning what it offers of value and using that as the means to work towards a different and better future. It may seem naïvely utopian, yet, in my view, such questioning must be at the base of any attempt to imagine a possible future that entertains a notion of democracy, that is, of equality, within a Europe that has grown more and more closed upon itself – upon what it thinks to be itself even though a truthful answer to what exactly might be Europe, might have been Europe, will still remain evasive, forever postponed. Those questions are also at the base of a refusal to simply

²¹Daniel Finn, “Luso-Anomalies”, *New Left Review* 106 (2017): 5-32, 5.

²²Finn, “Luso-Anomalies”, 32.

²³Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading, Reflections on Today’s Europe*, Transl. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 7-8.

accept a division between us and others, between insiders and outsiders, which has also been accentuated in the last decades and is reaching unthought of proportions with the rise and spread of the Far-Right and a politics of xenophobic fear and hatred all over Europe.

5 Regrettably Portugal's racism is no anomaly. It is the refusal to yield to such forces that makes Derrida construe himself precisely as a figure that escapes a division between the proper and the alien, when he affirms himself as a European intellectual but not completely: "I am European, I am no doubt a European intellectual ... But I am not, nor do I feel, European in
10 *every part*, that is European through and through."²⁴ It is an important construction not because it alludes to his birth in Algeria, but because it inscribes in his own identity that which he would wish for a European identity, that is, the refusal to essentialize, a refusal I see as crucial for any possibility to seriously consider the question of race in Portugal as much as
15 in Europe in general.

The importance of such a position may perhaps be better judged if one translates it into the realm of politics, as does Balibar. In one of his texts, "Violence et mondialisation: une politique de la civilité est-elle possible?"²⁵ Balibar stresses the unavoidability of questioning the possibility for democracy in Europe if understood as a process of equality. Referring to the establishment of institutionalized racism in Europe, Balibar maintains that it is impossible to consider it without seeing it linked to the current process of globalization. And the way in which he analyzes it is highly applicable to the Portuguese situation and indeed to the ways in which the problems of race
20 have been represented and problematized in recent novels by António Lobo Antunes, Lídia Jorge and other writers.

I find two points especially relevant in Balibar's analysis: one is his conception of such a racism as a double movement, both a local, or if one wants, national, projection of the conditions of globalization, and a reaction
30 to it. That is, institutionalized racism in Europe, if one wants all the legal mechanisms for exclusion that have been increasing more or less everywhere in Europe – and this applies as well to Portugal even though recent changes

²⁴Derrida, *The Other Heading*, 1992, 82.

²⁵Étienne Balibar, "Violence et mondialisation." *Nous, citoyens d'Europe? Les frontières, l'état, le peuple* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2001).

in, for instance, the law of nationalization²⁶ also indicate a possible counter-move – would be both and simultaneously a reflection, a copying of the generalized shift in power brought about by globalization. It also can and must be seen as yet another attempt by national societies to resist the perceived threat to their historical cultures as if by falling back into superseded claims of ethnic or cultural identity could arrest the renewed surge in migration directly linked to the current phase of capitalism.²⁷ The second point has to do with his perception of the connection between such moves and a generalized, globalized, violence and notably with a substitution of traditional images of the foreigner as an external enemy with images of the foreigner as an internal enemy, residing within the society it malefically would destroy. Such observations are precisely key to understand the ways in which some recent Portuguese novels represent questions of race and violence and I will turn to them shortly as a way of concluding.

Before doing so, however, I still would like to call attention to the arguments developed by Paul Gilroy in his book on *After Empire: Melancholia or*

²⁶The nationalization law keeps being subject to revisions. These oscillate between expanding and restricting the possibilities for acquiring Portuguese citizenship. Of note is the fact that overall, the possibility of acquiring Portuguese citizenship has significantly changed to admit migrants into Portugal and also the descendants of Portuguese emigrants. See the “Lei da Nacionalidade” (Lei n.º 37/81 de 3 de Outubro (com as alterações dadas pela Lei n.º 25/94 de 19 de Agosto): <http://www.sef.pt/portal/v10/pt/asp/legislacao/legislacao_detalle.aspx?id_linha=4458>, accessed on 14 June 2018. See also, the further changes brought on in 2017: “Decreto-Lei n.º 71/2017”: <https://dre.pt/web/guest/home/-/dre/107541407/details/maximized>, accessed on 14 June 2018. Recently, in May, 2018, a new set of alterations to the law has been approved in Parliament (Assembleia da República), drawing on the combined votes of the Partido Socialista (PS) and the Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (PAN) party. This law is now before the president of the Republic who is expected to sign it into effect in June 2018. These more recent alterations continue past tendencies of expanding eligibility to both migrant groups mentioned as they would allow for automatic citizenship to be granted to the children of Portuguese migrants after a period of residence of two years unless they expressly affirm they do not want it; and they also would allow for the parents of individuals born in Portugal to acquire citizenship after five years of residency. However, there is also some contraction as naturalized citizens would be excluded from both the offices of President of the Republic and of Parliament. On this, see the brief note by Maria Lopes and Joana Gorjão, “Nacionalidade automática para filhos de imigrantes há dois anos em Portugal”, *Público* 20 April 2018, <https://www.publico.pt/2018/04/20/politica/noticia/esquerda-e-pan-approvam-alargamento-da-nacionalidade-1811095>, accessed on 14 June 2018.

²⁷From many studies on the topic see especially Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions, Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Peter Osborne, *The Postconceptual Condition* (London & New York: Verso, 2018).

Convivial Culture, an extended study of how multiculturalism for the most part seems to have failed as either an ideology or as policy.²⁸ Gilroy's starting point is that "Multicultural society seems to have been abandoned at birth,"²⁹ viewing such a process as both a strategy for the preservation of existing power structures and social relations as well as "a failure of political imagination,"³⁰ precisely the type of imagination that Derrida would enjoin us to attempt. Gilroy's analysis is focused on Britain and this means that it cannot just be transplanted to the Portuguese situation, not only because of significant ideological and historical differences but also because the confrontation with multicultural issues has been extensive and far-reaching in England, whereas it is incipient at best in Portugal. This has consequences as well for other, more recent, facets of his thought as well, because although the focus on racial issues might actually have come to a point in which it is more counter-productive than potentially emancipatory in England, the same cannot be said of Portugal where even a discourse on questions of race beyond the privileged confines of the academy remains incipient, apparently always having to start anew. This is not to say that there have not been many attempts to bring the discussion into the public's attention by writers, artists, journalists and other cultural agents. Very recent examples include two books by Joana Gorjão Henriques, collecting articles previously published in *Público*, one of the main daily newspapers: *Racismo em Português, O lado esquecido do colonialismo* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2016), and *Racismo no país dos brancos costumes* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2018). Very recently, at the Lisbon Book Fair, a roundtable on this book with various speakers linked to anti-racist initiatives and movements in Portugal was disrupted by one of the volunteers working for the organisation, in a clear display of how uneasy the whole question sits still with a large number of Portuguese. Mamadou Ba, one of the leaders of SOS Racismo, who, together with the three women also participating, was interrupted when speaking, and has written a brief article in which he stresses exactly this. As he affirms, the events made clear that to speak of racism in Portuguese society still is bothersome and that is



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²⁸Paul Gilroy, *After Empire, Multiculture or Postcolonial Melancholia* (London: Routledge, 2004).

²⁹Gilroy, *After Empire*, I.

³⁰Gilroy, *After Empire*, 5.

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why it is important to keep the debate open in the public sphere.³¹ Nonetheless, Gilroy's observations and analysis are of acute importance to try to understand the current situation in Europe in general, and I think little correction for local circumstances would be needed to his view that "a refusal to think about racism as something that structures the life of the postimperial polity is associated with what has become a morbid fixation with the fluctuating substance of national culture and identity".³²

Morbid fixations

Precisely such a morbid fixation, in conjunction with a view of the perceived other, not only as enemy but also as an enemy within, and moreover one with evil characteristics, is what both Lídia Jorge and Lobo Antunes represent, expose and problematize in their most recent novels. Even a simple look at their titles would serve to conjure up such notions as both Lídia Jorge's *Combateremos a sombra*³³ as well as Lobo Antunes' *O Meu Nome é Legião*, explicitly refer to a sort of metaphysical evil, pervasive, multiple, and indeed residing within. That both authors are at the forefront of a questioning of race problems in Portuguese society, that their recent novels, not just those but also others such as for example *O Vento Assobiando nas Gruas* by Lídia Jorge and *O Esplendor de Portugal* by Lobo Antunes, should come as no surprise. Both authors were also the ones who most sharply and consistently problematized the trauma of the colonial war, its forgetting, and the functions that the colonial war plays in the cultural memory of Portugal as a nation. In their novels readers are confronted with an extremely violent universe, an utterly shocking reality of complete dehumanization depicted without a trace of sentimentality and also without false idealizations. If in the case of Lídia Jorge's novel it might still be possible for a reader to try

³¹Mamadou Ba, "Falar de racismo em Portugal incomoda e é por isso que importa," *Público* 4 June 2018: <https://www.publico.pt/2018/06/04/sociedade/opiniao/falar-de-racismo-em-portugal-incomoda-e-e-por-isso-tambem-que-importa-1833148>, accessed on 14 June 2018. Furthermore, the initiative of forty-two museums to exhibit some artefacts related to slavery is yet another key element to bring a different focus on historical questions and how they affect the present. More information on this, which could become one of the most important projects to try and bring about real change, can be accessed here: <http://testemunhosdaescravatura.pt/pt/projeto>, accessed on 14 June 2018.

³²Gilroy, *After Empire*, 13.

³³Lídia Jorge, *Combateremos a sombra* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2007).

some form of identification with its flawed characters, be it the doomed psychoanalyst who is killed in the end, or the detective who keeps insisting in the background to look for other clues, indeed, for “white” clues to what is decided is simply an affair of murder by African migrants, or the young black woman who does manage to escape by hiding and ultimately fleeing from Portugal. But in the case of Lobo Antunes’ novel, no such mitigating identification is possible. Likewise, no possibility is presented for escaping the violence and cruelty depicted as all his characters are intrinsically and deeply flawed. So flawed indeed that one could think them mere tragic symbols, were it not also for an excruciating humanity Lobo Antunes lent them, and which they continuously keep attempting to repress in their denial of any emotional involvement, paradoxically rendering it as even more powerful.

Rather than shunning the problematic question of race and how it figures in the constitution of present Portuguese society, both authors expose it and the dominant violence that goes with it. This constitutes an attempt, not so much to hold a mirror to society, as to force it to come to terms with a reality that no longer can be ignored or silenced. Because to do so would risk failing, not just a generation or a given class, but the future in its possibility for a more human existence. If in their denouncement of the colonial war both authors had indeed shown how an entire generation had been sacrificed, literally and symbolically, the survivors forever scarred and society as a whole stuck with its head in the sands of denial and repression, in their more recent works what they attempt rather is a direct confrontation with the present that, much in the same way as Derrida or Balibar, would force the Portuguese to embark anew on a discovery of themselves by questioning their identity as it were from the outside, keeping in mind their past as well as their possible future.³⁴ Both novels share a number of common elements even if in varying degrees. Lídia Jorge, keeping in tune with all of her previous work, focuses on the notion of bearing witness just as she keeps open a window, however small, for such testimony to bring about change in virtue of its undeniable ethical force. Whereas Lobo Antunes, also in keeping with his previous work, forcefully dismantles any possibility of holding simple di-

³⁴In this regard it is useful to keep in mind that in their latest novels, Lídia Jorge revisits precisely the events of the 1974 revolution and Lobo Antunes the colonial wars: Lídia Jorge, *Os Memoráveis* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2014); António Lobo Antunes, *Até que as pedras se tornem mais leves que a água* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2017).

visions between us and the others, or between Portugal and Africa, including any essentialized notion of race. Indeed, one could even say that a key premise of his works has been the denial of any such possibility, through characters who must confront their hybridity and who realize that instead of conferring them with any special advantage, in a racist society that persists in following traditional patterns of racial hierarchy, their mixed status only relegates them to an inferior position.

One figure that can be seen as exemplary in this regard is Carlos from *O Esplendor de Portugal*, the son of a colonist with one of his black servants who, even though raised, indeed *bought*, by the Portuguese family, and in spite of his appearance completely masking his hybridity, is always perceived as black, the ultimate enemy within, not just society, but oneself as it were.³⁵ And in *O Vento Assobiando nas Gruas* Lídia Jorge provides an entire family of Cape Verdean migrants who, by residing within the abandoned ruins of the factory that had provided for the wealth of the Portuguese family not only serve as a figure for capitalist exploitation but constitute themselves as yet another enemy within. The union of one of the migrant boys with one of the Portuguese girls is then immediately perceived by the white family as a genetic threat that must be curtailed by all means including the violent and covert sterilization of the young woman in cause. Indeed, as Derrida and others have pointed out what is at stake is also very much a question of heritage as much as it is one of capital and both converge on the issue of race. Ana Paula Ferreira, after providing an illuminating analysis of this novel, comes to the conclusion that Lídia Jorge:

in her exploring – that is to say, imagining – how old and “new” racisms can only be understood within the contexts of myriad social relations that involve economics but also affect and intimacy. In the present, as in the past, those relations are obviously marked by capital; those who have it and those who do not are clearly distinguished. They are embedded in and are in themselves discursive formations, statements aligned with family stories that recall the past to illumin-

³⁵António Lobo Antunes, *O Esplendor de Portugal* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 1997). Ana Margarida Fonseca has provided several critical readings of Lobo Antunes' texts and of this novel in particular. See for example her essay: Ana Margarida Fonseca, “Identidades Impuras: uma leitura pós-colonial de *O Esplendor de Portugal*”, in Eunice Cabral, Carlos J. F. Jorge & Christine Zurbach, eds., *A Escrita e o Mundo em António Lobo Antunes* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 2003), 281-296. Furthermore, the extensive study by Maria Alzira Seixo, *Os Romances de António Lobo Antunes* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 2002), remains fundamental.



ate predicaments of the present, the spaces and places where the present both repeats and alters the past, not to mention the past's still unimagined versions.³⁶

The title of Lobo Antunes' novel, *O Meu Nome é Legião*, is a direct quotation from the Bible, as he himself has remarked. Taken from St. Luke (8:30), it constitutes the answer given to Jesus by the man possessed by demons, "My name is Legion". That incident concerns possession, so that it is very literally a figure of the enemy within. And it is an account of the struggle between good and evil and of extreme violence. But the novel is not about exorcism at all. Indeed, the novel never presents any possibility for exorcising the evil that affects all the characters and that has nothing metaphysical about it. Rather, the novel is about continuous, unrelenting, struggle and about the desolation of humanity. The figure of the police inspector whose report we first read as the novel unfolds, and who tries desperately to hold on to some form of precision or objectivity, represented by his obsession with spelling out numbers and hours, or with his attempt to hold on to some form of sanity by counting up toothpicks –all of them futile operations as he well knows, the given number of toothpicks always changing at each new recounting – is not that of Jesus. Indeed, there is nothing of the savior or redeemer about him, his report does not restore any order to a disorderly universe, his decision to use deadly force against the youth gang offers no solution to anything, just a confirmation that he himself belongs with the legion of the damned as much as the ones he struggles against, be they his superiors, the image of his father, his estranged daughter, or indeed the black teenagers he hunts. And that is as important a point to make about the novel and its critical assessment of Portuguese society, as it refuses to create or preserve any distinctions between us and them, between "white" and "black", Portuguese or African.It is a strategy that is echoed by other characters who comment specifically on their race by noting how they become black either by associating with Africans or because of their falling into sexual exploitation, their 'color' not having any essential characteristics at all and able to shift depending on circumstances. The notion of struggle or torment and torture is further emphasized by including a dictionary definition of it within the novel, close to the end of the narrative, when a school session has come to substitute for the police report at the beginning



³⁶Ana Paula Ferreira, "Lusotropicalist Entanglements", 64.

in a move that implicates the failure of the educational and cultural establishment as much as it does the juridical one and indeed, the very narrative itself, in the failures of society.³⁷

This too is an echo of the biblical setting where the possessed man had asked Jesus not to torment him, so that in an apparently simple move Lobo Antunes makes explicit that what interests him is not the issue of exorcism but rather the torment involved for humanity. And by making the comment auto-reflect on his own narrative as a torment, Lobo Antunes in characteristically ironic fashion further refuses any false sentimentality or naïve feeling of absolution one could hope for in the force of the narrative, or the power of language. As much as it becomes impossible to draw any lines between good and evil, between black and white, African or Portuguese in this novel, so the conflict, the struggle, is also always represented as being as much an interior one as a clash with outside forces. And in the case of Lídia Jorge's novel the same could be said based on a number of observations starting with the figure of the black patient whose trauma has rendered him literally blind to black bus drivers so that his life is rendered practically impossible as he keeps seeing in the streets of Lisbon ghost buses without a driver in haunted memories of his own experience when left for dead among the corpses of a wrecked bus in Angola. Or jumping to the figure of the young black woman who hides pretending to have been killed, so as to escape being actually murdered as a potential witness to crimes and who explains her own situation as that of a black snow white, a "preta de neve" in forced hibernation, sleeping as it were among the dead.³⁸ And of course, the entire narrative with its focus on psychoanalysis and its presentation of the discourse of dreams as revealing the hidden violence and racism inherent in modern day sexual slavery, yet another form of globalization, could be said

³⁷This is the passage in question: "torture, n. 1: a serious bodily punishment ordered by judgment, cruelty (...) pay attention, gentlemen, I repeat, because we are nearing with a long and fast stride the end of the dictation, one minute, two minutes maximum, and for your satisfaction and relief the torture will be over" ["suplício, s. m. 1: grave punição corporal ordenada por sentença, sevícia(...) concentrem-se meus senhores, retomo eu, que nos aproximamos a passos largos e rápidos do final do ditado, um minuto, dois minutos no máximo e para vossa satisfação e alívio o suplício termina"] (Lobo Antunes, *O Meu Nome é Legião*, 377-378).

³⁸I have had the opportunity to analyze the novel in some detail in Paulo de Medeiros, "Preta de Neve", *Metamorfoses* 9 (2008): 179-190.



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to expose the impossibility of any neat division between inside and outside. In the case of Lídia Jorge's narrative, as much as in Lobo Antunes' the 'enemy' is not external but always already inside. And just as in the biblical passage the possessed man lived among the dead, so all of these characters in one way or another, symbolically or literally, also live among the dead: witness the thirteen-year old boy, remembering how the fields of his peripheral neighborhood were used as burial grounds and how he had tried to dig in an attempt at finding the corpse of the one old woman who had once shown him some tenderness and finding bones, shoes and other assorted remnants.

Coda

Both Lídia Jorge and Lobo Antunes engage in a relentless appeal to consider Portuguese society in light of its imperial past and in full consciousness of the continued violence of its post-imperial condition. They both reflect on memory and inheritance without any false or nostalgic trappings, as shown in the admission of one of the characters in *O Meu Nome é Legião* that he had inherited from his mother a box, empty but for the key.³⁹ And they both call for the Portuguese to assume a critical view towards such empty inheritances. Lobo Antunes openly remarked on that in a recent television interview, saying that the children he depicts in his novel "live completely suspended between an Africa which they have lost and a Europe which they have never gained".⁴⁰ A serious, committed, analysis of the problematics of race, representation and violence, such as those novels inaugurate, might be the only way to try to imagine a different future, one that might not be just compounded losses but offer the possibility of some gain, some human value, as well.

Not until such critique is carried forth across the different societal layers can one hope to see lusotropicalism safely relegated to the past. The current situation all across Europe is not really conducive to such analysis in spite of

³⁹Lobo Antunes, *O Meu Nome é Legião*, 264.

⁴⁰These comments are taken from a televised interview given by Lobo Antunes to Mário Crespo on 11 October 2008 and accessible in several versions from YouTube –for instance, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0kzm7wHM08&feature=related> – and other sites. Lobo Antunes says, circa nine minutes into the interview, the following, when commenting the situation of the African teenagers in his novel: "Não têm a África dos pais que perderam e não têm o Portugal que não ganharam nunca. Vivem suspensos entre uma África que perderam e uma Europa que não ganharam nunca."

the multitude of acts of resistance carried out by individuals every day. When Far-Right ideologues can openly, and with electoral success, vent their racist hatreds – as seen all across Europe, be it in France with the National Front (now National Rally, “Rassemblement National”), in Germany with the Alternative for Germany (AfD), or Italy with the Northern League (now just League, “Lega”, as it sheds any hints at regionalism), to mention only some – then to expect Portugal to be the exception and seriously confront racism would be simply too naïve. Indeed when a Steve Bannon on a tour of European capitals can openly incite listeners at a Front National rally in Lille, to wear their racism with pride, because “History would be on their side”⁴¹ the inversion of the racist reality in the fetishization process characteristic of lusotropicalism almost seems too innocuous and genteel, a kind of double “white” lie as it were, bereft of the rabid virulence all too clear in the current discourse of the Far-Right. Yet, such a state of affairs as we are living through at the moment calls out even more for redoubled vigilance and to keep pushing for a greater, more open confrontation, with the dissimulation, denial, and blindness of racism at the core of lusotropicalism in the hope that one day the time might come to say, with a bit more permanence, *Exit Ghost*.

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⁴¹See Lucie Souiller, “Steve Bannon, invité vedette du congrès du FN: ‘L’Histoire est de notre côté’”, *Le Monde* (March 3, 2018).