

**Margarida Calafate Ribeiro. *Uma história de regressos: império, guerra colonial e pós-colonialismo*.
Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2004.**

Phillip Rothwell

Margarida Calafate Ribeiro's *Uma história de regressos: Império, guerra colonial e pós-colonialismo* is a landmark in Lusophone studies. It combines profound erudition with superlative clarity, weaving together sociological theories of Portugal's imperial ambivalence and first-rate readings of canonical texts from Camões through to the present day. The sheer breadth of the book's scope is enough to make it essential reading for any serious scholar or student in the fields of Portuguese, Brazilian, or Lusophone African literary studies, as well as for those who welcome innovative interpretations of the shadows and mirrors that structure Portugal's colonial and postcolonial unconscious.

Ribeiro begins her journey through the Portuguese cultural imaginary by interrogating the multiple inflections of Portugal as both center and periphery, running this enlightening line of interrogation through the rest of her book. She reads all the cornerstones of Portugal's historiography—from the most celebratory to the most pessimistic—as symptoms or reflections of the country's rather schizophrenic imaginary, which was constantly buffered by loss and vacancy or compensatory imperial imaginations deployed to conceal lack.

The author traces the cultural manifestations of Portugal's sense of marginal identity at the corner of Europe and as an empire whose center shifted both literally and figuratively to the outskirts of the imperial realm. She offers a seamless narrative that sweeps her reader along from the ambiguous inception of the cultural component of Portuguese imperialism through the loss of Brazil and the Ultimatum shock into the truly intransigent and self-deluding phase of Portuguese imagination triggered by an entrenched New State cloaked in the convenient rhetoric of lusotropicalism.

She draws five centuries worth of Lusophone literary statesmen and women from all corners of the globe into her analysis, building up to close readings of four key works that were produced through the experiences of the Lusophone

African wars for independence by Portuguese authors who characterize Portugal's moment of transition into a postcolonial imaginary, when the reality of a lost empire and a displaced and disembodied metropolis finally hit home. These four texts include António Lobo Antunes's *Os cus de Judas*; João de Melo's *Autópsia de um mar de ruínas*; Manuel Alegre's *Jornada de África*; and Lídia Jorge's *A costa dos murmúrios*. Having laid an impressive theoretical framework in the earlier chapters of her book, Ribeiro proceeds to tease out the subtleties and cultural resonances in the works, contextualizing where necessary.

The only complaint I have is really against the conventions of academic books published in Portugal: *Uma história de regressos* lacks an index. Ribeiro covers so much so well that her text will become an invaluable source of reference as well as analysis for any postcolonial study of Portugal or any future work about the literature of the colonial war. The bibliography that she provides is extensive, yet highly relevant. She maintains an inquisitive and critical tone throughout the volume, opening up literary studies in Portugal through a deft and appropriate use of postcolonial theories and a profound sensitivity to literary texts. As a first single-author monograph, *Uma História de Regressos* is already a *magnum opus* and an essential read that marks a change in the way Portuguese literary studies tackle the recent and yet simultaneously distant past.

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