INTRODUCTION

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*and Clara Carvalho**

> I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents, like the themes of one's life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonizing. They are "off" and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, in the forms of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme. A form of freedom, I'd like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That scepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place (Said 1999: 295).

Edward Said's seminal text on *Orientalism* has opened, as it has often been stated, a complex agenda in the social sciences. In fact, Said unambiguously challenged all forms of essentialism by claiming that such settled categories as "Orient" and "Occident" did not correspond to any stable reality, but rather were an odd combination of the empirical and the imaginative (Said 1995: 331). Independent of the enormous controversy – both at the ideological and the theoretical level – that his thesis has raised, his assumption that each age and society recreates its "others"[1] had a strong influence shaping the development of a conceptual apparatus in the colonial discourses of the social sciences and its critiques of colonial rule. The same can be suggested about postcolonial theory.[2]

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* We would like to dedicate this volume to the memory of Paulo Valverde and Rui Rocha whose inspiring works remain a permanent reference.

[1] In the 1995 'Afterword' reissue of *Orientalism*, Said says that "the construction of identity – for indeed identity, whether of Orient or Occident, is finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and others whose actualities are always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from us" (Said 1995: 332).

[2] Although we do share Ascroft and Ahluwalia's point of view: "Rather than looking to him for a myth of origins, we can see in the link between his cultural identity and his cultural theory, a range of paradoxes and contradictions that illuminate the ambivalent and deeply complex nature of post-colonial identity construction in the contemporary world" (Ascroft and Ahluwalia 1999: 30).

Other relevant contemporary debates are indebted to Said's contribution – particularly the *Subaltern Studies* group of scholars whose prime concern has been to give voice to the unvoiced subordinates of European empires; and current feminist thought, stimulated by the fact that many aspects of Western attitudes to the East were bound up with notions of gender.[3]

But *Orientalism* is much more than a work about how Europe has represented the Orient, it also provides a powerful tool to analyze the representation of cultural and political issues of the discursive constitution of otherness. We believe that if Said's books are so profoundly polemical it is because scholarship and ideology are seen as so inseparably intertwined, confronting academics' golden utopia of political innocence and ideological freedom.[4] It is the Western hegemonic observer who he invites to be deconstructed as both a scholar and a decision-maker. The Western subject is produced by a discursive strategy in which denying dependence on the other guarantees an illusion of autonomy and freedom.

This volume raises a number of issues, namely, the limits and ethics of observation and representation, the nature of the contemporary observer who has been removed from an aloof academic paradise of ideological non-engagement. The collaborators of this publication have implicitly or explicitly addressed some of these topics. Other concerns have, however, led us originally to organise the conference "Mirrors of the Empire: Towards a Debate on Portuguese Colonialism and Postcolonialism", and subsequently to edit the present volume. Indeed, the relationship between cultures of different continents, as mediated by Imperialism, is a central aspect of modern History, as well as of other Social Sciences. Although Portuguese historiography (and to a smaller degree, anthropology) has a long tradition in Asian and African studies, there is little debate on colonialism and postcolonialism.

In some cases Portuguese historiography is not aware of the complexity of Western approaches to Asia or Africa, and of the need to understand the dualities and polarities that are inherent in them. In other cases it has not arrived at a theoretical discourse liberated from the colonial legacy and from many inherent representations of colonialism. No doubt, a chronological proximity to a colonial past has prevented many anthropologists from

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[3] Although it is true, Said´s treatment of gender has been criticized by some authors. We may summarize these criticisms according to three main topics: one of them condemns Said's primary concern to reach a Western public; another one (the most frequent) blames Said´s totalizing and essentialising posture, failing to articulate differences among those within the Orient; and the inverse perspective criticizes his totalizing view of a homogeneous Occident. Reina Lewis' *Gendering Orientalism* summed up the latter addressing Said´s failure to conceive women as active participants in strategies of empire.

[4] After *Orientalism* Said has largely softened his ideological perspective with respect to intellectual knowledge produced by Westerners concerning the East. In *Culture and Imperialism* he accents the way culture has allowed what he calls a *circle* between colonialism and postcolonialism effects and results, or what Parama Roy considers negotiated identities (Parama Roy 1998).

approaching this subject, as much of the research was conducted by some generations of scholars who were to a large extent engaged themselves with the colonial regime.

Consequently, comprehensive studies on Portuguese colonialism have not yet been a leading goal of Portuguese social scientists. Actually, despite its historical and ideological specificity, the Portuguese empire has been almost entirely the object of historical research, much of it ideologically biased, and faithful to a rigid and nationalistic methodology.[5] But the Portuguese empire[6] has not attracted foreign scholars' attention – exceptions to this providing important contributions.[7]

At the end of this intensive debate, after various disciplines have taken as a central task the analysis of colonialism and postcolonialism[8] (from Cultural and Literary Studies to History, Political Sciences, Anthropology), the ideologies and strategies of European empires have been scrutinized, colonial rule and colonial discourse have been the object of detailed and systematic analysis, and categories such as nationalism and postcolonial nations have stimulated long-term critical scholarship. Ultimately, the departure point is no longer coincident with contemporary theories and terminology. Colonial and postcolonial theory – not to mention orientalism – has submitted their prior assertions to critical evaluation, and new ideas have come forth. One of the more representative cases is Chakrabarty's conceptual change from a pessimistic perspective on the hegemonic European role – ideological as well as intellectual – in the East, preventing the subaltern from representing himself after an European sovereign discourse (Chakrabarty 1992), to an optimistic perspective when he considers European intellectual tradition as the construction of a relatively recent European history (Chakrabarty 2000). In so doing he denies that Europe is the site of hegemonic cultural thought to non-European contexts.

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[5] Diogo Ramada Curto was the first Portuguese historian to challenge the traditional Portuguese historiography, by editing *O Tempo de Vasco da Gama* (Vasco da Gama's Time), a reflexion on Gama's travel within a European and world-wise frame, thus breaking with the previous perspective of Portuguese historians towards the (significantly) so called Portuguese expansion (Diogo Ramada Curto 1998, *O Tempo de Vasco da Gama*, Lisboa, CNCDP and Difel). At running the risk of involuntary unfairness towards other authors, we have to mention Valentim Alexandre and Jill Dias historical research on colonial Africa (e.g. Alexandre and Dias 1998).

[6] We employ the term empire intentionally, as opposed to colonialism in the sense that Edward Said ascribed to them: "As I shall use the term, 'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism' which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory (…) In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as well as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices" (Said 1993: 9).

[7] Charles R. Boxer paved the way for historical research about the Portuguese sea born Empire, the theoretical fruits of which are still growing.

[8] The term postcolonialism permuting with post-colonialism or postcoloniality, each of them implying distinct theoretical attitudes.

The studies about Africa and the African diaspora are not characterized by the theoretical uniformity of the postcolonial studies on India. This is particularly evident in the journal *Subaltern Studies* (Oxford University Press), in which systematic scholarship on "subaltern" issues is regularly published. Still, Africa is a major example of the problems raised in the Asian context by other scholars and, since the pioneering works by authors as Franz Fannon, Albert Memmi and Amílcar Cabral, has been the locus of criticism of colonial forms of knowledge. In the construction of a Western identity during the colonial period, Africa, and particularly sub-Saharan Africa, represented an "absolute Otherness" (Mudimbe 1988, Mbembe 2000: 9). The way that "colonial difference" modeled both power relations and globalization extended even to the production of knowledge and to what Walter Mignolo calls "the complicities between modernity and the violence of reason" (Mignolo 2000: 126). We cannot think about contemporary African reality without referring to its colonial past and the concomitant violence of the period, a process exposed in the studies that Mignolo characterizes as "border thinking" as in those emanating from the centers of knowledge production.

As Terence Ranger acknowledges, "The colonial period was a time of distortion through power: power was used to force Africans into distorting identities: power relations distorted colonial social science, rendering it incapable of doing more than reflecting colonial constructions" (Ranger 1996: 273). These distortions induced by colonialism are still one of the main interests of postcolonial studies, as shown in the continuous work developed by Jean and John Comaroff about colonial knowledge and hidden oppression elements inducted by colonialism such as the regulation of the working and the reproductive body or the missionary action and its controlling effects.[9] In spite of colonial criticism and decontruction, we may consensually draw some research lines in postcolonial African studies, such as state formation in the postcolonial world that induced a number of studies about conflicts and the creation of "war societies", religious movements, and ethnic and national identities. The questions of globalization and creolization, which characterized postcolonial Africa, were already focussed in the precolonial studies (Amselle 2001) as well as in the studies about the African diaspora (where we point out the pioneering work of Abner Cohen and the important studies of Paul Gilroy) and are now also some of the most promising research directions.

The debate on identity constructions started as part of a wider critique of colonial knowledge and the ethnic labels imposed upon populations that were also subjected to a taxonomic vertigo with heavy political results. These

[9] Some of this issues were also raised by the works of Rui Pereira (1998) and Paulo Valverde (1997) who were pioneer in the Portuguese anthropological production on colonialism.

discussions were enriched by the creation of new identities, by the disparate phenomena of the revitalization of traditions and by the constitution of national identities exemplified in the recent works of Achile Mbembe (Mbembe 2000; see also Dzidzienyo in this volume). Mbembe criticizes the generalized idea that the African borders are the simple product of a colonial imposition and points out their multiple geneses. These borders are a reflection of the religious, military and commercial map drawn through the power games in which were entangled Africans and Europeans and later the different European potencies in the period that preceded the beginning of effective colonization during the 19th century (Mbembe 2001). Such territories were first structured by the colonial administration and subsequently by the postcolonial state. In the new African states Mbembe identifies the increasing importance of the creation of internal borders, like those imposed by apartheid, or of new ways of living, determined by such disparate factors as the religious movements and their leaders' action, forced migrations and the creation of almost permanent refugees camps, growing urbanization and the development of new creolizations (see also Trajano Filho in this volume).

African studies on colonialism and poscolonialism include such diverse themes as strategies of resistance to colonialism, social and populational movements that characterized the 20th century, the increase of different creolizations (in colonial situations first, then urged by the movement of urbanization of the continent and of its diaspora), and the constant flux of goods, ideas and desires (Appadurai 2001). These different issues point to multifaceted realities that we insist on keeping together because of their common origin in a continent unified by concerted processes of colonization and decolonization. Despite its diversity these studies do not constitute a systematic intellectual corpus of debate as that inspired through the Asian context.

Portuguese scholarship, as stated above, has been far from this intellectual arena, on the one hand; while on the other, this international debate has failed to include a sound discussion of the important Portuguese issues.

In an effort to fill this gap, the objective of the Conference leading to this volume was, as stated above, to open a comparative debate among anthropologists concerned with colonialism and postcolonialism in India, Africa, and Brazil. Most of these topics have been the object of systematic criticism and deconstruction, during the last decade. Different works were the outcome of increasing academic interest in these areas, and new concepts and terminologies have risen from former theories. Hibridity, multiculturalism (or should we rather say multiculturality?), transnationalism, cosmopolitanism (see bellow Peter van der Veer's innovative analysis), globalism, to mention only a few topics, have now come under prolific and fruitful discussion.

The final shape of this volume did not exactly follow the conference's programme. To a certain extent our priority was to opt for a contextual frame-

work and so give to reader the freedom to choose his own path through the authors' perspectives, so that when taken as a whole have a stimulating dynamics. Different conclusions can be raised. For the moment, we would like to underline one of the main methodological contributions offered by the papers: the need to abandon conceptual polarisations and dichotomies, the tendency to essencialise periods, concepts, and terminologies. In fact, as conveyed by some authors, the traditional oppositions between colonialism and postcolonialism, colonialism and nationalism, modernism and postmodernism, to underline only a few, reveal themselves to be problematic and responsible for conceptual and factual reductionism.

Peter van der Veer has "abandoned" his Indian field that has inspired previous production on colonialism, nationalism, and religion, to offer us a challenging approach to cosmopolitanism. After drawing the traditional picture of the cosmopolitan as a man (note the implied asymmetry of gender) willing to engage with the Other (thus opposed to the ethnic and national chauvinist) he overturns this same notion by showing that the emergence of the trope of cosmopolitanism occurs simultaneously with the expansion of imperialism and nationalism. For Peter van der Veer cosmopolitanism is in fact the Western engagement with the rest of the world, but this engagement is in its nature colonial. Cosmopolitanism is a dialectic relationship to nationalism that while moving beyond the boundaries of the nation is also altogether bond up within it. The conceptual contribution of the author goes further when he raises the issue of cultural translation, tied up to the notion of conversion. Here is a privileged theme used to discuss the role of religion (and particularly of large transnational religious movements such as Pentecostalism in Christianity, the Tablighi Jama'at in Islam, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad ih Hinduism, all of them "cosmopolitan" religions) in shaping national cultures that risk annihilation either by assimilation or by multiculturalism.

Gyan Prakash approaches alternative modes of modernity in colonial India. He proposes the concept of community, far more efficient to understand social relations that escape the market and the law than the model of civil society. This conceptual option allows the author a double deconstruction: the one of community itself, and, epistemologically speaking, the very inadequacy of Western notions to understand non-Western institutions – isn't this what colonialism is all about? At this level, the concept of community (that has previously been addressed by Partha Chatterjee as "the unresolved contradiction in Western theory"), offers Prakash a powerful tool to further criticism, such as the orientalist knowledge on India, as developed namely by Burke or William Jones. Despite the presumed orientalist respect for customary Indian order or Indian tradition, orientalism constituted no more than a tool for domination – confronting local resistance – since both British officials and scholars, not Indians themselves, were to define what

Indian principles were (more specifically, the principles imposed by the East India's Company). But the idea of community, together with other theoretical objectives, supplies a pertinent understanding of colonialist and nationalist attitudes towards gender, and the contradictions vis-à-vis women rose through both (a topic that is addressed in this volume by Fruzzetti and Perez). Indeed, at the same time that women became for Indian nationalism significant symbols of the traditional community, they were paradoxically imbued with new ideals of "modernity", such as education. This paradox would be confronted in postcolonial India, which was to witness regular struggles undertaken by women and (other) political minorities.

Lina Fruzzetti and Rosa Maria Perez took a comparative approach to the articulation of colonialism, nationalism, postcolonialism and gender supported by their fieldwork, carried out respectively in Bengal and Goa. By analising two situations of liminal women, the Bengali *home girl* and the Goan *devadasi*, these anthropologists sustain the discontinuity between women in colonial and postcolonial India. This discontinuity corresponds to different roles assigned to two women, a real and a metaphorical one, therefore demonstrating that gender provides an efficient tool for ideological and political manipulation. In fact, if nationalism in India has endorsed and implicated women (or, better, femininity) by considering them powerful nationwide symbols (their apparent empowerment corresponding to their motherhood, comparable to the nation's own motherhood) it has simultaneously endowed them with fictive status that post-independent India has put in evidence. As opposed to the colonial period and the concomitant nationalist movement when the exaltation of women led to the emergency of enthusiastic feminist groups, the postcolonial era made women face contradiction and delusion, their expectations refused by a society sustained by an unquestioned gender hierarchy. This contradiction is particularly expressive when we focus upon women at the margins of Indian society.

Still within the Indian context, Cristiana Bastos has concentrated on the Portuguese colonial era. Supported by historical and ethnographic evidence, she analyses the ambiguous status of Goan doctors as created by the colonial endeavour, which has denied Indian physicians professional partnership with Portuguese doctors on the one hand, and on the other endowed them with the role of a sort of civilizing mission in African colonies. Delusion and (fictive) glory are constituted, therefore, through these Janus-faced doctors' identity. The author proposes to apply to them the idea of subalternity. This concept (still under deeper research) is no doubt defiant: as a matter of the fact, although the doctors of the Medical School of Goa, like other careers built up in the colonies, are unquestionably *subaltern* (a term employed by Portuguese sources) within the Portuguese empire, they emphasize their links to the colonial project and deny their native identity – as subaltern.

The three essays about "Lusophone" Africa point out the question of the complexity of identity constructions that cross the colonial and postcolonial periods. The ambiguities of power and identity definition in the colonial period is the subject of Clara Carvalho's paper, raising the problem of the complexity of power manipulation through an analysis of the iconography of local chiefs. Her article establishes a comparison between the iconography of local chiefs created by both the colonial administration (through photography) and local populations (through statuary). Through the analysis of these representations and evoking the mimetic quality of material culture (also refered to by Paul Stoller in this volume), the author addresses the question of the contraditions and continuities between empowerment and manipulation during the colonial period and how they have been echoed in the postcolonial period.

Nuno Porto's paper presents a reflection about material culture in Angola and the way that the same objects can be reclaimed by single ethnic groups as part of their identity construction and used to "objectify the nation under urban, educated ruling elites cultural practices". In this paper, like in a mystery novel, we are invited to follow the trajectory of a stolen Lwena statue recognized at an auction in Paris. Between its recognition, recovery and placement at the Museum, Nuno Porto discusses the contradictions and implications of museum objects as artifacts in a modern African state. Like the Lwena statue, these artifacts are objects of national representation, crossing from a precolonial past where they were produced to their objectification during both the colonial and the postcolonial periods. Museum practices are analyzed in their complex configuration established between their collectors and their role in the official construction of a (problematic) national identity.

The subject of continuity and discontinuity between the colonial and postcolonial period is also raised by João de Pina-Cabral's article about the resistance of "lived worlds" to the process of political change that is intended to be global. The author's starting point is the symbolic construction of a space, Dona Berta's garden in central Maputo, Mozambique. This leads Pina-Cabral to reflect about the disparate elements of resistance to imposing political regimes, from the colonial administration to the postcolonial dictatorial state. In this process, different typologies of "otherness" are established, typologies that freely mix class, ethnicity and phenotype. As an example of ethnographic awareness, this article leads the reader through the hidden aspects of the complexity of colonial and postcolonial identity constructions.

The following papers deal with the problematic of identity inside and outside of "imagined communities" in contexts of blurred borders and definitions. Wilson Trajano Filho describes a Creole worldview and, specifically, a sketch of a Creole nation through an analysis of rumours. His analysis is supported by the conversations in a chat site dedicated to Guinea-Bissau,

where migrant Guineans discuss their own identity and that of their country, in a particular sensitive period after the 1998 conflict that led former president Nino Vieira to allow Senegalese troops to occupy the capital causing a large number of residents to migrate. For Trajano Filho, rumours (including web narratives) demarcate the limits of this fluid community without a territory – the Creole society, either resident or migrant. These are both internal, pointing at colonial categories (Christians, Muslims and members of local ethnic groups), and external (Senegalese, French, or even an unnamed Other which the author identifies as an image of the colonizer). Trajano leads us to the problem of the creation of "imagined communities" out of the limits of a "printed capitalism".

The constitution of "imagined communities" is a theme also present in the papers of Paul Stoller and Anani Dzidzienyo, that look specifically at the role played by Africa and Africans in the construction of African-American and African-Brazilian identities. Stoller's paper raises the question of Afrocentricity as a both philosophical and political core movement, assisting African-Americans against white hegemony in the United States in creating an arena of ethnic identity affirmation. Afrocentricity is also a concept explored commercially both by African-Americans and African traders. Stoller follows West African merchants in America and the way these contemporary tradesmen created a new idea of Africa by the commodification of culture and objects though inventing an Africa – without national reference – that mirrors the identity of African-Americans. It is interesting to compare the different uses of artifacts as core elements of identity process in his paper and the one by Nuno Porto. This identity construction in processes is accutely analyzed by the author.

Departing from the example of Brazilian external relations, particularly with African states in the last decades, Anani Dzidzienyo also raises the question of national identity construction in a postcolonial situation, and the uses of Africa as a mirror of identity. Brazil proclaims its "hybridization" or "miscegenation" (for a critical approach to these concepts see also Miguel Vale de Almeida in this volume) as necessary to the nation-building project and as a crucial part of the national identity project. Analyzing Brazil's foreign policy, Dzidzienyo examines the ambiguities and contradictions of miscegenation as an official statement. The establishment and improvement of diplomatic relations with African states was not echoed by an effective empowerment of African-Brazilians in their own country, where they still were absent from decision centers. The author points out the internal contradictions of a country where white hegemony is maintained obscured by the official speech of equality between ethnic groups, and points out the importance of ethnicity for the establishment of external relations between white and non-white nations.

Miguel Vale de Almeida deconstructs the concept of hibridism, that he considers a central issue of debate in the social sciences today. He follows-up

the origin of the concept in botany and its transposition to anthropology, and its subsequent connection with miscegenation and *mestiçagem*, a Portuguese term for "racial" and cultural mixing. These two concepts were crucial to manipulate power and domination – based relationships within Portuguese empire. Miguel Vale de Almeida's essay focusses on three periods in the Portuguese production around miscegenation and hybridism: a period marked by racist theories; a period marked by luso-tropicalism, and the present period marked, according to his perspective, by discussions of multiculturalism – this paper closing a sort of circle opened by Peter van der Veer's text, which takes a different perspective towards globalisation and multiculturalism.[10]

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[10] Unfortunately Pratima Kamat could not cope with the deadlines required by the editors. Nevertheless, her research on Indian resistance to Portuguese colonialism in Goa (Pratima Kamat, 1999, *Farar Far. Local Resistance to Colonial hegemony in Goa, 1510-1912*, Goa, Institute Menezes Braganza) is worthy to be mentioned, since she takes the task of submitting Portuguese rule to an attentive criticism, supported by solid historical data.