

Maria Isabel Barreno's *O Senhor das Ilhas*: Memory and Writing at the Threshold*

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Abstract. This paper is composed of two parts. The first provides an overview of representations of Africa in the twentieth-century Portuguese literature that revisits the colonial experience, paying particular attention to the relationship between history, memory and fiction, and to the novel of the 1990s as a counter-narrative of belonging. This segment assesses the problematic displacement of the Portuguese colonial self and locates the emergence of new groups in literary representations of empire. The second part addresses Maria Isabel Barreno's portrayal of Cape Verde's colonial past in the historical novel *O Senhor das Ilhas*. This final segment examines both the act of writing the colonizer's fictional (auto)biography, and the relationship between travel, writing and empire.

Qual o meu exacto lugar nesse mundo dele?

(*O Senhor das Ilhas* 18)

Mas é verdade também que na história e nos feitos que se narram sobre aqueles que de algum modo conquistaram a fama, estão mais presentes os motivos de quem narra do que as acções do herói da história.

(*O Senhor das Ilhas* 152-153)

In the decade marking the twentieth anniversary of the Portuguese revolution and the independence of the former colonies of Cape Verde, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau, writers persuasively revisited and re-imagined the

Portuguese presence in the former empire. Although literary representations of Africa are far from being a recent invention, revisions of the colonial experience have been a particularly recurrent tendency in the post-revolutionary fiction published in Portugal. Envisioned paradoxically as a space of both regeneration and disenchantment in the post-revolutionary literature, Africa signifies above all a space of return, a place revisited through memory and writing. This is specifically the case with the Portuguese fiction of the 1990s that reflects on the colonial past, stressing the prolonged impact of colonialism through depictions of colonizers and multigenerational families in works that elude the dividing lines between history, memory and fiction.¹

While contemporary critics have focused primarily on the theme of colonial war and the final collapse of the African empire in post-1974 fiction, none has examined the literary representation of the agents of empire—officials, missionaries, entrepreneurs, uprooted migrants, expatriates and outcasts—and the particular worldviews of those who traveled, settled in colonial outposts, and were born overseas. Dominated by the viewpoint of the Portuguese born and raised in Cape Verde, Maria Isabel Barreno's novel *O Senhor das Ilhas*² questions the very dualism that divided colonizer from colonized, as well as metropolis from colony, in order to understand the fundamental contradictions inherent in colonial projects and the internal *tensions of empire*, as the seminal writings of scholars like Ann Laura Stoler, Frederick Cooper, John L. Comaroff and others emphasize.³ Adopting the perspective of the colonizer's offspring, Maria Isabel Barreno's work reinvents the colonial past at the threshold,⁴ from a point of view situated at the crossroads of the Cape Verdean archipelago, and between the colony and the metropolis.

O Senhor das Ilhas demonstrates, on the one hand, how the "civilizing mission" produced sites of appropriation, tension, complicity and resistance in the colony. On the other hand, this historical novel traces the role that colonial Africa has played in the reconfiguration of Portuguese identity at home, showing how metropolis and colony were interconnected through a web of cultural influences. Part of a *macro-corpus* of literature that promotes a dialogue between the past and present, the post-revolutionary fictional representations of empire found in writers as diverse as António Lobo Antunes, Maria Isabel Barreno, Teolinda Gersão, Helder Macedo and others expose the fragments of a culture trying to come to terms with its colonial heritage. At the end of the millennium, this *macro-corpus* thus contributes to the "dialogues of identity" in contemporary Portuguese society.⁵

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I.

Although images of Africa have proliferated since the voyages of Portuguese explorers, it is mainly after the Independence of Brazil that Africa gains extensive literary projection in Portuguese fiction. Published in the late nineteenth century, Eça de Queirós's novels *Os Maias* and *A Ilustre Casa de Ramires*, for example, invented Africa as a place of adventure and redemption that allowed the protagonists to escape from the nation's crisis. Standing in sharp contrast to the dangerous Cape of Torments described by Camões, such a view of earthly paradise attempted to compensate for the country's decline and the anxiety over the loss of Brazil. Viewed as an exotic place, in Eça's novels Africa awaits development by the Portuguese, who dreamed of a "New Brazil" in Africa.⁶

Literary representations of Africa abounded in Portugal during the military dictatorship and the New State. The prolific literary production of this period and the effort to propagate an imperial mystique both in Portugal and overseas were largely attributed to the Colonial Literary Prizes, the Colonial Exhibitions, and the "Colonial Weeks."⁷ The New State's investment in disseminating an image of Africa as a desirable destination for Portuguese settlers was twofold: it promoted emigration to the colonies and reinforced the notion of Portugal as a transcontinental nation. For the most part, Portuguese colonial authors⁸ not only voiced official visions of imperial rule, but also represented an effort to normalize the subjugation of Africans. They often explored a series of themes centered on parental imagery primarily articulated in masculine terms, and invested in the history of male European heroism. The rhetorical celebration of the family in paternalistic tones served to con-

solidate the relationship between metropolis and colony by emphasizing the idea of a benevolent Portuguese tutelage. Written for a wide audience, the colonial adventure tale provided a way to dramatize the colonizers' experience of founding a home in exotic, often described as feminized, lands. Intended to celebrate Portugal's "civilizing mission," imperial narratives drew upon familial metaphors to reinforce the normalcy of colonial power overseas.

To be sure, Africa became the object of a different literary approach with the advent of colonial war literature. A major genre in the twentieth century, colonial war literature is primarily a literature of catharsis⁹ and denunciation. This genre, which has strong autobiographical resonances, not only recreates the chaos of war, thus avoiding the erosion of memory, but also searches for the redemption of the Portuguese self. Accounts of travel and texts about personal journeys, colonial war novels narrate the soldier's and the individual's dilemma when faced with the agony of the unresolved military conflict and an increasing awareness of colonialism. Incorporating partial visions of war in an attempt to autopsy the Portuguese nation in crisis, colonial war fiction voices the "Other," who does not principally embody the African, but rather the Portuguese soldier, who finds himself changed, "Other," as the war progresses.

Read primarily as fictions of historical failure and as postcolonial narratives,¹⁰ colonial war literature and the novel of the 1990s question Portugal's mission overseas and stage the imperial decline, the twilight of the African empire. Assessing the founding symbols of the Portuguese past, the novel of the 1990s draws special attention, however, to the culture of colonialism as a culture of contamination. By placing the relations between agents of empire and the intercultural contact between colonizer and colonized at the center of their narratives, these writers also display a keen awareness of the problematic displacement of the Portuguese colonial self. Focusing mainly on multigenerational family sagas, the novel of the 1990s functions as a counterpoint to the colonial narrative. Whereas in the colonial adventure tale longing for the appropriation of "exotic" subjects, cultures and lands lies at the heart of its fantasies and idealized depictions, in the Portuguese novel of the 1990s belonging stands at the center of the narrative.

By bringing to light the colonizers' ambivalent positioning between center and periphery, the Portuguese novel of the 1990s examines the struggle for colonial identity and, above all, raises questions of belonging to both a colonial heritage and a society dislocated from the metropolis while still alienated from the autochthonous populations. If the tensions within and against the

binaries of metropolis-colony and colonizer-colonized evoke the colonizers' ambivalent and displaced identity, it is hardly surprising that the subaltern nature of Portuguese colonialism also contributes to the colonizers' problem of self-representation. In "Entre Prospero e Caliban: Colonialismo, pós-colonialismo e inter-identidade,"¹¹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos offers an excellent assessment of the subaltern nature of Portuguese colonialism:

No domínio dos discursos coloniais, a subalternidade do colonialismo português reside no facto de, a partir do século XVII, a história do colonialismo ter sido escrita em inglês e não em português. Isto significa que o colonizador português tem um problema de auto-representação algo semelhante ao do colonizado pelo colonialismo britânico. [...] Aplicado ao colonizador português, este problema traduz-se na necessidade de definir o colonialismo português em termos de especificidade em relação ao colonialismo hegemónico, o que significa a impossibilidade ou dificuldade em o definir em termos que não reflectam essa subalternidade [...]. (27)

Boaventura de Sousa Santos identifies the colonizers' dual problem of self-representation and identity as it follows:

A identidade do colonizador português não se limita a conter em si a identidade do outro, o colonizado por ele. Contém ela própria a identidade do colonizador enquanto colonizado por outrem. [...] O Prospero português não é apenas um Prospero calibanizado, é um Caliban quando visto da perspectiva dos Super-Prosperos europeus. A identidade do colonizador português é, assim, duplamente dupla. É constituída pela conjugação de dois outros: o outro que é o colonizado e o outro que é o próprio colonizador enquanto colonizado. Foi esta duplicidade de alta intensidade que permitiu ao português ser emigrante, mais do que colono, nas "suas" próprias colónias. (42)

Although the phenomenon of "staging history" and the dialogue between history and fiction are not recent in Portugal, the valorization of competing versions and alternative angles from which to recreate the country's past is a persistent feature found in recent works. These narratives clearly exhibit a commitment to revisions of national identity in Portugal's semi-peripheral culture. Thus the need to dialogue with the past¹² has resulted, on the one hand, in a critical investigation of the nation's collective self-image, and, on the other, in a process of reassessment of major aspects of Portuguese history

(i.e., the colonization of Africa, the emigration to the colonies, *decolonization*, and the post-colonial transformations of Portuguese identity).

Displaying a profound interest in the marginalized and often forgotten agents of history, post-revolutionary writers have expressively incorporated their experiences as a way of accounting for the heterogeneity of Portuguese identity and the manifold contradictions in Portugal's social and cultural configurations. Despite its controversy, the emergence of "new" colonial groups and categories from the past attests to this crucial aspect. Within this vein, the novel of the 1990s identifies competing colonial agendas (based primarily on gender and class stratification, but also on race) to observe how these agendas shaped the politics of expansion and colonization overseas.

The insertion of "marginal" voices into the colonial project, especially the inclusion of children and women in representations of empire (i.e., women's interaction with colonized peoples, particularly with African women, as well as their complicity with imperial consolidation and downfall, or resistance to it) attests to a critical perspective on colonialism that several novels of the 1990s clearly share. That is specifically the case of Maria Isabel Barreno's *O Senhor das Ilhas*. Rejecting the notion of the colony primarily as a male setting, *O Senhor das Ilhas* examines not only the role Portuguese colonial women played in *domesticating the empire*,¹³ but also the complex interconnections between family, domesticity and colonialism.

II.

Among Portugal's most prominent writers, Maria Isabel Barreno (born in Lisbon, 1939) is well known for co-authoring *Novas Cartas Portuguesas*¹⁴ with Maria Teresa da Horta, and Maria Velho da Costa. Published during the Caetano regime and banned immediately after its publication, the book's radicalism captured the attention of readers and critics both in Portugal and abroad. Composed of a collection of essays, letters, excerpts from diaries, and poems, this fragmented and multiform work explored new modes of writing to express the condition of Portuguese women and contest Portugal's dominant culture.¹⁵ In this regard, it is important to emphasize one of the most illuminating aspects of Maria Isabel Barreno's work: her interest in voices of dissidence, which has been particularly present since 1968, upon publication of her first novel.

In recent years, the writer has skillfully examined key moments in twentieth-century Portuguese history (i.e. the end of the monarchy, Salazar's dic-

tatorship, the colonial wars, and the revolution and its aftermath) in *A Crónica do Tempo* (1990), a multigenerational family novel dealing with the relationship between family, memory and the national past.¹⁶ In *O Senhor das Ilhas*, Barreno readopts the family chronicle/saga,¹⁷ a sub-genre of the historical novel, to resurrect the past of the Martins family, and the author's Cape Verdean ancestry.¹⁸

Intertwining the historical novel, the family chronicle, the fictional biography/autobiography, and the travel narrative, *O Senhor das Ilhas* recreates not only the private life of the clan, but also Cape Verdean colonial society of the late 1800s. It describes the nature of race relations and slavery, the role of the *creole* elite in the archipelago, and particularly the effects of colonial rule on the marginalized and often illegitimate *mestiço*, at the time of the rise of the emancipation movements. Although the work concentrates on the complex and often paradoxical role of the patriarch's "civilizing mission" in Cape Verde, it clearly attempts to bring into view those who were left unspoken in the histories/fictions of empire.

Written from the youngest generation's perspective, *O Senhor das Ilhas* relates the offspring's dispute over the act of remembering and writing the fictional biography of their dead father. Throughout this first-person, retrospective narrative, the reader is confronted with the question of who represents the voice most authorized to retell and imagine the life and mission of the family's leading member, Manuel António Martins. The unresolved tension between Manuel Maria, "marginal" protagonist, "author" and narrator who inherits his mother's voice, and Marta, who intervenes and appropriates the narration on several occasions, is never overcome and is a central aspect of the novel.¹⁹ This tension clearly expresses the opposite forces behind the desire to memorialize and the need to unveil the "true" image of the paternal figure.

Writing is a privileged theme that *O Senhor das Ilhas* explores in many directions. Alluding to the existence of a manuscript or "original matrix" granting historical "authenticity" to *O Senhor das Ilhas*, the novel's introduction raises the problem of representing the past and shows how private history can only be unveiled through fiction and invention:

O manuscrito que a seguir se publica foi encontrado por um descendente da família Martins, na ilha Brava, em 1993. Tratava-se de uma coleção de cadernos de capa preta, bastante maltratados pelo tempo e pelas mãos humanas. [...] como se alguém quisesse preservar-lhes a intimidade, ou afirmar que a história privada

não pode ser contada, e que qualquer tentativa de a contar a transforma fatalmente em ficção.

Dever-se-á também supor, dadas todas estas interferências no manuscrito deixado pelo primeiro autor e que se terão sucedido ao longo de várias gerações, que alterados ou inventados foram todos os episódios que não possam ser verificados em fontes históricas. (13)

Informed by the first-person narrator's viewpoint, both in close proximity and distant from the events, Manuel Maria's memorial to the colonizer²⁰ reinvents the colonial sites of familial memory mainly through imagination:

Para relatar as histórias dos meus, e a minha, as linhas que vieram determinando e colorindo nossas existências e também essas escuras cavernas do tempo que a memória não consegue explorar, recorrerei a todos os relatos que ouvi e li. Mas usarei sobretudo a minha imaginação, porque só essa luz de cada um de nós ressuscita os mortos e as sombras do passado. (20)

As a novel that mimics life-writing, *O Senhor das Ilhas* blurs the distinction between a fictional biographical reconstruction of the father and a fictional autobiography of the son. From the very beginning, the narrative brings into question the authority surrounding the fictional author, the motivation for writing lives and the biographer's responsibility to truthfulness. Both a scribe of memory and a chronicler of a parent's death, Manuel Maria's version of the past embodies, nevertheless, failure, omission and distortion.

Biographical writing—a genre indigenous to the Western world and associated developmentally with the spread of empire—serves, on the one hand, to commemorate and immortalize life against death and, on the other, to demystify illusions.²¹ Primarily a demythologizing form that strives to correct or reinterpret false or distorted accounts of the subject, biography nevertheless can, as Ira Bruce Nadel points out in *Biography: Fiction, Fact & Form*,²² both destroy and create myths.

Does Manuel Maria's narrative contribute to forging a colonial identity (as a fiction of empire) or does it revise the myth of the "patriarch's mission" (as a fiction against empire)? In other words, does the novel, written from the perspective of the colonizer's offspring, overtly destabilize the myths surrounding the father's authority, thus unmasking his construction and unsettling the entire colonial order? In Manuel Maria's own words:

Olho as páginas que escrevi, e muitas dúvidas me assaltam, tanto nas razões como nos resultados. Terei esclarecido e acrescentado a figura e o destino do meu pai, ou terá sido o meu destino que cumpri? Tão obstinadamente me opus a herdar suas empresas, que acabei unindo minha rota à sua. Nossas acções não se definem por nossos propósitos, mas sim por seus resultados. (363-364)

Resonating throughout the novel, Manuel Maria's question, "Qual o meu exacto lugar nesse mundo dele?" (18), reflects the narrator's quest for personal identity and shows how identity is defined in relation to the father figure and his legacy. Thus it is the father-son relation that constructs the frame through which we read the private history of colonialism. As both an act of revision of the paternal figure—as "meio de tornar claro o [seu] caminho" (19)—and a reinvention of the self performed in the writing of the other, writing unveils the tension between father-son, patrimony-identity.²³

A hybrid form and an amalgam of biography, autobiography and history, Manuel Maria's narrative challenges the myth of autonomy in life-writing, suggesting that all forms of self-representation are relational and generated by the tension between self and other.²⁴ The opening, founding proposition of the novel—"Talvez a meu pai eu empreste meus sonhos, meus amores e minhas paixões" (17)—attests to the relational dimension of identity. Thus, Manuel Maria's revisionist project comprises the recovery of the self and the offspring's story of colonialism, told as the story of the colonizer and the Martins clan. Seen as "the history of a becoming," while providing the "account of an undoing," the autobiographer's narrative charts a journey outwards.²⁵

Travel is a constant motif throughout the work and is associated with writing and belonging. The novel, which dialogues with classic sagas of the Western literary tradition, presents the narrator's search for identity and meaning with regard to his own culture. The novel also explores travel writing as a form emphasizing the self-reflexivity of the journey,²⁶ which allows for the production of the self in the course of the act of writing while traveling. In Barreno's novel the association of travel writing and empire, which normally suggests the consolidation of the imperial power, is subverted. In *O Senhor das Ilhas*, travel means transgression, for Manuel Maria and Marta search for the "real" paternal figure through writing during their voyage from Cape Verde to the metropolis.²⁷ In this vein, their voyage inverts the Portuguese colonizer's typically European direction of travel from the imperial center to the colonial periphery.²⁸ In sum, *O Senhor das Ilhas* offers a fictional rewrit-

ing of canonized types of travelogues and displays the offspring's marginal perspective on the imperial center.

Travel also means displacement, which the image of Manuel Maria's boat wandering incessantly from coast to coast accentuates. Manuel Maria, simultaneously protagonist, narrator and fictional author of the colonizer's (auto)biography, represents the figure of the wanderer, a subject that cannot be fixed and has nowhere to return. A product of "o mundo que o português criou" or "do mundo que criou o português," Manuel Maria "é esse português, criado por tal mundo, que hoje peregrina em simbólicas viagens à procura de si mesmo através dos outros e dos outros através de si mesmo," as Eduardo Lourenço aptly reminds us in "Errância e busca num imaginário lusófono" (112).²⁹

A wandering figure in search of a place and time to belong to, Manuel Maria personifies nostalgia, which, as Svetlana Boym argues in *The Future of Nostalgia*,³⁰ "attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home," and "dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging" (xviii). Nostalgia, emphasizes Boym, "is not always for the ancient regime or fallen empire but also for the unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that became obsolete" (xvi). The final image of the shipwrecked boat, in which the narrator dies, suggests not only the fragmentation of the self, but, above all, the failure of the Portuguese colonial project in Africa. Written by the colonizer born in Cape Verde, who challenges the assumed centrality of the Portuguese perspective as well as European representations of travel, Manuel Maria's fictional narrative questions, from the African margin, notions of home, culture, identity and belonging.

Maria Isabel Barreno's compelling novel not only revisits the colonial sites of familial memory, but also re-inscribes Africa as a focal point for reflection about individual and national identity. Published in the 1990s, *O Senhor das Ilhas* examines the contradictions inherent in colonial projects, while dialoging with the literary tradition. Given the diversity of experiences of colonialism, the novel privileges the representation of the colonizer's problematic identity in life-writing and revises the cultures of empire. At the turn of the millennium, as the twilight settles around the memories of colonialism, literature promotes a generational dialogue between past and present, as well as among cultures, and continues to search for the haunting meanings of the past while asking what it means to be back at home, what it means to belong to a post-imperial nation.

Notes

* I am grateful to Lisa Beth Voigt and Naomi Parker for their gracious help in editing this paper. This article draws on sections of my Brown University dissertation, especially Chapter I, “Colonos, Família e Registo da Memória Colonial em *O Senhor das Ilhas* de Maria Isabel Barreno.”

¹ For representations of colonialism in the Portuguese novel of the 1990s, see, for instance, Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras* (Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1997); António Lobo Antunes, *O Esplendor de Portugal* (Publicações Dom Quixote, 1997); Helder Macedo, *Partes de África* (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1991); and *Pedro e Paula* (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1998). Onésimo T. Almeida refers to this recent body of fiction as “romance de revisitação africana.”

² (Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 1994).

³ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Tensions of Empire, Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997).

⁴ This term evokes a way of reading and writing the cultures of empire at the threshold. *O Senhor das Ilhas* embodies this liminal location: it is a novel both about Cape Verde and from Cape Verde.

⁵ Luís de Sousa Rebelo, “Os Diálogos da Identidade no Fim do Século,” *Tesserae* 1 (1994-95).

⁶ Valentim Alexandre, “The Colonial Empire,” António Costa Pinto, ed. *Modern Portugal* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1998) 41.

⁷ Alexandre, “The Colonial Empire” (49), and “África no Imaginário Português (séculos XIX-XX),” *Penélope* 15 (1995):39-52.

⁸ For studies on colonial literature, see Pires Laranjeira, “La Littérature Coloniale Portugaise,” Jean Sévry, ed., *Regards sur les littératures coloniales, Afrique anglophone et lusophone*, Tome III (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999) 231-258; Inocência Mata, “Reflexões em torno de um conceito de literatura colonial—Haverá uma estética colonial?,” *Pelos Trilhos da Literatura Africana em Língua Portuguesa* (Braga: Cadernos do Povo, 1992) 11-18; Manuel Ferreira, “Uma perspectiva do romance colonial vs. literaturas africanas,” *Discurso no percurso africano I* (Lisboa: Plátano, 1989) 231-259; and Salvato Trigo, “Literatura Colonial, Literaturas Africanas,” *Ensaio de Literatura Comparada Afro-Lusa-Brasileira* (Lisboa: Vega, 1986) 129-146. Also see Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 2-4.

⁹ Rui de Azevedo Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português* (Lisboa: Notícias Editorial, 1998) 99.

¹⁰ I use the term “postcolonial” here not primarily as a historical periodization, but as a self-reflexive system of knowledge and its narratives, a particular form of enquiry and analysis that contests both colonial domination and colonialist perspectives. See Catherine Hall, “Introduction: thinking the postcolonial, thinking the empire,” *Cultures of Empire: A Reader, Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 3-5; Elleke Boehmer (3); and Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 12.

¹¹ In Maria Irene Ramalho e António Sousa Ribeiro, org., *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos da Identidade* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2001).

¹² I employ here LaCapra’s concept of dialogue with the past: “[...] to employ the notion of ‘dialogue’ to designate one’s relation to the past (including its texts) is obviously to employ a metaphor. A text cannot literally answer one back in an ‘I-thou’ relation in the manner in which a face-to-face conversation presumably allows. [...] The more basic sense of dialogue is conveyed by *dia-logos*—a divergence or dehiscence in the logos that itself enables anything like an ‘I-thou’ rapport to emerge in a face-to-face encounter.” See Dominick LaCapra, *History, Politics and the Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987) 10.

¹³ For an excellent collection of essays on the intersection between race, gender, family and colonialism, see Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (ed.), *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1998).

¹⁴ (Lisboa: Editorial Futura, 1972).

¹⁵ Maria Isabel Barreno's interest in the recording and interpretation of women's reality is parallel to her interest in the social and historical memory of the nation. See Álvaro Manuel Machado, *Dicionário de Literatura Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1996): "A leitura do conjunto da obra de Isabel Barreno põe em evidência a formação de uma voz comprometida com a chamada 'escrita feminina' [...] e com a memória histórico-social do país. Desse modo, desde o seu primeiro romance até um dos mais recentes, não por acaso intitulado *Crónica do Tempo* [...] é explícita a preocupação da autora com o tempo, tanto na sua dimensão individual, como na sua dimensão histórica, elevando muitas vezes, à condição de tema a própria reflexão sobre a passagem do tempo" (51).

¹⁶ For a study of the novel, see Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, "Os Tempos de três gerações," *Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideias* 11: 456 (Abril 2-8, 1991).

¹⁷ For an elaboration on the family saga as a sub-genre of the historical novel—a particularly recurrent trend in the Portuguese literature published in the last twenty years—see Maria de Fátima Marinho, *O Romance Histórico em Portugal* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 1999). On Barreno's novel, the critic writes: "*O Senhor das Ilhas* é, pois, um romance sobre a História de Cabo Verde, na sua íntima ligação com a de Portugal, História contada através da vida, costumes, sentimentos e afazeres de uma família, que poderemos considerar como paradigmática de um tempo, lugar e classe social demarcados" (167).

In the preface to the Cape Verdean edition of *O Senhor das Ilhas* (Praia: Centro Cultural Português, 1998), António Leão Correia e Silva identifies the author's contribution to the inauguration of the historical novel in Cape Verde as follows: "Sendo a história de Cabo Verde de grande potencialidade ficcional causa estranheza não se ter produzido no arquipélago, até data recente, romances históricos. *O Senhor das Ilhas* da escritora Isabel Barreno é por isso para a literatura sobre Cabo Verde, a inauguração de um género, a abertura de um novo território. Ele instaura um começo. Por esta razão, mais do que propriamente pela sua inquestionável qualidade literária, trata-se de um marco. O género foi aberto com chave de ouro" (iii).

¹⁸ On Maria Isabel Barreno's Cape Verdean background and comments on *O Senhor das Ilhas* as an "archeological search for dreams and feelings," as well as "an alternative history of colonialism," see "Nota da Autora" in the Cape Verdean edition.

¹⁹ In his review of *O Senhor das Ilhas* in *Quadrant* 13 (1996), Paulo Alexandre Jorge dos Santos refers to this tension as a game (alluding to the game of backgammon) embodying the narrative's central force: "[...] nous pouvons presque dire que le personnage le plus important n'est autre que le jeu. [...] Le jeu est déjà le grand moteur de la fiction qui provoque des doutes chez le lecteur: qui écrit le roman? Combien de personnages sont vraiment des narrateurs? Est-ce que Marta a un rôle important dans la formulation du récit?" (266-267).

On the mediation between the (implicit/explicit) author, the narrator and Marta, David Mourão-Ferreira argues in "A ressurreição dos antepassados," that "Muito aliás haveria a dizer sobre o intrínseco relacionamento entre a autora explícita (ou implícita) e o narrador masculino sobre cujos ombros recai a responsabilidade da narração. Não me parece fruto do acaso a circunstância de existir, entre tal autora e narrador, a mediação de uma feminina personagem—a irmã mais velha, Marta—nem o facto de a própria narração se desenvolver sob o olhar vigilante, e mesmo interventor, desta figura carismática, a seu modo e para o seu tempo inquietantemente emancipada," *Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideias* (Dezembro 21, 1994): 23.

²⁰ My use of "memorial" oscillates between a book of remembrances and a memorial to the dead. Manuel Maria's fictional writing is initiated at sea, while on a mission to the metropolis

to obtain a stone for his father's mausoleum. Standing as a controversial memorial to the colonizer, Manuel Maria's narrative not only reflects on past experiences, but also on memory and writing, reminding us, as James E. Young points out, that "the motives of memory are never pure" (2). His narrative is less a metaphorical monument than a memorial. Different from monuments, which are celebratory and embody the myths of beginnings, argues Young, memorials indicate the twilight of ends, educate future generations, and can be conceived as expiations of guilt (3). For an elaboration on memorials and monuments, see James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).

²¹ See Catherine Park, *Biography. Writing Lives* (New York: Twayne, 1996) 22.

²² *Biography: Fiction, Fact & Form* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984) 176, 181.

²³ In *Bequest & Betrayal, Memoirs of a Parent's Death* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), Nancy K. Miller identifies patrimony both as what we inherit by birth and comes after a parent's death, and what haunts our identity (31). I employ here Miller's notion of "patrimony."

²⁴ See Paul John Eakin, "Relational Selves, Relational Lives: Autobiography and the Myth of Autonomy" (43), In *How our lives become stories: Making selves* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999).

²⁵ Nancy Miller 39, 53-54.

²⁶ On travel narrative and empire, see Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

²⁷ Manuel Maria's (travel) narrative subverts the traditional fiction of empire since it consists of an inquiry into his father's identity and (unknown) origins. In *The Appropriated Voice* (Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1990), Bette London states: "The fiction of empire cannot withstand much inquiry into origins, since it premises itself on eternal omnipresence [...]. To investigate origins is to bring imperial power into a provisional realm, to reveal it as a human construct and not an unalterable act of God. And it is to reveal the shaky logic at its core, for the purported cause of colonial power" (75).

²⁸ For a detailed study of postcolonial travel writing in the twentieth century and inverted patterns of travel, see Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing, From Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

²⁹ *A Nau de Ícaro seguido de Imagem e Miragem da Lusofonia* (Lisboa: Gradiva, 1999).

³⁰ (New York: Basic Books, 2001). For a detailed study of this theme in the novel, see Piero Ceccucci's article "La memoria e il sogno, o la nostalgia delle proprie radici in *O Senhor das Ilhas* di Maria Isabel Barreno," Françoise Massa, org., *Les Îles Atlantiques: Realités et Imaginaire*, Actes du colloque organize par l'équipe ERILAR, 1999.

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