

СЕКЦИЯ VIII МЕЖНАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ СОХРАНЕНИЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ

SENTIMENTALITY IN PORTUGUESE POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE AND ITS ROLE IN CONSTRUCTING LOCAL IDENTITY

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One of the distinctive accomplishments of colonial literature is the sense of solidarity it creates among its local readers. In many cases, this solidarity shapes a sense of community and mutual understanding, which in turn reinforces the understanding of shared cultural background. In turn, those shared ideas may spread far beyond local boundaries and reflect global transformations that occur within systems of seemingly unrelated cultural entities with a shared historical fate. An example of such a system is the 20th century Portuguese Empire which spanned the west coast of India, southern Africa, South America, and parts of the Asian Pacific. For many colonial powers, the second half of the 20th century was a turbulent period of independence movements, self-identification of colonized nations and cultures, and the formation of new nation states with their own governing bodies and national politics. Unsurprisingly, the post-colonial literature of the time was a key bonding agent for communities of mixed racial, cultural, and socioeconomic profiles. The three characteristic literary works that reflect this trend are *Candy* by Henrique de Senna Fernandes, *The Crossing* by Luis Cardoso, and *Tivolem* by Victor Rangel-Ribeiro, set in Macao, East Timor, and Goa, respectively. By experimenting with the symbolism of memory, nostalgia, tradition, and nature, the three works construct a sentimental narrative of remote colonial geographies. The works reflect how the inhabitants of Goa, Macau, and East Timor began to develop a new sense of shared cultural identity and connection to their places of origin, history, and heritage, and display early evidence of an emerging sense of national identity. By carefully documenting local customs, mentality, and values, the authors produced unofficial yet extensive anthropological studies of those colonial cultures. Within those communities, the authors pioneer the idea of ‘motherland’ and thus exemplify the evolution of their national literatures.

A vital property of a ‘motherland’ as opposed to a permanent place of living is the gravitational power it has over its members. In all three literary works, protagonists return to their birthplaces from faraway countries. As a result, the media of transportation and environments of transition (like water bodies or airports) become key venues in all three texts. Even though the emphasis on transportation might seem loosely connected to the discussion of identities, it creates a general sentiment celebrating the existence of communities at the boundary between local cultures and the outside powers, the globalized world and the intimate rural setting. In *Tivolem*, crossing the river by boat is the most vivid and

emotional part of Marie-Santana's journey, because it marks a boundary between the outside world and her home community. The sense of connection with the boatman and their shared memory of Marie-Santana's father contrast with the busy harbor setting of long-haul travelers and customs officers.

The composition of *Candy* features even deeper attention to spaces of transportation. The Kai Tak airport is not merely a tool of return or a departure, but a backbone of the story, despite its location outside of Macao. The story begins and ends at Kai Tak, and as the story progresses, the narrator counts down the time until his flight. The pace of the novel is correlated with movement through the city fabric, and the tensest moments coincide with characters driving or walking. Thus, the sense of movement and journey separates the characters and disrupts their lifestyle, but also defines what it is like to be Macanese in a world where globalization is about to swallow the fragile community existing at the boundary between Portuguese and Chinese cultural realms.

In addition to reflecting the sense of nostalgia across space, the three works also depict the sense of sentimentality tied to the distant past. Protagonists reflect on their lives and unresolved conflicts dating a couple of decades back. Even though those conflicts might be loosely connected to the issue of national identity, they contribute to the general feeling of nostalgia about the characters' birthplaces and their ties to the local communities. For some of them, like the protagonist of *Candy* or Marie-Santana, it is the story of an unresolved romantic relationship that haunts them throughout their lives.

The depiction of the surrounding environment is another powerful tool in creating a sentimental narrative and celebrating a connection to the *genius loci*. The sketches of characters enjoying the sites of urban and natural environments in the three works are reminiscent of 18th century European romanticist panoramas. Historically, the fascination with local nature depicted in these panoramas reflected the rising ideas of patriotism and development of nation-states in Europe, a phenomenon which could translate well to Portuguese colonies. In *Candy*, the narrator recalls vivid images of "The mellow autumn sunset watched from one of the belvederes on the Penha hill, the streets and alleyways, the narrow and twisting residue of an old Macau now tending to disappear" [1, p. 131] as he wanders around Kowloon before his flight and recalls his childhood memories. These works construct vivid impressions of the surrounding environment and nostalgic memories of the protagonists' childhood experiences – a sentimental celebration of the characters' ties to the area. The idyllic setting often relies upon – and very seldom is disrupted by – the presence of local customs. All three works are anthropological documentations of traditions and value systems that the characters follow or challenge. Moreover, characters typically find it hard to break the social codes and if they do so, they have to face the judgement of their countrymates. Some of these traditions have indigenous origins and arise from concerns about endangered local cultures. For example, before the narrator in *The Crossing* enters the Jesuit school, his grandfather takes him to sacral sites and shares indigenous rituals: "He wanted me to know my own nature before seeing it forever submerged in the Christian world" [2, p. 56]. In *Tivolem*, Marie-Santana is stigmatized for having an "evil eye" [2, p. 77], a reputation she later manages to overcome. At the same time, these traditions coexist with the Portuguese set of customs, primarily elements of Catholicism. Walking together to the Sunday mass, Marie-Santana and Simon are wary of the attention they draw from other women who tend to walk to church separately. What is most important is that the texts do not show any discourse between the native and the colonial habits, both of which are respected equally.

Despite the heavy influence of two religious systems, the works also highlight grass-roots customs that appear most successful in constructing the essence of the local spirit.

These customs emerge from very personalized and localized habits: the start of the Sunday mess upon Dona Elena's late arrival, boatmen's commitment to sail against the tide in memory of Marie-Santana's father, and, finally, an impromptu 'cultural group', organized by Domingo and his friends in Lisbon. Appearing almost as anecdotes, those traditions contribute greatly to a sense of nostalgia for the motherland and a coming-of-age understanding of place and culture: "That was the first time I heard a genuine marbere... my idea of culture, acquired in rooms lined with fat, heavy tomes, was profoundly shaken by the way in which Domingos, illiterate, ushered the world cultural" [3, p. 22]. Thus, it is not the overarching Portuguese or indigenous influences but local, shareable, sometimes individual customs and family traditions that end up being the foundation of the evolving self-identification.

The discussion of customs and habits is a part of a broader investigation into the relationship between the local community and the outside world. All three works reflect upon the characters' understanding of the 'foreign' lands to some extent. Even though the communities are colonies of Portugal, the presence of this colonial power is minimized as the communities begin to consider themselves equal members of the international arena. In *Tivolem*, Senhor Eusebio's discussion of recent news with Tendulkar features discussion of the worldwide political agenda rather than solely the influence of Portugal. When the Portuguese context is mentioned, Tendulkar denounces Goa's cultural dependence: "On paper, we're all Portuguese citizens, never mind that we are actually Indians – or Goans by birth and descent... should we be praised for assimilating into a lesser culture?" [2, p. 56]. *The Crossing* portrays a much more mature stage of cultural independence and shows a rich political scene unfolding in East Timor under the influence of local elites educated abroad – and, consequently, their agenda for an independent East Timor. Similarly, the works show that characters are able to recognize each other outside of their region and easily establish a sense of connection. The best illustration of such solidarity is seen in *The Crossing*, where the protagonist is recognized by two other Timorese in the streets of Lisbon and is instantly invited for a tea at their house. Therefore, the works demonstrate an established sense of awareness of the people not as Portuguese, Indian, or Chinese, but Goan, Timorese, and Macanese. Such self-identification, however, does not arise at once but is rather a result of a long process of self-reflection in the dual cultural context: "I was often told not to forget where I was from... But I always felt I was from several places. Only later was I told that your home is where you were born. When I went to get my identity card, I immediately announced that I was from Cailaco, and, as if to plead some extenuating circumstance for that remote region, I supplemented this with 'Province of Timor!'" [3, p. 22].

Certainly, these sentimental narratives do not necessarily account for different geopolitical situations in each of the regions. Eventually, the three areas discussed ended up at different levels of sovereignty and international recognition. While East Timor is now an independent state, Goa and Macau are autonomies within India and China that still retain self-governance and recognized cultural brands. What is more important is that all three territories and the nations that inhabit them were artificially shaped as a result of land division between the colonies of Portugal and other countries. At the time of colonization, Macau, Goa, and East Timor had very little language or ethnic distinction from the larger Indian, Chinese, or Indonesian provinces surrounding them, and would have developed elsewhere had the colonial borders been defined differently. Evidently, it is the mixed cultural context and people's emotional attachments to specific local customs that ignited their development as separate nations. The three texts discussed above thus offer a unique opportunity to witness (or speculate) how the senses of nostalgia and sentimentality were

some the earliest transformative forces that sparked the sense of belonging and patriotism and subsequently drove the decolonization movement. Since the three works discussed were written at the turn of the 21st century, that sense of shared sentimental connection continues to lay the groundwork for building a set of national values and identity. Moreover, this literature is also a bastion for defending the identities of those fragile communities in the world of accelerated globalization.

Literature

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